



## The Reorientation of Indonesia's Maritime Fulcrum in Addressing Shifting Priorities and Strategic Challenges

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### Article Info:

### Abstract

#### Keywords:

global maritime fulcrum, defense, indonesia, maritime, security

#### Article History:

Received : 27-04-2024

Revised : 25-10-2024

Accepted : 30-12-2024

#### Article DOI :

10.55960/jlri.v12i4.967

**Purpose:** The aim of this article is to review the literature related to Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) policy, which was initiated by President Joko Widodo at the beginning of his administration in 2014. This study seeks to identify the challenges that arose during the transition and implementation of the GMF policy, particularly in the period from 2014 to 2019.

**Study Design/Methodology/Approach:** This article employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive-analytical approach. Literature sources such as journal articles, opinion pieces, books, and documents from relevant ministries and agencies are utilized to analyze the trends in the development of PMD policy during the second half of President Joko Widodo's administration.

**Findings:** The findings indicate that most recent literature suggests a shift in priorities during President Joko Widodo's second term (2014-2019) concerning the GMF policy. This shift is evident from the decreasing focus on GMF in various speeches and governmental policies, alongside a greater emphasis on land-based infrastructure and economic development rather than maritime. The article categorizes the factors contributing to this shift into two major groups: external challenges and internal challenges. The primary external challenge currently faced by Indonesia is the increasing aggressiveness of China in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, the internal challenges include the limitations of military budgets, the COVID-19 pandemic, the allure of China's economic incentives, and a lack of coordination among related ministries and agencies.

**Originality/Value:** The study underscores the need on GMF issues should focus more on the prioritization of GMF programs. Additionally, relevant ministries and agencies need to establish realistic priorities within the GMF program, considering current budgetary constraints and the socio-political and economic landscape, to effectively achieve the GMF vision.

**How to cite :** Munabari, F. & Sellita. (2024). The Reorientation of Indonesia's Maritime Fulcrum in Addressing Shifting Priorities and Strategic Challenges. *Jurnal LemhannasRI*, 12(4), 551-556. <https://doi.org/10.55960/jlri.v12i4.967>.



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Published by Lemhannas Press.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2014, President Joko Widodo, during his victory speech aboard a traditional pinisi boat, announced his vision to position Indonesia as a leading maritime nation, referred to as the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) in English academic literature. Domestically, this initiative requires significant investment in infrastructure projects aimed at enhancing maritime connectivity, such as the construction of ports and roads, boosting the maritime economy through fisheries and aquaculture, developing maritime tourism, and strengthening maritime defense posture. In its initial phase, the GMF focuses on strategic areas including the Indian Ocean.

The GMF was officially introduced at the ninth East Asia Summit on November 13, 2014. Acknowledging the shifting power dynamics and economic developments in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as the necessity for this area to remain peaceful and secure for global trade, the GMF encourages Indonesia to assert itself as the 'Global Maritime Fulcrum' (Witular 2014). This doctrine is supported by five core pillars: maritime culture, management of marine resources, maritime connectivity and infrastructure development, maritime diplomacy, and maritime defense. These conceptual pillars have been integrated into the National Medium-Term Development Plan 2015–2019 and the 'Strategic Initiative' document issued by the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) (Bappenas 2014).

The primary goal of the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) is to strengthen Indonesia's maritime identity. Reinforcing the sustainable concept of 'Wawasan Nusantara,' President Joko Widodo regards the waters surrounding Indonesia as a source of strength and economic advantage, rather than a barrier. Aiming to boost economic growth, the GMF seeks to enhance maritime infrastructure and connectivity by developing 'sea lanes,' constructing seaports, improving logistics networks, and promoting maritime industries such as tourism, fisheries, and shipping. Additionally, the GMF plans to effectively manage and utilize marine resources to ensure the country's food sovereignty (Pattiradjawane and Soebagjo 2015).

This new maritime doctrine reshapes Indonesia's strategic interests, emphasizing its role as the largest archipelagic country situated at a strategic global crossroads. In his five-year policy plan, President Joko Widodo intends to realign Indonesia's foreign policy to strengthen the country's position in global affairs, focusing on an archipelago-centric approach in five key areas: 1) utilizing maritime diplomacy to address boundary disputes; 2) maintaining territorial integrity, sovereignty, security, and social welfare on outlying islands; 3) protecting national resources and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); 4) enhancing defense diplomacy; and 5) reducing maritime tensions among major powers to encourage the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes in the region (Agastia and Perwita 2017).

To implement this maritime vision, Indonesia is required to have a robust capacity to safeguard national sovereignty, ensure maritime security, and enhance regional stability. However, Southeast Asia faces challenges such as illegal fishing, smuggling, and maritime piracy. Territorial disputes in the East China Sea and South China Sea have heightened tensions and intensified great power rivalries. Meanwhile, driven by social media and conflicts in the Middle East, radicalism and terrorism remain top domestic security priorities for Indonesia (Aufiya 2017; Hudaya and Putra 2017).

During President Joko Widodo's first term, several efforts were made to build maritime infrastructure, including the construction of ports in strategic areas to support logistics and maritime connectivity. This is further strengthened by the 'sea toll' policy to

ensure equitable distribution of goods and reduce price disparities between western and eastern Indonesia by operating regular shipping routes connecting various islands. Additionally, enhancing the capabilities of the Indonesian Navy to secure maritime safety is also a priority for President Joko Widodo to address threats such as piracy and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Besides infrastructure and maritime security, maritime diplomacy is also high on the government's agenda, with a focus on strengthening international maritime cooperation, including diplomacy in the ASEAN region and partnerships with countries that have maritime interests.

Unfortunately, the concept of the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) has faced various complex challenges, leading to a strong indication of a shift in priorities from a focus on maritime development and strengthening to land-based infrastructure and economic development during President Joko Widodo's second term (Tiola 2019). As President Widodo began his second term in 2019, it became increasingly clear that his administration was shifting away from prioritizing the GMF. This change is reflected in the decreased frequency of references to the concept, which has now been overshadowed by a focus on development narratives. Notably, upon his inauguration for a second term, the GMF was conspicuously absent from the agenda. In his inaugural speech, there was not a single mention of the words 'maritime' or 'foreign policy' (Agastia 2021).

In contrast, President Joko Widodo emphasized his commitment to prioritizing human resource development, infrastructure enhancement, regulatory and bureaucratic reforms, and broader economic transformation (Laksmana 2019). Unlike his first inaugural speech in 2014, which highlighted his ambitions to position Indonesia as a maritime power, this address prioritized sustainable development and economic growth. The absence of maritime references indicates that the once-prominent influence of the GMF has significantly diminished. By the end of President Jokowi's first term, many commitments outlined in the GMF, including the renewal of Indonesia's maritime identity, a shift towards ocean-focused initiatives, and a more maritime-oriented foreign policy, were largely unfulfilled. Entering his second term, President Jokowi displayed little enthusiasm for advancing the GMF, choosing instead to focus on the development of land infrastructure and efforts to attract foreign investment (Agastia 2021).

The programs of the Global Maritime Fulcrum (PMD) are detailed in the Indonesian Ocean Policy (KLI) by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Investments. Although the KLI provides more specifics about the PMD programs and outlines policy objectives, this document is still considered to lack essential elements typically found in coordinating policy documents. First, the implementation of the programs described in the KLI remains the responsibility of individual ministries (Laksmana 2017). Furthermore, President Jokowi's participation in the development of the KLI has been limited, as he has focused more on managing domestic development projects than guiding the creation of the KLI (Laksmana 2019). This limited involvement may indicate a disinterest in maritime policy or a heavy reliance on the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investments, Luhut Pandjaitan, in policy development (Syailendra 2016).

President Jokowi's actions, which appear to deviate from further development and activation of the PMD, suggest that he is not as fully engaged with the concept as previously anticipated. Instead, President Joko Widodo seems to rely on foreign policy specialists for pre-formulated plans, reflecting a tendency to delegate such issues. However, this approach contrasts with President Jokowi's usual hands-on style, which is evident in his business and political efforts where he actively participates in strategy and implementation (Agastia 2021).

Despite the strategic ambition embedded in the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) and its formal integration into Indonesia's national development planning, there remains a critical gap in the literature concerning the declining salience of this vision during the administration's second term. Previous studies have largely focused on the conceptual foundations of the GMF (e.g., Agastia & Perwita, 2017), its geopolitical relevance (e.g., Pratiwi et al., 2021; Chubb, 2021), or the initial infrastructure and diplomatic efforts launched in its early phase (e.g., Laksmana, 2017; Gindarsah & Priamarizki, 2015). However, few have systematically examined how and why the GMF lost prominence in the government's policy agenda post-2019. Specifically, limited attention has been paid to the interaction between internal constraints—such as defence budget limitations, pandemic-induced fiscal reallocation, and bureaucratic fragmentation—and external pressures, including China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea.

To address this gap, this study aims to examine the recent literature concerning the shift in priorities of the Indonesian government under the leadership of President Joko Widodo during his second term. This research distinguishes itself from prior studies by offering a more integrated and critical synthesis of both internal and external challenges that have contributed to the reorientation of Indonesia's maritime strategy away from the GMF framework. Unlike earlier analyses that mainly focus on maritime potentials or external geopolitical factors in isolation, this article critically explores how fragmented inter-agency coordination, constrained strategic budgeting, and China's maritime posturing have collectively influenced the government's reduced attention to maritime security. This shift is evident in the diminished frequency of references to the GMF in official speeches and policy documents, and the growing emphasis on land-based infrastructure and broader economic transformation (Agastia, 2021; Laksmana, 2019; Tiola, 2019). By addressing these questions, the study contributes to a clearer understanding of the evolving dynamics of Indonesia's maritime posture and offers recommendations for recalibrating the GMF's role in future national strategy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The Trend of Abandoning President Jokowi's Maritime Focus Policy in His Second Term**

Since taking office in 2014, Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has championed the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) as a cornerstone of his administration's policy, aiming to position Indonesia as a pivotal maritime power between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The GMF was introduced as a comprehensive strategy encompassing maritime culture, resources, infrastructure, diplomacy, and defense, with the goal of enhancing Indonesia's maritime capabilities and asserting its sovereignty, particularly in the face of challenges such as illegal fishing and territorial disputes in the South China Sea (Agastia, 2021, p. 5). The initial enthusiasm surrounding the GMF was reflected in Jokowi's active promotion of maritime issues on international platforms, including the East Asia Summit (Parameswaran, 2020, p. 12).

However, as Jokowi commenced his second term in 2019, there has been a noticeable shift in focus away from the maritime agenda, raising questions about the sustainability and commitment to the GMF. The absence of any mention of maritime policy in his inauguration speech and the prioritization of economic and bureaucratic reforms over maritime issues signal a shift in focus (Laksmana, 2021, p. 3). This trend is

further corroborated by the reappointment of Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, who emphasized trade and investment without reference to maritime concerns (Caroline, 2021, p. 8).

The literature suggests that this shift can be attributed to several interrelated factors. Firstly, Jokowi's administration has increasingly prioritized domestic infrastructure projects, such as roads and airports, over maritime initiatives. This has resulted in a lack of investment in maritime infrastructure, which is crucial for realizing the GMF. The Sea Toll Road project, intended to enhance maritime connectivity, has not achieved profitability and has been overshadowed by land-based projects (Agastia, 2023, p. 15).

Moreover, the governance of Indonesia's maritime domain remains fragmented, with multiple agencies involved in maritime security and law enforcement. This bureaucratic complexity has hindered effective policy implementation and coordination (Laksmana, 2021, p. 4). The lack of a central strategic policy hub has exacerbated these challenges, leading to inefficiencies in addressing maritime issues (Parameswaran, 2020, p. 14).

Additionally, Jokowi's leadership style, characterized by a preference for delegating responsibilities, has contributed to the stagnation of the GMF. His reliance on Coordinating Minister Luhut Pandjaitan for maritime governance has resulted in a lack of direct involvement in maritime policy formulation (Caroline, 2021, p. 10). This delegation has led to a perception that Jokowi is not personally committed to the GMF, undermining its potential as a grand strategy (Laksmana, 2021, p. 5).

Geopolitical considerations also play a significant role in this trend. Jokowi's administration has faced external pressures, particularly from China, which has asserted its claims in the South China Sea. The administration's cautious approach to these incursions reflects a prioritization of economic relations over maritime assertiveness (Agastia, 2021, p. 6). This has resulted in a more subdued maritime policy, with less emphasis on coalition-building and regional leadership (Parameswaran, 2020, p. 16).

The trend of sidelining the GMF raises significant concerns for Indonesia's maritime strategy. Without a clear commitment to maritime issues, Indonesia risks losing its potential as a maritime power. The lack of investment in maritime capabilities and infrastructure could hinder the country's ability to address challenges such as illegal fishing and territorial disputes effectively (Agastia, 2023, p. 18). Moreover, the fragmented governance structure poses a significant barrier to the successful implementation of maritime policies. The need for a cohesive strategy that integrates various agencies and stakeholders is critical for advancing Indonesia's maritime interests (Laksmana, 2021, p. 7).

The trend of abandoning President Jokowi's maritime focus policy in his second term reflects a complex interplay of domestic priorities, bureaucratic fragmentation, limited strategic leadership, and geopolitical considerations. As Indonesia navigates these challenges, it is imperative for the government to reaffirm its commitment to the GMF and develop a coherent maritime strategy that aligns with its broader national interests. The future of Indonesia's maritime aspirations hinges on the ability to integrate maritime issues into the core of its policy agenda, ensuring that the country can effectively leverage its maritime potential in an increasingly competitive regional landscape.

## METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach, primarily based on an extensive literature review. It aims to provide a detailed interpretation of the dynamics surrounding the implementation of the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) agenda under President Joko Widodo's administration. The data sources comprise journal articles, opinion pieces, books, official government documents, and press releases issued by relevant ministries and agencies.

To ensure relevance and rigour, a purposive sampling technique was applied to select documents based on predefined criteria that reflect the evolution of Indonesia's maritime policy. The inclusion criteria were: (a) publications issued between 2014 and 2023, capturing recent policy developments; (b) official and credible sources, including national policy reports, strategic planning documents, and peer-reviewed academic articles; and (c) documents written in either English or Indonesian. Selected materials were intended to represent both policy formulation and implementation perspectives.

To minimise bias, a systematic search strategy was employed using targeted keywords such as "Global Maritime Fulcrum," "Indonesia maritime policy," and "maritime security." The search was conducted across government portals and academic databases, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and institutional websites. The collected data were analysed using thematic coding to identify recurring patterns and emerging trends in the shifting landscape of Indonesia's maritime policy.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **External Challenges: Increased Chinese Aggression in the South China Sea**

Since 2010, the situation in the South China Sea, which was relatively stable during the post-Cold War era, has become increasingly unstable. This instability has continued dynamically, with China's threatening behavior in the South China Sea showing no signs of waning. The rapid escalation of China's military power over the past two decades has inevitably enhanced its aggressiveness in the South China Sea, where the country has significant interests, particularly in economic sectors (Quyet 2023). This enhancement of military strength and aggressiveness is indicated as one of the external challenges that determine why the implementation of the Global Maritime Fulcrum (PMD) agenda during President Joko Widodo's administration has been declining in both quality and quantity (Kwon 2019; Chubb 2020).

China's current aggressiveness occurs in the context of its rapid rise and the U.S. 'pivot' to Asia. The situation in the South China Sea is influenced by various factors, including the transformation of regional power structures, cognitive adjustments made by related countries, and strategic choices made by external powers in deciding how to respond to shifts in regional power dynamics. Although Indonesia does not share a direct maritime border with the South China Sea, there have been at least two incidents in the Natuna waters, Indonesia, indicating that China's claims in the South China Sea overlap with Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) boundaries (Fangyin 2016; Zou 2023).

The first incident occurred on March 19, 2016, when a Chinese coast guard vessel intervened to free a Chinese fishing boat that had been captured by the Indonesian navy for illegal fishing in Indonesia's EEZ. This incident was diplomatically resolved. However, a similar incident recurred between December 19-24, 2019, when 63 Chinese fishing vessels, escorted by Chinese coast guard ships, entered Indonesia's Natuna EEZ. China justified this action by claiming sovereignty over the Nansha Islands (Spratly) and

sovereign rights over the related waters. This claim diverged from the first incident in 2016 when China merely used the argument of "traditional fishing grounds" to justify its presence in Natuna waters (Suryadinata 2016, 2020).

The Indonesian government successfully de-escalated the tensions while signaling its sovereignty and capability to protect its territorial integrity in the Natuna waters. This was demonstrated by President Joko Widodo's direct visit to the area to conduct a cabinet meeting aboard a Navy warship shortly after the first incident in 2016. However, the lesson learned from both incidents indicates strong evidence that China is unlikely to reduce its level of aggression in the South China Sea. Furthermore, China's maritime claims in the South China Sea are likely to overlap with Indonesia's territorial waters, justifying different claims over time.

While China's increasing assertiveness in the Natuna waters and its claims in the South China Sea are primary concerns, Indonesia's maritime security faces other significant threats that merit attention. These include rising incidents of piracy, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and transnational crimes such as drug trafficking and human smuggling. Data from the Indonesian Marine Police indicates a 25% increase in piracy and illegal fishing incidents over the past five years, underscoring the need for a comprehensive maritime security approach. In addition, maritime activities that operate outside international regulations, like illegal fishing and smuggling across regional borders, pose ongoing challenges. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) reports emphasize the importance of strengthening maritime governance that addresses not only military threats but also criminal activities exploiting legal loopholes and weak enforcement. Effective response demands increased surveillance capabilities and international cooperation to manage these threats effectively (Auld et al., 2023; Chapsos and Hamilton, 2019).

In light of these indications, the shift in the orientation of the Global Maritime Fulcrum agenda during President Joko Widodo's second term becomes relevant. Along with other factors such as military budget constraints and a lack of coordination between ministries and agencies discussed below, the ongoing external challenge posed by China's unwavering threats in the South China Sea presents an unavoidable pressure for President Joko Widodo's government to pursue a more realistic maritime policy reorientation.

### **Internal Challenges: Limitations of Military Budget, COVID-19 Pandemic, China's Economic Incentives, and Lack of Coordination Among Ministries or State Institutions**

#### **Military Budget Limitations**

The Indonesian maritime budget from 2014 to 2024 reflects the government's commitment to strengthening the maritime sector. During President Joko Widodo's first term, his vision prioritized the Global Maritime Fulcrum strategy, with budget policies focusing on infrastructure development, expanding maritime connectivity, managing fishery resources, and enhancing maritime defense. In contrast, during the second term from 2019 to 2024, the Indonesian maritime budget has been characterized by significant investments in land-based infrastructure, alongside challenges posed by the pandemic at the beginning of this period. The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially affected Indonesia's budget priorities and policy focus, as it has globally.

Data from the Ministry of Finance indicates a 12% reduction in defense spending in 2020, with reallocations directed toward healthcare and pandemic relief efforts. This shift in focus delayed or curtailed several strategic maritime projects, including port development and fleet expansion. Furthermore, Analysts at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore, emphasize that the pandemic accelerated restructuring of national budgets, shifting priorities toward health and economic stability at the expense of long-term military and maritime development. Empirical evidence and expert opinion reinforce that the pandemic underscores the necessity of adaptable, resilient maritime strategies—able to sustain core security and sovereignty goals even amid crises—making the continuity of initiatives like the PMD more vital than ever (Suparman, 2021; Ha and Signh, 2023).

One year into Jokowi's administration (in 2015), the Ministry of Transportation's Directorate of Sea Transportation received a budget increase of IDR 11.29 trillion, rising from IDR 11.3 trillion to IDR 22.8 trillion (Ministry of Transportation of Indonesia, 2015). These additional funds were utilized to construct several new ports in Indonesia to support the Global Maritime Fulcrum program. However, in 2019, there was a decrease in the budget for the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs by IDR 15.34 million compared to 2018 (Kumparan 2019). The handling of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the reallocation and refocusing of national spending budgets. Countries in Southeast Asia impacted by the crisis due to the pandemic began to reduce their budgets in the maritime sector (Lemhannas 2022). In this unstable fiscal environment, Indonesia has also experienced cuts in its maritime budget, prioritizing social needs such as food security. Furthermore, infrastructure development has become prioritized during Jokowi's second term, particularly following the announcement of relocating Indonesia's capital from Jakarta to the new capital, Nusantara (IKN), in 2019.

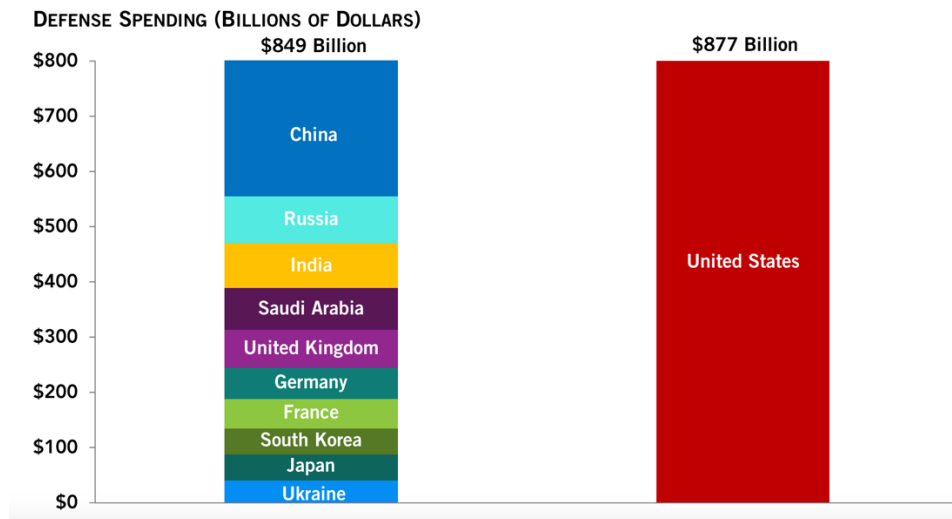
Table 1. Budget Allocation of President Joko Widodo's Second Term Government (2020 - 2024)

Sector	Budget Priority
Economic Recovery Post-Pandemic	Allocation for social assistance, MSMEs, health sector, technology growth, and green industry.
Infrastructure Development	Focus on the construction of roads and bridges, including special economic zones and digital infrastructure. IKN as a primary focus at the end of Jokowi's term.
Education and Health	Development of schools, training for educators, healthcare facilities, and public health programs.
Human Resource Development	Enhancing the competitiveness of Indonesian labor in the industry sector.
Regional Development and Poverty Alleviation	Development of remote areas and improvement of the quality of life for the community.
Digital Transformation and Innovation	Development of digital infrastructure and innovation initiatives.
Administrative Reform	Reform of the budgeting planning system, oversight, and public accountability.

Source: Compiled from sources cited in this article

Indonesia faces significant challenges in strengthening its maritime sector. Major countries such as China, Japan, India, South Korea, and Australia have enhanced their maritime capabilities through defense budgets. According to data from the SIPRI Military

Expenditure Database 2023 (shown in the image below), China ranks first in Asia with a budget of \$849 billion, followed by India at \$400 billion, and Japan and South Korea at \$100 billion each (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2023). As a nation directly neighbouring these countries, Indonesia must consider maritime security projections as a form of geopolitical defense.



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2023

Figure 1: Defense Spending by Country

From the comparison of maritime defense budgets, it can be observed that Indonesia lacks focus in accounting for costs and expenses. There is a need for a new accumulation that is directly related to the budget specifically allocated for maritime affairs. A more mature budgeting period must be undertaken again so that Indonesia does not fall below average in terms of managing its maritime budget. This is essential for achieving Indonesia's vision as the Global Maritime Fulcrum.

### COVID-19 Pandemic and the Economic Incentives from China

In addition to the limitations of Indonesia's military budget, the internal challenges faced by the world, including Indonesia, during the period from 2020 to 2022 were primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic posed a non-traditional threat that exerted significant pressure on the government's budget posture, necessitating revisions to budget allocations to address the pandemic. In other words, Indonesia's government budget, which should have been directed more towards supporting programs that strengthen the maritime sector to support the Global Maritime Fulcrum (PMD), experienced pressure and revisions (Desdiani et al., 2022). The Indonesian government decided against implementing a nationwide lockdown due to concerns over the resulting economic crisis. Instead, it adopted a policy known as "Rem dan Gas," which involved adaptive and situational tightening measures. This approach aimed to protect the economy from further decline due to the pandemic while also preventing the nationwide spread of COVID-19 (Ihsan and Munabari, 2023).

China has emerged as a leading country in producing COVID-19 vaccines, with Indonesia among the nations receiving vaccines from China alongside others. In this context, considering the economic relationship between Indonesia and China today, Indonesia heavily relies on economic investments from China in various sectors, especially in land infrastructure development, which is a priority for President Joko

Widodo's administration. For example, the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail project is an indication of a new trend in building strategic infrastructure cooperation using technology in partnership with China, having previously been dominated by Japan (Gammeltof and Tarmidi, 2013; Intan, 2022).

Regarding the agenda to strengthen maritime security in Indonesia, as discussed earlier, there are strong indications of increased Chinese aggression in the South China Sea. This trend represents a maritime threat to Indonesia, as evidenced by at least two incidents of encroachment into Indonesia's EEZ in Natuna waters by China. However, on the economic side, Indonesia undeniably receives various economic incentive packages in several areas of cooperation, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 vaccine program and the high-speed railway development. This reality creates a dilemma for President Joko Widodo's administration when considering a more assertive response to territorial violations by China in Natuna waters.

The current fact is that Indonesia experiences a significant level of economic dependency on China. The priority to enhance maritime security and maximize marine resources, such as expelling foreign fishing vessels engaging in illegal fishing in Indonesian waters, which had been carried out extensively during President Jokowi's first term under the then Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Susi Pudjiastuti, is a critical indicator for the successful implementation of the PMD. However, these actions may inadvertently provoke China. Responding to potential territorial violations by China in a radical and confrontational manner is, of course, unfeasible at this time given the stark difference in military power between Indonesia and China. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, Indonesia's need for cooperation with China in various sectors, especially the economy, is another driving factor in why President Joko Widodo's second term appears reluctant to prioritize strengthening the maritime sector.

### **Lack of Coordination Among Relevant Ministries/Agencies**

To realize Indonesia as the Global Maritime Fulcrum, Sea Power must collaborate with other strengths, including political, diplomatic, and institutional roles. This underscores the importance of an inclusive maritime strategy for maritime nations like Indonesia. This need grows with the emergence of various issues in waters related to maritime domains. Maritime crimes such as piracy, smuggling, illegal trade, unauthorized entry, tax evasion, carrying illegal weapons, marine pollution, fishing in prohibited areas, and other illegal activities significantly impact the sustainability of maritime areas. In implementing maritime security, governance is required to protect the maritime environment, economic interests, human security, and border integrity. Achieving this requires cooperation among relevant ministries and agencies.

Indonesia currently has the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment; however, this ministry cannot operate independently to address the various issues threatening maritime security. For example, in addressing issues related to illegal drug trafficking in waters, coordination among relevant agencies such as the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (if trade occurs at the borders), and the National Narcotics Agency is necessary. One maritime issue can then become a collective concern for related ministries and agencies.

Another challenge is the geopolitical landscape leading to a potential clash involving China, the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. Countries may compete to strengthen their maritime security to achieve national interests. At this stage, Indonesia's foreign policy direction must be coordinated with relevant ministries and agencies (Laksmana et al., 2018). The need for an integrated strategy among these agencies will form a new effort

to realize superior and synergistic foreign policy directions, particularly in the maritime sector. Strengthening maritime security should not only occur through domestic policies but also requires foreign policy as an essential aspect of national resilience. The direction of a foreign policy that positions Indonesia as the Global Maritime Fulcrum must have a clear framework.

On the regional level, maritime nations such as Australia, Singapore, and Norway have faced similar challenges—managing defense budgets, institutional coordination, and adapting strategies to external threats. For example, Australia successfully enhanced its maritime capabilities through structural reforms focusing on institutional integration and increasing defense spending from 2% to 3% of GDP over recent years, coupled with collaborations with NATO and regional partners. In contrast, Indonesia struggles with fragmentation within its maritime agencies and a lack of cross-sectoral policy coordination. According to reports from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), countries that undertake administrative reforms and foster inter-agency collaboration tend to respond more swiftly and effectively to maritime security issues. These nations improve resource management and institutional coherence systematically, which significantly enhances overall maritime resilience. This comparative analysis highlights the critical importance for Indonesia to undertake similar reforms—streamlining bureaucratic structures and fostering synchronized policymaking—to bolster its maritime strategy effectively (Tertia and Perwita, 2018; Gopal, 2017).

Inefficient bureaucratic constraints pose a significant barrier to Indonesia's maritime security. Various ministries and agencies have collaborated to enhance Indonesia's naval strength as a maritime nation. Coordination has occurred among relevant institutions, such as the National Coordinating Agency for Maritime Safety; the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries; the Ministry of Forestry; the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources; the Ministry of National Education; the Ministry of Transportation and Communications; the Ministry of Environment; the Indonesian Navy; the Indonesian Air Force; the Marine Police; the Directorate General of Immigration; and the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (Laksmiana et al., 2018). However, a new issue arises regarding whether this coordination has been efficient or merely adds complexity due to the involvement of numerous ministries and agencies without achieving effective resolutions in the maritime area.

There is a pressing need for a cohesive policy among ministries and agencies that can effectively address this complex issue. This policy should encompass clear roles and responsibilities for each involved party and ensure that efforts are directed towards a common goal: enhancing Indonesia's maritime security and governance.

In summary, addressing the internal challenges faced by Indonesia—ranging from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic dependency on China to the need for enhanced coordination among ministries—is crucial for realizing the vision of Indonesia as the Global Maritime Fulcrum. A comprehensive approach involving diplomatic, economic, and strategic cooperation is essential for navigating the complexities of maritime security and ensuring Indonesia's interests are safeguarded in an increasingly competitive regional environment. By doing so, Indonesia can not only bolster its maritime capabilities but also contribute to regional stability and security.

## CONCLUSION

This article has examined existing literature concerning the implementation and evolution of Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) policy, particularly during the

second term of President Joko Widodo's administration. The findings indicate a significant shift in national priorities away from maritime strategy towards land-based infrastructure and economic development. This transition is driven by both external challenges—primarily China's assertiveness in the South China Sea—and internal constraints such as limited defence budgets, the fiscal consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and fragmented institutional coordination.

The study underscores the importance of enhancing inter-agency collaboration in managing Indonesia's maritime affairs. Rather than creating a new institutional body, the government should consider strengthening existing coordination mechanisms under the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment. This includes establishing clear inter-ministerial mandates, improving strategic alignment between agencies such as the Navy, Bakamla, and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and encouraging regular joint maritime operations and data-sharing platforms.

Moreover, budgetary reform is essential. The Indonesian government should increase investment in maritime security by ensuring adequate and sustainable funding for patrol operations, surveillance, and deterrence capabilities. The development of a comprehensive maritime defence policy, aligned with Indonesia's strategic planning documents and tailored to address both conventional and non-traditional maritime threats, is also necessary.

In parallel with domestic reforms, Indonesia's maritime posture must also remain connected to broader regional frameworks. Active participation in ASEAN-led maritime initiatives—such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific—along with bilateral patrol cooperation in contested waters, will be vital in reinforcing regional trust and enhancing interoperability.

While these policy recommendations offer a forward-looking agenda, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the current study. This analysis is primarily based on secondary sources, which may not fully capture the on-the-ground complexities of maritime policy implementation. Future research should therefore include primary data collection through interviews with policymakers and maritime stakeholders, comparative analysis with other ASEAN member states, and evaluation of the effectiveness of maritime budgeting and institutional coordination. Such research would provide a more nuanced understanding of how Indonesia can reclaim and reposition the GMF vision amid an evolving regional and domestic policy landscape.

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