



NAVIGATING THE CONTINUITY OF INDONESIA-CHINA RELATIONS IN THE MINING AND ENERGY SECTORS AFTER THE 2024 ELECTION

Yusril Ihza Mahendra^{1*}, Siti Muti'ah Setiawati¹

¹Department of International Relations; Gadjah Mada University; Indonesia

*email: yusrilihazmahendra@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstrakt

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis keberlanjutan hubungan Indonesia-Cina dalam sektor pertambangan dan energi pasca Pemilu 2024, dengan berfokus pada pengaruh pergantian kepemimpinan terhadap kebijakan luar negeri, sambil mempertimbangkan status Indonesia sebagai negara berkembang dengan menggunakan konsep change and continuity serta kebijakan luar negeri negara berkembang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Pemilu 2024 kemungkinan tidak akan mengubah hubungan Indonesia-Cina. Kerja sama kedua negara telah memberikan keuntungan besar bagi Indonesia, di mana Cina masih menjadi investor Coal-Fired Power Plant terbesar dengan total suplai 12.949 MW. Kebijakan hilirisasi yang didukung investasi Cina juga membantu Indonesia meningkatkan kapabilitas produksi untuk menghasilkan produk mineral setengah jadi dengan harga jual lebih tinggi. Sebagai negara berkembang, pertumbuhan ekonomi melalui investasi akan tetap menjadi prioritas Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, transisi kekuasaan kemungkinan hanya akan membentuk pola intensification, yaitu tidak akan mengubah hubungan Indonesia-Cina. Transisi ini justru akan diikuti oleh penguatan kerja sama sebagai upaya memperkuat posisi kedua negara dalam rantai pasok mineral dan energi global.

Kata Kunci: *hubungan Indonesia-Cina; pemilu 2024; sektor pertambangan dan energi, transisi kekuasaan*

Abstrak

This study aims to analyze the sustainability of Indonesia-China relations in the mining and energy sector after the 2024 Election, focusing on the influence of leadership changes on foreign policy, while considering Indonesia's status as a developing country. Using the concept of change and continuity and the foreign policy of developing countries, the study indicate that the 2024 Election is unlikely to change Indonesia-China relations. China remains the largest investor in Coal-Fired Power Plants, supplying a total of 12,949 MW, while Chinese-supported downstream policies also help Indonesia enhance production capabilities, yielding higher-value semi-finished mineral products.. As a developing country, economic growth through investment will remain a priority for Indonesia. Therefore, the transition of power is likely to result in an intensification of existing patterns, leaving Indonesia-China relations unchanged.. This transition will instead be followed by strengthening cooperation as an effort to strengthen the position of the two countries in the global mineral and energy supply chain.

Keyword: 2024 election; Indonesia-China relations; mining and energy sector; regime transition

Introduction

The relations between Indonesia and China are characterised by a complex interplay of historical ideological conflicts, strategic cooperation, and current dynamics that present both opportunities and problems. Although Indonesia and China had a long history of interactions, formal political relations between Indonesia and China commenced in 1950, following an agreement between President Soekarno and Mao Zedong to establish diplomatic ties. Afterward, the diplomatic ties between the two nations experienced a period of instability marked by alternating periods of political collaboration and disagreement. Indonesia even severed its ties with China in 1967 due to the G30S/PKI incident, as the Indonesian army accused Beijing of supplying arms to the Communist Party of Indonesia (Zhou, 2014). Currently, both nations are embarking on a new phase of their relationship which is characterised by complexity. This includes not only political problems related to disagreements in the South China Sea, but also collaborative efforts in the economic domain.

Besides manufacture and infrastructure development, mining and energy sectors are those of main segments of collaboration between Indonesia and China, accounting for about 40% of the overall cooperation (Cahyanti, 2023). Coal and nickel, which are the primary commodities, have gained significant popularity and attracted substantial investment from Beijing. Starting in 2020, China committed to purchasing 200 million tons of Indonesian coal in 2021, with a total value of USD 1.46 billion. The China-Indonesia Coal Procurement Matchmaking Meeting marked the signing of this agreement (ESDM, 2020). Several prominent Indonesian coal exporters, such as Adaro, Bukit Asam, and Toba Bara, attended the event expected to promote the downstream initiatives and to provide space for investor and company interaction.

China has shown significant interest in investing in another mineral resource, particularly nickel. Indonesia currently holds the title of the world's largest producer of nickel ore, accounting for 48.48% of the total global production (Rosada et al., 2023). Hence, the Indonesian government regards nickel as a valuable commodity with significant potential for enhancing the nation's economy. China's substantial need for nickel, driven by its steel, electronics, and electric vehicle sectors, serves as a common ground that aligns the interests of both countries. China has used its technological advantages and human capital expertise to form strategic partnerships that benefit both

parties. Indonesia's implementation of downstream policies has encouraged investors to build manufacturing facilities within the country. This, in turn, has led to the development of significant infrastructure, including highways, airports, and ports, in the mining regions of Indonesia.

Nevertheless, the 2024 election raises concerns about the future of this partnership. The three candidate pairs presented different points of view concerning concepts and policy methods related to mining and energy. Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar stressed the importance of adopting an ecological strategy to maintain equilibrium in the use of natural resources. Prabowo Subianto and Gibran emphasised the possibility of utilising downstream natural resources to enhance Indonesia's value-added production and to promote fair development. Meanwhile, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD prioritised addressing the challenges in mining management, which they believed that those were still unresolved and influenced by corrupt practices. The diverse vision and goals of the candidates have undoubtedly ignited discussions about the future president's approach to handling relationships with foreign investors, particularly China, which has thus far played a significant role in Indonesia's mining and energy industries.

The relationship between Indonesia and China has consistently raised concerns and even served as a campaign tactic in previous presidential elections. In the 2019 election, rivals utilised the government's tight relationship with China to undermine President Joko Widodo (Jokowi), who was running as the incumbent. However, the upcoming 2024 election will focus on discussing how to sustain and develop bilateral relations between the countries. The role of China as a significant player in Indonesia's mining and energy industries can undoubtedly exert an impact and be affected by a shift in the leadership regime. The author argues that regardless of the next president, the relationship between the countries in the mining and energy sectors is unlikely to undergo significant changes. In the upcoming chapter, the author will provide a detailed and thorough examination of the analysis and explanation that underpin this argument.

Methodology

The Concept of Developing Countries' Foreign Policy

Currently, Indonesia is trying to move beyond its status as a developing country. Sri Mulyani, the Minister of State Finance, has stated that in order for Indonesia to become a high-income or developed country by 2045, Indonesia must strive for an annual economic growth rate of 6-7 percent (Britcham, 2023). Therefore, Indonesia's government has implemented numerous initiatives, such as improving the quality of human capital, speeding up infrastructure development, and striving to transition from a consumption-focused economic model to an investment-focused one (Mensesneg, 2019). It is believed that this strategy will increase domestic productivity, resulting in a spillover effect on other productive sectors.

In fact, several international institutions, including the World Bank, have refrained from using the terms "developing" and "developed" countries. The term "development" can be interpreted as a hierarchical system that may convey a sense of paternalism and patronage for certain countries (Mahler et al., 2024). Hans Rosling argues that classifying countries as developing countries can be confusing due to the varying outcomes they experience. Furthermore, developing countries often have better economies compared to developed countries (Rosling & Edutainer, 2013). The World Bank then employs a country classification system that categorises them based on income levels. This system includes four categories: low-income, lower-middle income, upper-middle income, and high-income. The classification is determined by calculating the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita for each country.

According to World Bank data from 2023, Indonesia has transitioned from a lower middle-income country to an upper middle-income country, with a GNI per capita of USD 4,580. This shift occurred after experiencing a decline in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time, Indonesia's economy is expected to experience 5.0% GDP growth in 2023, with an average growth rate of 4.9% from 2024 to 2026. Higher private consumption and a favourable trade exchange rate contribute to this growth. Nevertheless, several global economic phenomena pose a threat to Indonesia's economy, potentially impeding growth if left unaddressed. Furthermore, the White Paper "From LPEM for Indonesia: Economic and Community Agenda" asserts that Indonesia's inability to maintain 7% economic growth for 15 consecutive years

precludes its classification as a developed country (this term is required for the purpose of concept utilisation).

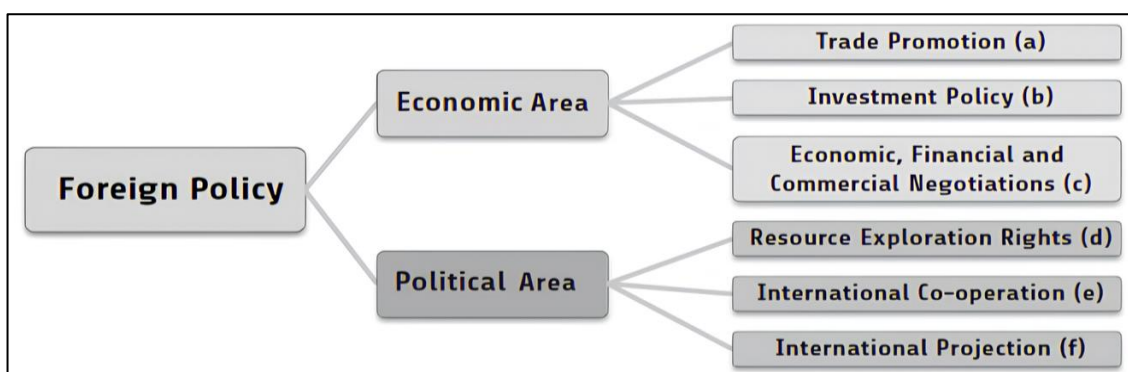
The status of a country, whether it is developed or developing, often affects its behaviour and strategy in international relations. It is known that developed and developing nations differ in their strategies in designing foreign policy objectives and plans. Developed nations typically seek to exert control and influence over other nations in the sectors of economics, politics, and culture. Meanwhile, developing nations are primarily concerned with safeguarding themselves against the power and influence that industrialised nations are seeking to achieve (Setiawati, 2023). This argument aligns with George Modelsky's definition of foreign policy, which refers to "...the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment" (Dawisha, 1983). Therefore, we understand that the country's status, whether it belongs to the category of industrialised nations with abundant resources or developing nations with limited resources, inherently influences the goals and objectives of foreign policy.

Casburi (1999) states that numerous emerging nations experience dilemmas when formulating their foreign policy. In the past, developing countries took on free market policies, economic liberalisation, and global competitiveness as options for addressing social and political issues. Following the finalisation of the reform initiatives, a set of new challenges arose, including flawed market policies, inadequate infrastructure, and a fragile economic transition, which raised doubt on the effectiveness of the strategy. Nevertheless, as stated by Pardesi (1976), economic growth will remain a prominent goal of developing countries' foreign policy. Domestic and foreign policies will primarily aim to improve the economic and social conditions of society. Hence, the foreign policy of developing countries is perceived as an expansion of their internal objectives, which are shaped by external circumstances.

Peripheral nations, which refer to developing countries, require robust governance in order to narrow the gap between them and industrialised countries (core countries). Gerschenkron (1962) argued that the more underdeveloped a country is, the greater the government's role in promoting development is. Wallerstein (1990) and Arrighi (1990) reinforce this claim by highlighting the necessity of governmental involvement in mobilising possibilities for growth to address the disparity between industrialised and

developing nations. Sophr & Silva (2017) argue that we can comprehend the impact of foreign policy on the development of developing countries through two frameworks: economic and political framework. Within an economic framework, there are three primary methods that can be implemented: a.) trade promotion; b.) investment policy; and c.) economic, financial, and commercial negotiations. In the political sphere, those strategies include: a.) resource exploration rights; b.) international cooperation; and c.) international projections.

Figure 1 - The role of foreign policy in the process of development in developing countries



Source: Spohr, & da Silva. (2017). Foreign Policy's Role in Promoting Development: the Brazilian and Turkish Cases. *Contexto Internacional*, 157-178.

In the economic area, trade promotion is often used to describe the extent to which a country's foreign policy has been successful. Trade promotion entails increasing national exports not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Investment policy primarily focuses on a country's ability to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), which includes ensuring the transfer of technology essential for development, and expanding the scope of overseas investment to encourage domestic businesses to invest in other countries. Meanwhile, economic, financial, and commercial negotiation strategies aim to create appropriate condition for development and to ensure fair and beneficial trade practices for all parties involved.

In the political sphere, the employed strategies may not have an immediate effect, but they can contribute to fostering a favourable environment that facilitates rapid progress. Resource exploration rights ensure a country's ability to utilise its resources, both in relation to ownership rights and negotiations regarding environmental impacts. International cooperation is a strategy to ensure that all parties involved get their

respective benefits. In this case, stronger countries can offer cooperation or sharing initiatives based on the principle of equality to other countries. International projection encompasses the indirect effects of the previously mentioned strategies. It includes several issues on the global agenda that can be approached from a developmental perspective, depending on the country's strategy.

Nonetheless, when implementing those strategies, it is critical to consider specific factors. Developing nations will encounter challenges in their endeavour to maintain a balance between independence and their need for development. Indonesia has also encountered this challenge, notably during the New Order Period. The government's USD 54 billion debt in 1998 significantly increased the country's dependence on international institutions. The subsequent government, Megawati, was also required to approve IMF intervention in Indonesia, which resulted in further repercussions, including the privatisation of state-owned enterprises (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Korany & Dessauki provided further insight into the diverse obstacles developing countries may encounter when forming their foreign policy. The challenges include the trade-off between aid and independence, which involves deciding whether to prioritise policy independence or to receive debt or aid to accelerate development; the issue of nations' objectives and resources, which entails the challenge of achieving national goals with limited resources; and the dilemma between security and development, which involves deciding whether to prioritise security or development (Setiawati, 2023). It is imperative to evaluate each of these risks in order to ensure that developing nations such as Indonesia derive the greatest benefits without compromising their national interests.

The Concept of Change and Continuity in Developing Countries' Foreign Policy

Foreign policy has drawn attention from both practitioners and scholars. Multiple concepts and theories have arisen in order to comprehend the nature and process of policy formation. These approaches aim to elucidate the reasons for actors' divergent behaviour in international relations, even when faced with similar circumstances, by taking into account a range of influential factors. Hence, employing a distinct approach can yield different findings throughout a study.

The terms "change" and "continuity" in foreign policy analysis refer to significant shifts and long-lasting patterns of policy, respectively. Change can range from basic shifts to comprehensive restructuring, while continuity refers to policies that remain mostly unchanged over time with only minor adjustments. Rosenau (1978) argues that we cannot study or assess change without previously considering constant or behavioural continuity. Rosenau draws a connection between change and continuity, suggesting that they are inseparable. Hence, this research analysis will also take into account the dynamics and fluctuations of Indonesia-China relations throughout the previous power transition. This analysis is crucial for assessing and overseeing the continuity of Indonesia-China relations in the mining and energy sectors following the departure of President Jokowi.

Traditional perspectives heavily influenced prior studies examining the concept of change and continuity, suggesting that the international system significantly influences developing countries' foreign policy. Small nations are commonly perceived as having restricted resources and political autonomy, requiring their dependence on larger nations in the global arena (Kakachia et al., 2018). This leaves small countries more vulnerable to changes in order to adapt to foreign circumstances.

To comprehend possible changes in foreign policy, one must employ a systematic approach to identify distinct limitations. Hagan (1989) classified four potential patterns of foreign policy change in his article, 'Domestic Political Regime Changes and Third World Voting Realignments in the United Nations'. These patterns are: a) intensification, which involves minimal or slight changes followed by the strengthening of foreign policy objectives, scope, and strategies; b) refinement, which entails minor adjustments in the scope, objectives, and strategy of foreign policy; c) reform, which involves moderate changes in the scope, objectives, and strategy of foreign policy; and d) restructuring, which encompasses significant changes in the scope, objectives, and strategy of foreign policy. During the period of transition, a country may experience any of these four potential outcomes. The term "scope" pertains to the extent of a country's activity, whether it is focused on regional or global matters. "Goals" denotes the intended outcomes or objectives of a policy, and "strategy" refers to the specific approach a country employs to achieve these diverse objectives.

Table 1 - Patterns of Foreign Policy Changes throughout the Transition Period

Patterns	Changes
Intensification	There is no change or only a slight change
Refinement	Minor change
Reform	Moderate change
Restructuring	Major change

Source: Hagan. (1989). *Domestic Political Regime Changes and Third World Voting Realignments in the United Nations. International Organization*, 505-541.

When examining the concept of change and continuity in Indonesia's foreign policy, it is crucial to take into account the fundamental principle of 'bebas aktif' that has guided the nation's approach to international relations. The concept is based on three primary pillars: the ideological foundation, the constitutional foundation, and the operational foundation. The ideological foundation encompasses the five Pancasila principles, which function as guiding principles of life within the nation and society. The constitutional foundation consists of several provisions of the 1945 Constitution that provide guidance for the development of foreign policy. Meanwhile, the operational basis is stated in various presidential decrees, such as the principles of peace and coexistence, non-intervention politics, and politics based on the UN Charter (Azmi, 2023). Unlike the relatively stable and unchanging ideological and constitutional foundations, the operational foundations experience evolution and shift in response to changes in regimes that prioritise diverse national interests. These three foundations are important for understanding how the change in leadership after the 2024 elections can influence Indonesia's foreign policy, especially in cooperative relations with China in the mining and energy sectors.

Research Method

This is a qualitative research, which aims to develop knowledge that is found on constructive understanding. It is accomplished by using participatory methods, such as political issues, orientation, collaboration, or change, or by deriving meaning from personal experience, social values, and historical values. Qualitative researchers acquire

knowledge by analysing and engaging with various perspectives and facts related to the research topic (Fiantika & Wasil, 2022). Specifically, this methodology is well-suited for the examination of complex phenomena, such as the relationship between China and Indonesia, with a focus on political contexts and social values. An examination of the social and political factors may provide us with a better understanding of the potential impact they could have on the relationship between the countries.

We utilise an explanatory research method to explore the causal relationship between two or more variables. The objective is to assess the principles or predictions of a theory and apply them to new situations or subjects while simultaneously verifying or refuting an explanation or forecast (Hamdi & Ismaryati, 2021). We will examine the impact of the regime transition on Indonesia-China relations in the mining and energy sectors while also taking into account Indonesia's status as a developing nation. We employ a document-based research method for data collection, which involves gathering relevant data from various sources such as books, journals, theses, dissertations, reports, websites, and other documented sources. It will be conducted in two steps: data collection and data verification, taking into account the institution, publisher, author, year, etc. to ensure the credibility of all the sources used.

Transition of Regime and Indonesia-China Relations through Decades

Regime transition is closely related to alterations in a nation's foreign policy. In countries characterised by contrasting domestic political ideologies, such as the US, these alterations tend to be more evident. The two primary parties, Republicans and Democrats, possess distinct beliefs that are different from one another. Republicans, commonly associated with right-wing ideologies, tend to favour nationalist policies, promote national interests, advocate economic independence, and prioritise a unilateral approach in international relations. On the other hand, Democrats, who are often associated with the left, place a high value on an internationalist strategy. This includes prioritising collaboration with other nations, providing global aid, and actively participating in global forums (Smeltz et al., 2020). Hence, it is no surprise that the change of authority from a republican to a democratic regime, or vice versa, would profoundly influence strategy and implementation of US politics and foreign policy. Then, what about Indonesia? To fully comprehend this issue, it is essential to take into

account internal dynamics, such as political competition and the influence of domestic parties in policy formulation.

In contrast to the US, which has a well-defined umbrella party system characterised by distinct ideological differences, Indonesian political parties often face an identity crisis. Political parties lack a clear and fixed ideology that serve as a foundation for their beliefs and actions. In their pursuit of maximising votes in the election, they employ catch-all party tactics without hesitation and are willing to alter their beliefs (Mahendra, 2021). Interest-driven political contestation presents challenges in understanding the impact of the regime transition in Indonesia's foreign policy. Nevertheless, we can analyse alterations from previous administrations in order to understand the consistent pattern of transformation.

Domestic dynamics, such as commitment to developing national economies, maintaining political stability, and debates on national ideology, have significantly shaped Indonesia's foreign policy since the country gained its independence. As a result, changing leadership regimes with contrasting values can have a significant impact on the trajectory of policies and political strategies implemented. One of the most significant was the transition of power from President Soekarno to President Soeharto. In the era of President Soekarno, Indonesia's foreign policy prioritised security and state sovereignty, emphasising the idea of non-alliance, and gained recognition for its competitive policies on the global stage. The notion of a self-reliant economy, rooted in socialist values, promotes government pursuit of independence and discourages reliance on external entities. During this era, Indonesia's adherence to socialist principles brought it into a close relationship with China. When Soekarno launched the “Ganyang Malaysia” campaign, China became one of few countries to support Indonesia (Dahana, 2002). Although this notion has been contested, the establishment of the Jakarta-Beijing Axis served as strong evidence of the positive relationship between the two nations, which at that time it sparked a major disruption in Indonesia's relations with Western countries.

Soeharto's government implemented a more open policy to foster international cooperation and to facilitate global market access. Suharto employed a pseudo-non-alliance approach by cultivating close ties with Western nations—which was slightly the opposite of Soekarno's policy—to promote economic development and bolster his

regime's authority. Under Soeharto's regime, the relationship between Indonesia and China underwent a major change that was marked by the termination of diplomatic ties between both nations. The government's concerns over Beijing's influence in the 30 September movement, widely known as the G30S/PKI event, led to the closing of the PRC embassy in Jakarta. A week after the incident, the Indonesian embassy in Beijing also closed. During that time, Romanian embassy served as China's representative in Indonesia, while Cambodia represented Indonesia in China (Sinaga, 2013).

Following the Reformation Era, there was a minor improvement in the relations between Indonesia and China. Habibie's reign followed Suharto's policies by securing IMF assistance, maintaining positive relations with the Western world, and simultaneously attempting to boost bilateral trade with China (Rusydati, 2014). Habibie also put an effort into resolving the problem of the Chinese minority by listing the initial code (K-1) in the Chinese descent identity card. The Habibie regime also acknowledged Confucianism and the Chinese language (Mandarin) and permitted their teaching in schools. However, the effectiveness of those efforts appears to be questionable (Zuhri, 2015).

Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarno Putri pursued a more progressive approach towards Beijing. China was the first destination of Abdurrahman Wahid's international visits upon his takeover of office in October 1999. In his tenure, Indonesia-China relations experienced a significant improvement, which was the result of various factors. First, Wahid wanted to work closer with China because he perceived that the West had betrayed Indonesia, particularly in the Timor-Leste crisis. Second, there was a need to accelerate economic recovery by strengthening domestic and international trust towards the government. Lastly, Wahid government faced the crucial issue of preserving its territorial integrity. Consequently, Indonesia succeeded in gaining Beijing's support. Hu Jintao, China's Vice President, declared that China would consistently provide Indonesia with assistance in safeguarding its national integrity and sovereignty, particularly in the face of major powers' interference (Sukma, 2009). Megawati Soekarno Putri continued Wahid's strategy to improve these relationships. In March 2002, President Megawati made China her initial stop during the Asian tour. Following that, the two nations reached an agreement to enhance bilateral cooperation in all sectors, with a particular emphasis on energy and agriculture (BBC, 2002).

The maneuver to intensify the relationship with China remained strong in the era of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY). In 2004, China already became Indonesia's fifth-largest commercial partner. In the same year, Indonesia's exports to China achieved a remarkable development of 232% in comparison to 2003, totalling 12.6 billion US dollars. Additionally, the two nations have rapidly expanded their collaboration to include sectors beyond commerce, such as energy, security, and defence (Sukma, 2009). In 2005, President SBY and Hu Jintao established a strategic partnership that significantly boosted the trade value of the two countries, reaching USD 30.35 billion. Indeed, the favourable trends that prevailed during that period fostered an atmosphere of optimism. Projections suggested the magnitude of trade between Indonesia and China would reach USD 50 billion in 2014 (BBC, 2010).

It is safe to say that the highest point in Indonesia-China relations occurred during the tenure of Joko Widodo (Jokowi). The two countries committed to a comprehensive strategic collaboration through the signing of several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) covering areas such as economic cooperation, industrial development, fast trains, taxation, and outer space (Putri & Maarif, 2020). In addition, President Jokowi's vision of establishing Indonesia as a prominent and powerful maritime nation aligns well with China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is aimed to expand China's influence globally. Therefore, Indonesia took on a significant role in the implementation of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and joined the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road route. This involvement encompasses not only the construction of physical infrastructure but also the facilitation of policy communication, the removal of trade barriers, and the reduction of trade and investment expenses.

In the mining and energy sectors, the downstream policy implemented by the Jokowi government starting in 2014 received a good response from Beijing. As a result, China has made substantial investments in both the mining industry and the construction of smelters in Indonesia. Indonesia utilises significant funding from Beijing to foster the growth of its domestic sector and to produce high-value goods (Harding & Ober, 2024). Undoubtedly, this relationship has contributed significantly to Indonesia's emergence as an important player in the global market network. Moreover, alongside the ongoing efforts to shift towards renewable energy, nickel, a major

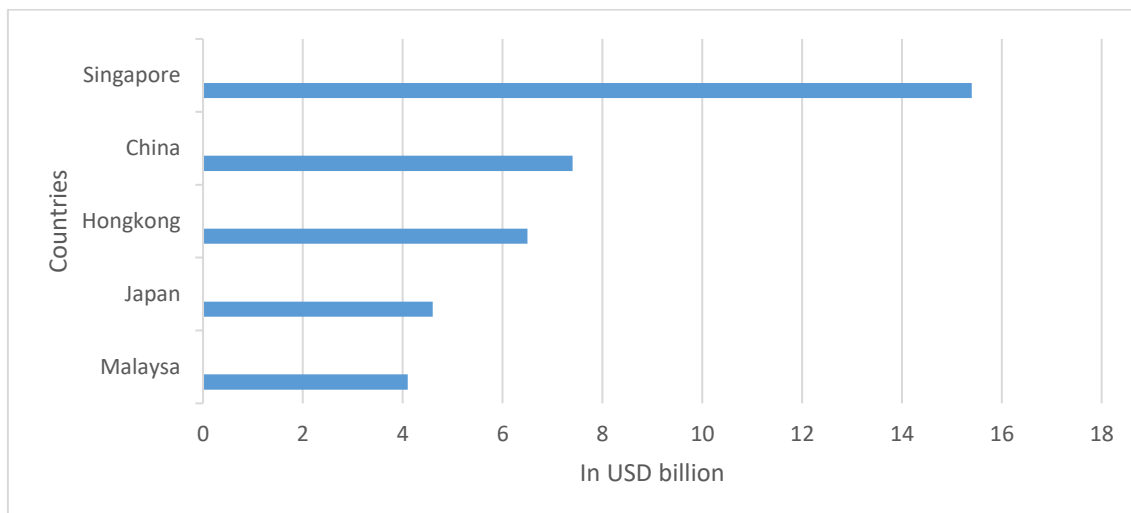
commodity in the Indonesian mining industry, has emerged as a highly desirable component for the production of electric vehicle (EV) batteries.

Coal and Nickel as Prominent Commodities for Indonesia-China Mining and Energy Sector Cooperation

According to the 2023 data, China remains the second-largest investor in Indonesia, with a total investment of USD 7.4 billion. Followed in sequence by Hong Kong (USD 6.5 billion), Japan (USD 4.6 billion), and Malaysia (USD 4.1 billion) in third, fourth, and fifth place (Annur, 2024). Despite Singapore being the top investor, with a total investment of USD 15.4 billion, China's investment in Indonesia has significantly increased in recent years. The cooperation between Indonesia and China started in 2005, when President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and President Hu Jintao agreed on a declaration of a 'strategic partnership'. This partnership covered a wide range of sectors, including economic and technological assistance, increasing the annual trade volume, infrastructure development, maritime and agricultural cooperation, as well as the exploitation of energy and natural resources (Jize, 2005).

In 2013, the establishment of a 'comprehensive strategic partnership' further enhanced the countries' relations. This cooperation specifically targeted the manufacturing, agricultural, investment, finance, and infrastructure development sectors (Xinhua, 2013). Following that, Indonesia and China increased the frequency of collaboration initiatives, including both intergovernmental and business-government partnerships. The fact that Indonesia was the first nation in Southeast Asia to host a diplomatic visit from President Xi Jinping exemplifies the close relationship and reinforcement of Indonesia-China relations.

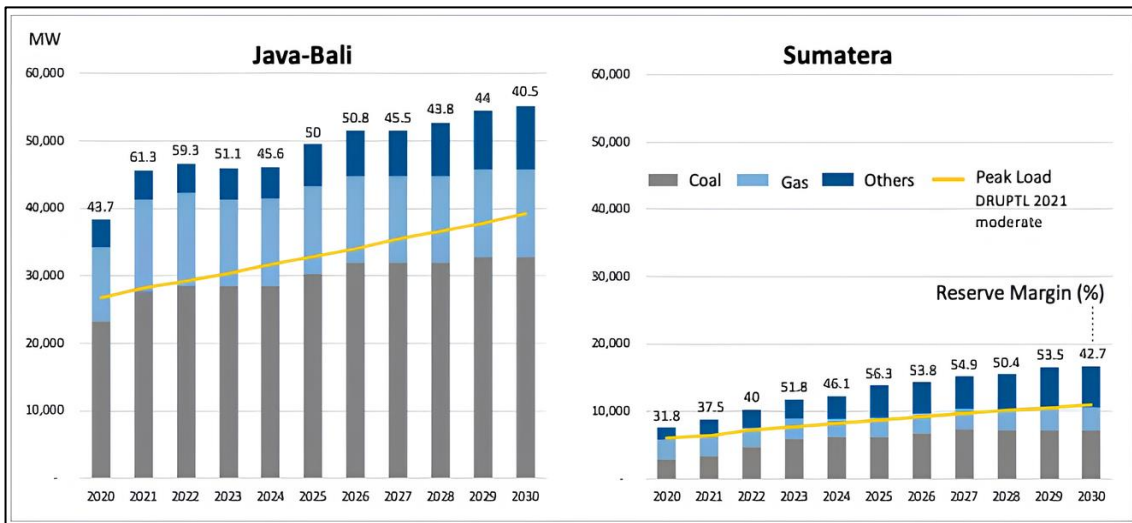
Figure 2 – The five largest investor countries in Indonesia



Source: <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2024/01/29/bukan-china-ini-negara-investor-terbesar-di-indonesia-pada-2023>

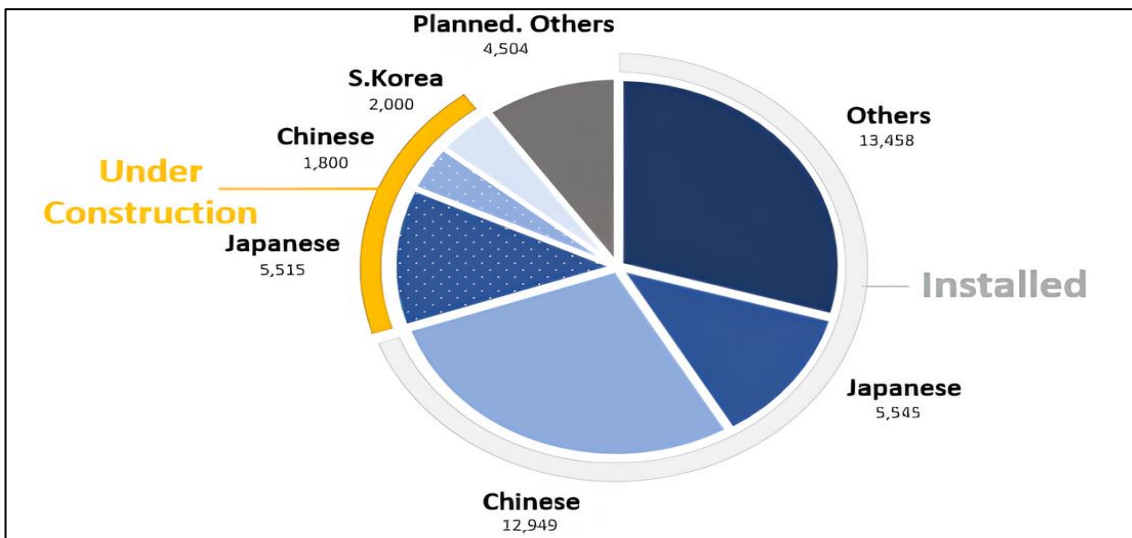
Indonesia's mining and energy industries are highly valued by China. Despite being relatively new compared to Japan and Korea, China has effectively established itself as a significant contributor to the advancement of Indonesia's energy infrastructure. This is strongly linked to the rise in foreign investment in BRI, which coincides with a boom in Indonesian energy infrastructure development, particularly in the coal and nickel sectors. Indonesia uses coal as its primary commodity for energy generation and exports it, resulting in an annual economic growth rate of 5%. This potential presents a compelling opportunity for Chinese investors. Multiple private firms, including Chinese enterprises, are participating in Indonesia's energy development through a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with PLN. Their involvement encompasses power generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity as independent producers (Gu, 2024). China's engineering, procurement, construction, and financial (EPC+Finance) scheme has enabled investors to expand their investment opportunities. As a result, numerous Chinese companies have acquired project ownership through equity investments or joint ventures (Liu et al., 2021).

Figure 3 – PLN Energy Sources until 2030



Source: Hamdi & Adhiguna. (2021). *Indonesia Wants to Go Greener, but PLN Is Stuck With Excess Capacity From Coal-Fired Power Plants.* Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

Figure 4 – The majority of Indonesia's CFPP projects are financed by China and Japan



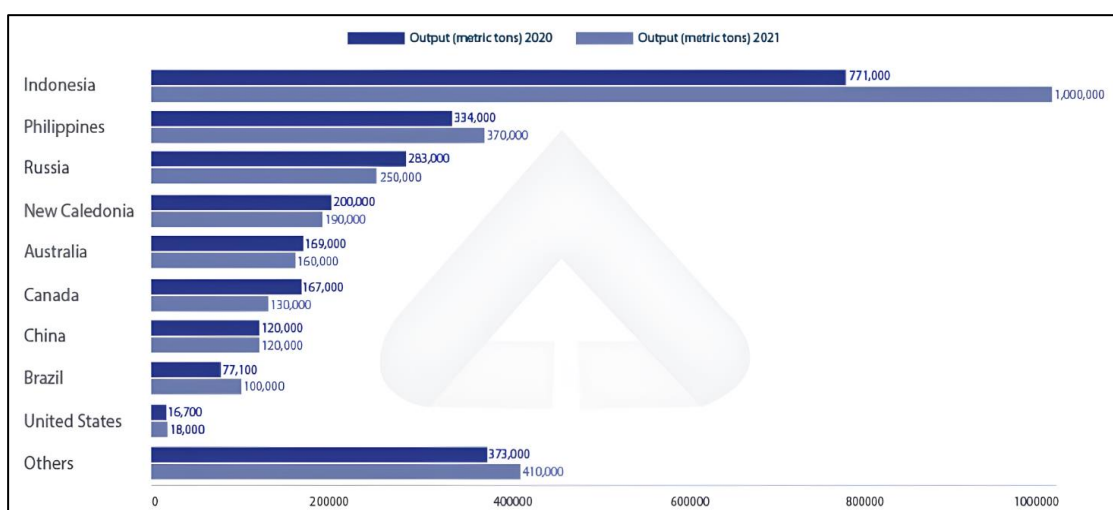
Source: Hamdi & Adhiguna. (2021). *Indonesia Wants to Go Greener, but PLN Is Stuck With Excess Capacity From Coal-Fired Power Plants.* Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

The provided data indicates that coal remains the primary source of electricity in Indonesia, particularly on the islands of Java and Bali. Despite facing criticism from multiple parties, particularly environmentalists advocating for the diversification of renewable energy sources, coal is projected to remain the primary source of electrical energy in Indonesia until 2030. Furthermore, it is anticipated that coal consumption will

increase, albeit not significantly. The following data indicates that China is the primary investor in Indonesia's Coal-Fired Power Plants (CFPP), with a total capacity of 12,949 MW. Furthermore, construction of an additional 1,800 MW is currently underway. Given the significance of coal energy supplies for Indonesia's electricity requirements, it can be concluded that China currently holds considerable influence as an external actor in Indonesia's energy sector.

Apart from coal, nickel is also an important commodity for China. China enthusiastically embrace President Jokowi's downstream policy, which prohibits the export of raw materials. As a result, China provide substantial financial resources to construct smelters at many nickel mining sites. Indonesia has received significant investment, amounting to billions of dollars, which has facilitated the growth of its domestic industry and enhanced its ability to turn raw nickel ore into valuable nickel products (Harding & Ober, 2024). Accordingly, Indonesia emerged as the world's leading nickel producer, with production volumes of 771,000 metric tons in 2020 and 1,000,000 metric tons in 2021. Indonesia surpassed Australia, the second-greatest nickel deposit in the world that only produced 169,000 metric tons in 2020 and 160,000 metric tons in 2021, securing fifth place.

Figure 5 – World's Largest Nickel Producing Countries (2020 & 2021)

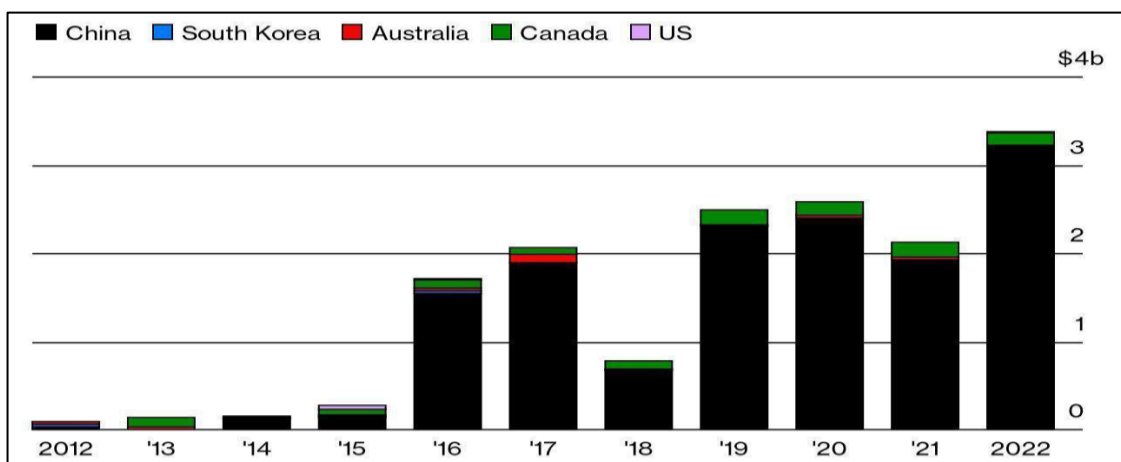


Source: <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/unleashing-nickels-potential-indonesias-journey-to-global-prominence/>

Chinese investment has had a significant impact in two of Indonesia's primary nickel-producing regions, notably Sulawesi and Halmahera. Since 2014, Chinese funding has begun to flow into these areas, coinciding with the implementation of the downstream policy outlined in Peraturan Pemerintah (PP) No. 23 Tahun 2010 (Ika, 2017). The Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP) in Sulawesi is one of the biggest Chinese investments in the nickel sector. Initiated in 2013, the project has received major funding from the Chinese Development Bank, the Industrial and Commercial Bank, and China's major steel firm, Tsingshan (Prakash, 2024).

On Halmahera Island, China plans to construct an electric vehicle battery factory through one of its companies, Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Ltd. (CATL), which is currently recognized as the largest electric vehicle battery company worldwide. The completion of this project, with an investment value of USD 5.6 billion, has been scheduled for 2026. It is anticipated to significantly contribute to Indonesia's downstream nickel initiatives (Muliawati, 2023). Therefore, despite facing criticism for its environmental impacts, work safety concerns, and issues with foreign workers, China's contribution to Indonesia's mining sector undeniably plays a crucial role in diversifying the country's mining commodities. The flow of investment capital is critical for Indonesia, particularly in its attempts to engage in nickel downstream process, which can bolster the domestic sector and facilitate access to the already popular global electric car market.

Figure 6 – Chinese Investment in the Nickel Sector in Sulawesi and Halmahera (2012-2022)



Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-12-15/chinese-companies-are-flocking-to-indonesia-for-its-nickel>

Indonesia's downstream industry initiatives appear to attract Chinese investors. The need for Indonesia's two mining commodities, coal and nickel, has encouraged large Chinese companies to build factories within the country. In contrast to the US and the European Union, which oppose the downstream program, China has welcomed this policy with enthusiasm. Indonesia has expanded its range of raw commodities by collaborating with China, resulting in the production of derivative products such as briquettes, coke, semi-coke, upgraded coal, ferronickel, nickel pig iron, and nickel matte, which charge higher prices in the market (ESDM, 2023) (Perdana & Theodora, 2024). This fact indicates that China's contribution to the development of the mining industry and the construction of Indonesia's energy infrastructure is irreplaceable.

The establishment of billion-dollar industrial parks and technology transfer initiatives has fostered a mutually beneficial and interdependent connection between the nations, despite the presence of both positive and negative consequences. China's desire for expansion through the BRI aligns with Indonesia's desire to establish itself as an important player in the global mineral production chain. As a result, it will be intriguing to see how the change in Indonesian leadership affects this collaboration. Will the election of a new leader lead to the implementation of a new policy approach that will either enhance or undermine Indonesia and China's cooperation?

How Will The Change of Leadership After The 2024 Election Affect The Indonesia-China Relationship in The Mining and Energy Sectors?

By examining the pattern and trajectory of Indonesia's foreign policy shift, it becomes evident that the relationship between Indonesia and China has advanced throughout the years. Despite the historical conflicts and ongoing disagreements in the South China Sea, collaboration in the areas of economics, infrastructure development, mining, and energy steadily grows each year. The long history of relations between Indonesia and China can also be attributed to the complex interconnection across multiple sectors. The benefits they receive will underpin rational policies for enhancing cooperation in strategic sectors.

Regarding the 2024 election, the author argues that whoever succeeds Jokowi's government will most likely not change Indonesia-China relations in the mining and

energy sectors. Indeed, it is fair to say that every presidential contender proposes distinct concepts and plans. Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar emphasised the importance of an ecological approach in mining and energy policies (Ayu & Amrullah, 2023). Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming introduced the idea of sustainability, which still prioritised downstream policies (Revo, 2024). Meanwhile, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD consistently highlighted the problem of mining governance, claiming that mafia influence continued to cause harm to the community (Jelita, 2024). The potential impact of each candidate's specific policy in Indonesia-China relations is considerable. In this case, the vision and mission of policies that prioritise an ecological approach and justice could make the government more considered in assessing its relations with China. Meanwhile, policies that prioritise downstreaming will promote stronger relations between the two countries. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that the alignment of Indonesia's energy and mining strategies with China's investment plan has established Beijing as a highly favourable long-term partner. We expect the future government to prioritise the continuation of collaboration, recognizing its potential to yield significant advantages for both parties.

But then, what are the government's considerations on the negative effects of Chinese investment, which is also a matter of popular concern? In spite of the advantages, China's investment in the energy and mining sectors also entails adverse consequences. Coal-fired power facilities have been associated with environmental and health issues. PT Kaltim Prima Coal (KPC), the second-largest coal factory in Indonesia, has been implicated in causing environmental harm by polluting rivers through the release of untreated waste. Companies clearing land have caused forced population displacements and hindered the indigenous ability to engage in their traditional hunting and cultural customs. The Paiton Power Plant in East Java, known as the largest coal-fired PLTU complex in Southeast Asia, is believed to be emitting toxic and thermal stresses that pose a hazard to the local ecosystem (Pramono et al., 2021).

The environmental and social consequences of nickel mining are equally concerning. Industrial waste in North Konawe, a district in Sulawesi, has led to marine pollution and a decline in local fishing productivity. Research by Koalisi Rakyat untuk Keadilan Perikanan (KIARA) on Wawonii Island in Sulawesi revealed that mining activities had caused harmful impacts to the community's primary drinking water

source, particularly in the Southeast Wawonii and South Wawonii regions. In East Halmahera Islands, North Maluku, the nickel industry has contaminated fields, rice fields, fishponds, and even residents' houses in multiple towns. Similar conditions also appear in South Halmahera, where mining sites have had detrimental effects on people's land and plantation crops. It has created air pollution and contamination of sea species, which serve as a vital food supply for the community (Djamhari, et al., 2024). On top of that, the nickel mining concessions in these areas have caused an approximate amount of 3,331 hectares of deforestation, resulting in the release of 2.04 metric tons of greenhouse gases once trapped in the forest (Baskaran, 2024).

China's investments in Indonesia are considered highly risky to the environment due to their rapid pace and low cost. The Indonesian government's desire to expand the mining sector, which is in tune with China's ambition to dominate the global battery market, has resulted in the construction of inconsiderate facilities at the expense of environmental protection regulations. Dinata et al. (2020) conducted a study that compared the health, safety, and environment (HSE) practices of PT Vale (from Brazil), VDNI, and IMIP (both from China). They found that PT Vale had the best procedures among others, while VDNI and IMIP still did not meet the standards and needed improvement. Consequently, it is imperative to implement cooperation in phases and evaluate the implementation of a range of policies and laws to prevent the adverse effects of investment on society and the environment.

The range of adverse effects should serve as the foundation for the next administration to evaluate the risks of engaging in economic partnership with China. Nevertheless, we believe that the next government will still not prioritise environmental and social issues when it comes to defining relations with China, particularly in regard to cooperation in the mining and energy sectors. As a developing country, economic growth through investment policies still becomes Indonesian government's main priority. This aligns with the argument by Dessauki and Korany that developing nations possess a restricted range of foreign policy choices. The dilemma between security (traditional and non-traditional) and development requires developing countries like Indonesia to consider foreign policy based on maximised profits. In this case, developing countries are going to keep prioritising economic growth as their primary concern (Pardesi, 1976). Various policy options, including trade promotion,

international cooperation, economic negotiations, and investment policies, will be implemented to encourage domestic development.

Consequently, the core idea of Indonesia's foreign policy, which is 'bebas dan aktif', does not necessarily mean that the elected leaders can direct policy according to their wishes. The abundance of benefits derived from collaboration with China will encourage the newly elected government to persist in, or even enhance, its initiatives to collaborate. Furthermore, when considering systemic sources and external patterns at the international level, maintaining relations with China is undoubtedly the most rational policy. The expansion of China's BRI has established China as a significant actor in regions like Africa, Central Asia, and the Pacific. China's growing influence in those areas is evidence of their emergence as a reliable ally, despite perceptions of hegemony and neocolonialism. These conditions in the international system will greatly influence Indonesia's foreign policy as a developing country. In comparison to developed countries, their constrained resources and lack of political autonomy will push developing countries to actively seek alliances with major nations in order to secure advantages in the global sphere (Kakachia et al., 2018).

The operational foundation, as one of the three primary pillars of Indonesia's foreign policy, will indeed allow changes to take place due to the leadership transition. The operational foundation can evolve and adapt in response to changes in regimes that advocate for varying national interests (Azmi, 2023). However, the change in leadership following the 2024 election will not necessarily result in changes to Indonesia-China relations. The transition of power from President Jokowi to the next government will likely only form a pattern of intensification. It means that it will not result in any significant changes in Indonesia-China foreign policy concerning the mining and energy sectors. Following this step could involve strengthening goals, defining scope, and developing policy strategies to address several issues, including those related to environmental and social impacts.

Mining and energy cooperation will be one of the domains that receive special attention in the continuation of Indonesia-China relations. Indonesia has been able to enhance its domestic production capacity and capabilities, thanks to significant investments and the establishment of smelters by China. Therefore, this benefit will

serve as a crucial catalyst for the upcoming Indonesian administration to continue maintaining beneficial relations with China.

Conclusion

The transition of power after Indonesia's 2024 election is likely to reinforce, rather than to alter, Indonesia-China relations in the mining and energy sectors. This continuity stems from Indonesia's status as a developing country, which significantly influences its policy priorities. As a developing nation, Indonesia remains intensely focused on economic growth through strategic investments, aligning well with China's interests and capabilities. The substantial benefits Indonesia has gained through collaboration with China, including enhanced domestic production capabilities and a stronger position in global markets, are too valuable to be disrupted, regardless of its political transitions. Consequently, new leadership is expected to intensify these relations, emphasising cooperation to strengthen both countries' positions in global mineral and energy supply chains. The compelling economic advantages and developmental priorities inherent to Indonesia's current status will ensure that Indonesia-China relations continue on a growth trajectory, highlighting the strategic importance of this partnership for Indonesia's foreign and economic policy, irrespective of who holds the presidency. Future research could explore the long-term environmental and social impacts of this intensified cooperation, assess the potential for diversifying Indonesia's international partnerships in these sectors, and examine how this relationship might evolve in response to global dynamics and Indonesia's domestic political flux.

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