

## **Geopolitics of Global Leadership and Resource Competition in the Indo-Pacific: Implications for Indonesia's Defense Doctrine**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The geopolitical rivalry among the United States, China, and Russia in the Indo-Pacific region has intensified, particularly in the competition over strategic resources such as energy, critical minerals, maritime technology, and control of international trade routes. This dynamic poses direct implications for middle powers, including Indonesia, which occupies a pivotal position as a global maritime fulcrum. Such circumstances require Indonesia to adopt a defense doctrine that is not merely reactive to emerging threats but also proactive in fostering self-reliance and regional resilience. This article aims to analyze global leadership interactions in the Indo-Pacific context by employing transformational leadership theory (Burns, Bass), adaptive leadership (Heifetz), and military-strategic perspectives, while mapping Indonesia's position through a SWOT analysis framework. The findings indicate that Indonesia possesses significant geopolitical strengths yet continues to face structural weaknesses, particularly in the modernization of defense systems and the self-sufficiency of its defense industry. Opportunities arise from multilateral cooperation and the development of renewable energy, whereas tangible threats stem from great-power rivalry and maritime security instability. These insights underscore the urgency of strengthening Indonesia's defense doctrine in alignment with the Asta Cita vision, thereby safeguarding sovereignty, enhancing bargaining power, and ensuring Indonesia's strategic role amid global rivalry.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Indo-Pacific region has become one of the most dynamic arenas in global geopolitical competition over the last two decades. The region's position is not only strategic due to its international shipping routes connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans but also because of its wealth of natural resources, ranging from fossil fuels, fisheries, to critical minerals that are essential for the global energy transition (Doyle and Rumley, 2019 ; Vashisht, 2023). The geopolitical rivalry between the United States, China, and Russia in this region is intensifying, alongside the changing balance of world power and the growing demand for strategic resources, as well as explained by Fiszer (2020).

The United States emphasizes the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy as a geopolitical instrument and an effort to maintain its military dominance (Tan, 2020). Meanwhile, China, through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), seeks to expand its network of infrastructure, energy, and maritime connections to support its national interests (Liu *et al*, 2020). Russia, although its role is relatively limited, still leverages the potential for energy and defense cooperation to strengthen its influence in the region, particularly through relations with non-Western partners (Oruch *et al*, 2024). This rivalry poses direct implications for middle powers like Indonesia, which is located on the vital shipping route of the Malacca Strait and a resource-rich maritime area. For Indonesia, the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific present a strategic dilemma:

on one hand, there are economic opportunities from trade and investment cooperation; on the other hand, there are serious security risks, ranging from South China Sea conflicts to the potential involvement in great power rivalries (Dipua *et al*, 2020). To address this challenge, Indonesia requires a comprehensive defense doctrine that not only focuses on military aspects but also encompasses dimensions of diplomacy, economics, and the development of national defense industries (Riyadi and Dewi, 2020).

In this context, leadership theory becomes relevant. Transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990) emphasizes the importance of vision and motivation to build legitimacy, adaptive leadership theory (Heifetz) highlights the need for flexibility in facing geopolitical uncertainties, while military strategic leadership underlines the importance of alignment between political objectives and defense strategies. By integrating this theoretical framework, Indonesia can build a more robust, adaptive, and visionary defense posture. Furthermore, the vision for Indonesia's defense development can be directed through the *Asta Cita* framework, which emphasizes sovereignty, independence, global justice, and strengthening the national economy. Through this approach, Indonesia has the opportunity to position itself not only as an object of great power rivalry but also as an active subject playing a strategic role in maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on Indo-Pacific geopolitics cannot be separated from the dynamics of great power rivalry and its impact on middle countries. Academic literature suggests that competition for resources, control of trade routes, and military power projection are the main factors shaping the security architecture in this region. Mearsheimer (2003) emphasized that competition among great powers is inherent in the international system, while Nye (2011) through the concept of smart power highlights the combination of hard power and soft power as the main instruments in global rivalry.

In the context of leadership, there are three relevant theoretical frameworks to understand the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific and Indonesia's response:

1. **Transformational Leadership.** Burns (1978) and Bass (1990) argue that transformational leadership is based on vision, idealism, and moral motivation. Transformational leaders are capable of driving significant change, inspiring followers, and building strong legitimacy. In the geopolitical context, transformational leadership can be realized through a strategic vision that positions Indonesia as the world's maritime axis.
2. **Adaptive Leadership.** Heifetz (1994) emphasizes that adaptive leadership is needed when organizations or countries face complex problems and high uncertainty. Adaptive leaders are required to navigate change, formulate creative solutions, and maintain social cohesion. In the context of a turbulent Indo-Pacific, adaptive leadership is necessary to respond to US-China rivalry without becoming trapped in bloc politics.
3. **Military Strategic Leadership.** Cohen and Gooch (1990) argue that strategic military leadership serves to bridge political objectives with defense strategy. This is relevant to Indonesia, which needs an integrated defense doctrine that includes the development of defense equipment, defense diplomacy, and military industrial independence.

In addition to the theoretical framework, policy literature also provides important contributions. The National Defense Doctrine 2022 published by the Indonesian Ministry of Defense emphasizes the importance of the Total Defense System and the modernization of military posture to address contemporary security challenges. The vision for Indonesia's long-term development through *Asta Cita* also reaffirms the direction of defense development based on sovereignty, self-reliance, and active participation in maintaining world peace. Recent studies also highlight ASEAN's relevance in maintaining regional stability. As a key member of ASEAN, Indonesia is expected to act as an honest broker in managing great power rivalries. Literature on

hedging strategy. Ardhani *et al*, (2023) and also Iksan and Soong (2023) explained that middle powers like Indonesia tend to adopt an ambivalent strategy, not fully aligning with one major power, but also not completely neutral in order to maximize economic and security gains. Thus, the literature indicates a consensus that Indonesia needs to integrate the theories of transformational, adaptive, and strategic leadership into its defense doctrine. This aligns with Indonesia's position as a middle power that plays an important role in maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the aim of analyzing the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific geopolitical landscape, global leadership rivalry, and its implications for Indonesia's defense doctrine. The qualitative approach was chosen because it can explore the conceptual, normative, and strategic dimensions that cannot be fully explained through quantitative methods. The research methodology consists of three main stages:

1. **Literature Review.** This stage involves a critical examination of academic literature, books, and international journals related to leadership theory (Burns, Bass, Heifetz), Indo-Pacific geopolitics (Mearsheimer, Nye), and defense doctrines. Official policy documents of Indonesia such as the National Defense Doctrine 2022 and the National Medium-Term Development Plan 2020–2024: *Asta Cita* are also used as references to understand the direction of national defense development.
2. **Policy Analysis.** At this stage, an analysis is conducted on Indonesia's defense policy, including the modernization of defense equipment, defense diplomacy strategies, and Indonesia's role in regional forums such as ASEAN and IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association). The policy analysis is used to assess the relevance of existing policies to the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific geopolitics.
3. **Expert Interviews.** To enrich the analysis, interviews are also conducted with military practitioners, diplomats, or international law experts. Primary data from these interviews is useful for providing practical perspectives that complement the literature findings.

As an analytical tool, this research uses SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). SWOT analysis was chosen because it can comprehensively map Indonesia's position, both from internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats). With this combination, the research is expected to produce relevant strategic recommendations to strengthen Indonesia's defense doctrine amid global rivalry in the Indo-Pacific.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Indo-Pacific Geopolitics

This study shows that Indonesia's position in Indo-Pacific geopolitics is at a strategic point full of opportunities, yet also faced with complex challenges. The global rivalry among the United States, China, and Russia not only reflects the competition for political influence, but is also intense in the competition for strategic resources, including energy, critical minerals, maritime technology, and control over international trade routes. This situation positions Indonesia as a key actor that must be able to balance global interests with its national agenda. As the world's maritime axis, Indonesia is required to have a defense strategy that is not merely defensive, but proactive in managing resources, strengthening the independence of the defense industry, and enhancing maritime diplomacy capacity. Thus, Indonesia can maintain sovereignty while playing a strategic role in maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region. For this reason, mapping Indonesia's position through SWOT analysis becomes important in order to formulate relevant defense doctrines that align with the vision of *Asta Cita*.

1. **Strengths (*Kekuatan*).** Indonesia has several geopolitical advantages that serve as a fundamental asset in responding to global rivalries. First, its strategic geographical location positions Indonesia as a global maritime hub and controller of vital sea lanes such as the Strait of Malacca and the Archipelagic Sea Lane (ALKI). Second, the wealth of natural resources, including fossil energy, nickel, and critical minerals, provides bargaining power in the global energy transition. Third, the doctrine of the Total Defense System and the Asta Cita vision emphasizes national defense independence based on public participation. From the perspective of transformational leadership (Burns, Bass), this strength must be projected through a vision that inspires the region, namely making Indonesia a stabilizer in the Indo-Pacific. Strategic military leadership also requires the utilization of geographical strengths and resources to support a robust defense posture.
2. **Weaknesses (*Kelemahan*).** Despite having great potential, Indonesia still faces several structural weaknesses. First, the modernization of defense technology is not balanced with the dynamics of regional threats; dependence on military technology imports hampers the independence of the defense industry. Second, coordination between agencies in addressing non-traditional threats such as cybercrime, smuggling, and piracy is still suboptimal. Third, the gap in human resources in the defense sector also poses a barrier to building military professionalism. This situation demands adaptive leadership (Heifetz) that can identify internal limitations, drive innovation, and seek collaborative solutions. For example, strengthening defense technology transfer through international cooperation or enhancing civil-military cooperation in addressing multidimensional threats.
3. **Opportunities (*Peluang*).** The Indo-Pacific geopolitical situation also opens opportunities for Indonesia. First, multilateral cooperation through ASEAN, IORA, and Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) provides space for defense diplomacy. Second, the global demand for critical minerals offers Indonesia the chance to strengthen both upstream and downstream industries based on resources. Third, the energy transition opens up opportunities to develop new and renewable energy that aligns with national energy security agendas. Transformational leadership encourages Indonesia to build a collective vision through active defense diplomacy. Strategic military leadership can turn economic opportunities into the foundation of national defense, for example, by creating an integrated defense industry ecosystem that meets energy and technology needs.
4. **Threats (*Ancaman*).** Indonesia faces a number of real external threats. First, the US-China rivalry in the South China Sea has the potential to drag regional countries into open conflict. Second, military competition in the Indo-Pacific increases the risk of an arms race that could undermine regional stability. Third, the exploitation of natural resources by external actors poses a potential risk to sovereignty and the sustainability of national development. These threats demand strategic leadership capable of linking political goals with military readiness. In the context of Asta Cita, Indonesia's defense doctrine must emphasize sovereignty, justice, and sustainability. This means strengthening deterrence capability while promoting Indonesia's role as a balancer in global rivalry.

## SWOT Analysis of Indonesia in the Indo-Pacific Geopolitics

**Table 1. IFAS (*Internal Factor Analysis Summary*)**

INTERNAL FACTORS (IFAS)	WEIGHT	RATING	SCORE
<b>Strength (<i>Kekuatan</i>)</b>			
1. Strategic geographical location as the world's maritime axis	0,20	4	0,80
2. Abundant natural resources (energy, critical minerals, fisheries)	0,20	3	0,60

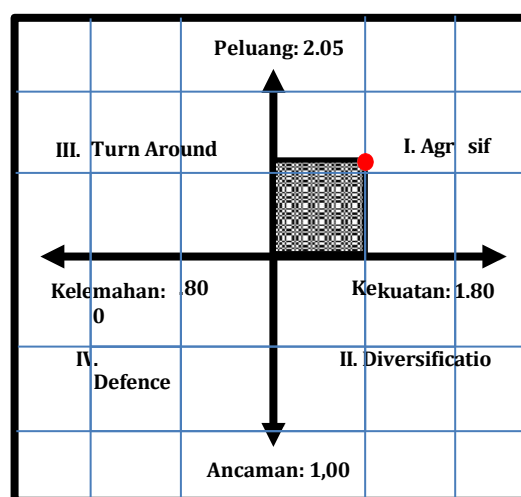
3. Defense doctrine based on independence & Asta Cita	0,20	3	0,40
Subtotal	<b>0,60</b>		<b>1,80</b>
<b>Weakness (Kelemahan)</b>			
1. The modernization of defense equipment is not optimal, dependency on imports	0,20	2	0,40
2. Coordination between agencies is still limited	0,10	2	0,20
3. Human resource gaps in the defense sector	0,10	2	0,20
Subtotal	<b>0,40</b>		<b>0,80</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,00</b>		<b>1,00</b>

Source : Author (2025)

**Table 2. EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary)**

EXTERNAL FACTORS (EFAS)	WEIGHT	RATING	SCORE
<b>Opportunity (Peluang)</b>			
1. ASEAN multilateral cooperation, IORA, ADMM-Plus	0,20	3	0,75
2. Global demand for critical minerals & renewable energy sources	0,20	4	1,00
3. Strengthening defense diplomacy & middle power strategy	0,10	3	0,30
Subtotal	<b>0,50</b>		<b>2,05</b>
<b>Treat (Ancaman)</b>			
1. AS–Tiongkok rivalry and the risk of maritime conflict	0,15	2	0,30
2. The risk of an arms race in the region	0,15	2	0,30
3. Exploitation of resources by external actors	0,20	2	0,40
Subtotal	<b>0,50</b>		<b>1,00</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,00</b>		<b>1,05</b>

Determination of the SWOT Quadrant.



Source : Author (2025)

The SWOT analysis shows that Indonesia has a fairly strong strategic position in facing the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific geopolitics. From the internal factors (IFAS) side, Indonesia's main strength lies in its geographical position as a world maritime axis, which makes Indonesia a

central actor in global trade routes. In addition, the abundant natural resource wealth, ranging from energy, critical minerals, to fisheries potential, provides strategic added value in supporting national independence. The defense doctrine based on independence and the Asta Cita vision also strengthens the direction of national defense development. The total strength score reaches 1.80, higher than the weakness score of only 0.80, indicating that Indonesia's internal capital is relatively strong. However, the weaknesses faced are quite significant, particularly in the aspect of modernization of defense equipment which still relies on imports, weak coordination between agencies, and gaps in the quality of human resources in the defense sector. These weaknesses have the potential to reduce the effectiveness of the implementation of defense strategies if not addressed promptly.

Meanwhile, on the external factor (EFAS), Indonesia has significant opportunities with a total score of 2.05. The greatest opportunity comes from the global demand for critical minerals and new renewable energy, as well as active involvement in multilateral cooperation such as ASEAN, IORA, and ADMM-Plus. The middle power strategy and defense diplomacy also open avenues for Indonesia to enhance its bargaining power in global affairs. On the other hand, external threats continue to loom with a score of 1.00. The rivalry between the US and China has the potential to create maritime conflicts in the region, while the risks of an arms race and resource exploitation by external actors could threaten national sovereignty.

Based on calculations, the SWOT coordinate values show  $X = 1.00$  and  $Y = 1.05$ . This places Indonesia in Quadrant I (Growth Strategy), which is a very favorable condition as internal strengths can be maximally utilized to take advantage of external opportunities. Thus, the appropriate strategy for Indonesia is an aggressive strategy, namely strengthening defense independence, enhancing maritime diplomacy, and optimizing strategic resources to support regional leadership in the Indo-Pacific.

### **Integration of SWOT with Indonesia's Defense Doctrine**

The results of the SWOT analysis show that Indonesia's defense strategy must emphasize four main steps:

1. **Exploiting Strengths to Expand Influence.** Indonesia can leverage its geographical position and wealth of resources to enhance the role of defense diplomacy, as well as strengthen its image as a regional leader.
2. **Reducing Weaknesses through Reform and Innovation.** There needs to be a strategy for accelerating the modernization of defense equipment, achieving self-reliance in the defense industry, and strengthening defense human resources.
3. **Optimizing Opportunities through Diplomatic Strategy.** Indonesia can develop multilateral defense cooperation based on shared interests, as well as leverage its role as a middle power to reduce the dominance of great powers.
4. **Anticipating Threats through Adaptive Doctrine.** The defense doctrine must be adaptive to global rivalries by strengthening the early warning system, enhancing joint operation capability, and expanding non-block strategic alliances.

Through a transformational, adaptive, and strategic leadership approach, as well as the integration of the Asta Cita vision, Indonesia can strengthen its defense doctrine to be more proactive, resilient, and competitive. Thus, Indonesia is not only able to endure the currents of global rivalry but can also play a strategic role as a determinant of stability in the Indo-Pacific.

### **CONCLUSION**

The global rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region among the United States, China, and Russia emphasizes that competition for strategic resources and maritime routes will continue. This situation places Indonesia in a unique yet vulnerable position: on the one hand, it has significant geographical power and natural resources, but on the other hand, it faces challenges such as

limitations in defense equipment, dependence on technology, and the complexity of multidimensional threats.

The results of the SWOT analysis show that Indonesia has the strength to play an important role as a strategic balancer in the Indo-Pacific. Opportunities from multilateral cooperation, global demand for critical minerals, and energy transition can be leveraged to strengthen the defense base while enhancing diplomatic bargaining power. However, internal weaknesses such as inadequate defense modernization and external threats in the form of great power rivalries and maritime conflicts must be anticipated seriously.

In the framework of leadership theory, Indonesia is required to implement transformational leadership to build an inspiring vision of the global maritime axis; adaptive leadership to respond to uncertainties and rapid geopolitical dynamics; and strategic military leadership to bridge political objectives with measurable defense doctrine.

The practical implication is the need to strengthen the defense doctrine based on *Asta Cita*, which emphasizes sovereignty, independence, and global justice. This doctrine must be aimed at three main agendas: First, the modernization of military equipment and the development of the national defense industry; Second, strengthening defense diplomacy within a multilateral framework; and third, enhancing adaptive defense capacity to face non-traditional threats. With this step, Indonesia not only maintains its sovereignty but also plays an active role in creating stability in the Indo-Pacific region amidst global leadership rivalries.

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