

The Impact of Reopening Zheng He's Maritime Silk Road through One Belt One Road Policy on Indonesia-China Cooperation

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to explain the impact of reopening the maritime silk route that was previously discovered by Admiral Zheng He which affecting the cooperation relations between Indonesia and China in the last few years. The line was reopened in 2013 in the Chinese OBOR policy with the name "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (a new maritime silk route) that connects countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe, including Indonesia which in 2017 agreed to participate in inside it. The research question is; "What did Indonesia and China get from the reopening of the maritime silk route through OBOR?". This article used descriptive qualitative methods, using documented research data collection techniques. The results is cooperation between Indonesia and China in the OBOR policy is a form of interdependence.

Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan dampak dibukanya kembali jalur sutra maritim yang ditemukan sebelumnya oleh Laksamana Cheng Ho yang mempengaruhi hubungan kerjasama Indonesia-China dalam beberapa tahun terakhir. Jalur tersebut dibuka kembali pada tahun 2013 dalam kebijakan OBOR China dengan nama "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (jalur sutra maritim baru) yang menghubungkan negara-negara di Asia, Afrika, dan Eropa, termasuk Indonesia yang pada tahun 2017 setuju untuk berpartisipasi di dalamnya. Pertanyaan penelitian ini adalah; "Apa yang didapat Indonesia dan China dari dibukanya kembali jalur sutra maritim melalui OBOR?" Tulisan ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, dengan menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data penelitian terdokumentasi. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa kerja sama Indonesia-China dalam kebijakan OBOR merupakan bentuk interdependensi.

Keywords: 21st Century Maritime Silk Road; Indonesia-China Cooperation; One Belt One Road

Introduction

China is one of the civilizations on this earth that has a long history. 2500-2100 BC, beginning with the leadership of three rulers and five emperors.¹ In addition, China in the traditional period (before the republic) consisted of various dynasties, for example the Xia Dynasty (2100-1600 BC) which was the first Chinese dynasty, the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), the Sui Dynasty (589-618 AD), to the Qing Dynasty (1644-11911 AD) became a dynasty from China before turning into a republic.² Each dynasty has its own history and victory, which is agreed to be able to bring China into one of the major countries in the world.

The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) was a dynasty that had a major influence on the conditions of the Chinese economy. This is because in this dynasty the formation of a maritime silk line was initiated by an admiral Zheng He expedition or it could be called Admiral Cheng Ho. This expedition was planned during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) with the aim of creating an expansion of China's maritime network in the Indian Ocean and beyond. But the policy was only realized during the Ming Dynasty because of the change of power.

Admiral Zheng He's expedition was carried out in 1405 with 250 ships, of which 60 were treasure ships, and more than 27,000 people with 26,000 were military forces.³ The mission of this expedition is to expand Chinese influence in the fields of politics (diplomacy), economy (trade), culture, and religion with other countries. The voyage can be seen as an attempt by the Chinese government at that time to expand its hegemony, which can be called "Ming Maritime Imperialism", which is almost like the way of colonialism in Europe.⁴

Based on **Figure 1**, it was recorded that Zheng He's cruise expedition had been carried out seven times. The first to third voyage was aimed at Calicut, on the Malabar coast, India. The fourth voyage sailed out of South Asia towards Hormuz, the Persian Gulf. The fifth, sixth, seventh voyage has a distant destination, Swahili, Africa. This Zheng He expedition opened China's trade routes to the kingdoms in the Indian Ocean region so that it was called the maritime silk road.

The existence of the maritime silk road is increasingly developing, the times are increasingly neglected and not used anymore, this is driven by the formation of modern states which increasingly limit freedom in shipping with the existence of territorial sovereignty. But today, in 2013 China represented by President Xi Jinping sparked an initiative to reopen the maritime silk route through the One Belt One Road (OBOR) policy.⁵ The old maritime silk route was reused which was later called the 21st Maritime Silk Road or the new maritime silk route, because besides using the old route, it also added several new routes such as adding routes to Egypt and European countries such as Italy, thus covering the Asian region, Europe, and Africa.

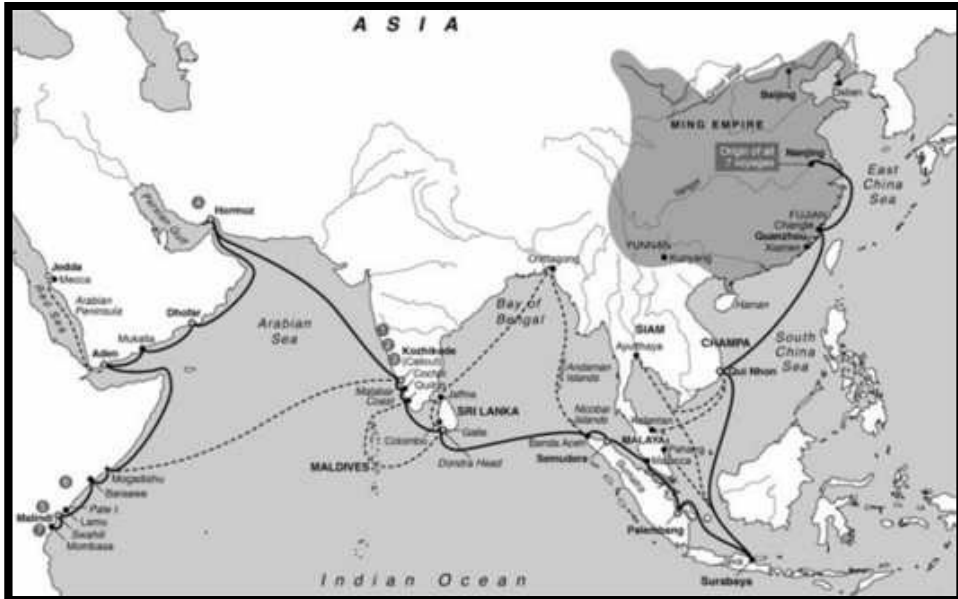


Figure 1. Map of Zheng He Expedition

The OBOR policy consists of two components, Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Land transportation is supported by the Silk Road Economic Belt, while the Maritime Silk Road fights as a supporter of sea transportation. Both of these lines aim to support the course of trade across countries and continents. In addition, this policy is inseparable from China's support through AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) in infrastructure development in OBOR member countries. The official website of OBOR declares now the program itself has 130 members.⁶ Based on this, it can be seen that OBOR has a very wide network, and its existence is accepted by many countries. The reaction of the OBOR program by these countries is because the collaboration has a positive impact which is said with the phrase "Benefit for all", this means that all the countries joined in it will benefit and no one is marginalized.

This policy plans to create a path of trade interests and the spread of investment from China to Europe and Africa, besides this policy does not include Japan and America in it, because one of the objectives of the OBOR is to rival those countries. This OBOR is expected to be a sustainable policy so that it remains implemented in the future and provides future benefits that focus on the economies of the countries incorporated in it. AIIB has an important role in this OBOR policy because it provides loans to its member countries to build their infrastructure both land and maritime infrastructure that can encourage the progress of economic cooperation.



Figure 2. One Belt One Road Map

Indonesia was officially registered to join the OBOR on the arrival of President Joko Widodo at the One Belt One Road Summit (OBOR) which was held on May 14-15 2017 in Beijing. The conference was attended by 29 heads of state from 50 countries. In the meeting, Indonesia and China signed three cooperation documents namely in cooperation in the field of implementation of a comprehensive Indonesia-China strategic partnership in 2017-2021, then the signing of the Sino-Indonesian Economic and Technical Cooperation document, and the last signing of the Jakarta fast train project facilitation cooperation - Bandung. Indonesia through President Joko Widodo offered various mega projects in the infrastructure sector to China, including the development of the Kuala Tanjung Port in North Sumatra and the Bitung Port in North Sulawesi which is an international port. This collaboration between Indonesia and China continues until now, which has achieved various results in the project and investment.

This research will take a number of previous studies that also examine the One Belt One Road policy and the studies related to it. In the study of Hermawati Roosmayri Lovina, Gong Jiaja, and Hua Chen⁷ with the title "Review of" The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: Indonesia-China Cooperation and Future Opportunities for Indonesia's Port Cities Development "and research conducted by Santi Wira Wibawati, Ika Sari Marina, and Yuli Ari Sulistyani with the title "Potential and Challenges of One Belt One Road (OBOR) for Indonesia's National Interest in the Maritime Field". The research essentially talks about Indonesia's advantages in OBOR, namely in the field of maritime infrastructure development which will have an impact on Indonesia's economic growth. The

OBOR that runs with AIIB is considered to help Indonesia in building its infrastructure and other impacts, namely increasing foreign investment in Indonesia. In addition, OBOR saw as an accelerator for Indonesia's goal to become the world's maritime axis.⁸

Based on various previous studies described above, a red thread can be drawn that the existing studies only discuss the benefits gained by Indonesia, the benefits that China gets are minimally explained so that it does not explain the interdependence between Indonesia and China. Therefore, in this study, besides using Institutional Liberal Theory which is often used by research examining OBOR also uses the concept of Interdependence which will explain in depth about the interdependence between Indonesia and China in the OBOR policy, which both countries need each other fulfill their national interests. Based on the statement above the researcher has a research question, "What did Indonesia and China get from the emergence of 21st Country Maritime Silk Road?"

Literature Review

Institutional Liberal Theory

Institutional Liberalism is an international organization is one of the actors in International Relations. According to Clive Archer, international organizations are a formal and sustainable structure, which is formed by member states both government and non-government consisting of two or more sovereign countries, to discuss a particular issue so that common interests can be achieved.⁹ Institutional liberalism states that international institutions can make cooperation easier, far more feasible and also able to promote organized cooperation among countries. Institutional liberalism also has an argument, namely the higher the interdependence, the higher the demand for cooperation. Institutional liberalism includes arguments that state that international institutions play an important role in coordinating international cooperation.¹⁰ International institutions here can be formal and non-formal organizations representing countries, but also as official rules, agreements. With the existence of international organizations can provide information flows and forums for an organization, where the government to see the commitments of other countries whether they have run or not as agreed upon, strengthen pre-existing mutual trust in solidarity with an international agreement and reduce the fear of each other. Institutions are often considered capable of providing solutions to various types of problems collectively. Therefore norms, rules of institutions are formed and decided because it is able to help States to deal with common problems. As Robert Keohane said that Institutionalists do not elevate the international regime to the position of myth about the authority that goes

beyond the State, these regimes are determined by the State to achieve their goals.¹¹

The Concept of Interdependence

The concept of interdependence is one of the most important concepts in describing the nature of the international system and this concept says that not only are the actor countries independent as a whole but the countries depend on each other. Basically, there is no country that can fulfill its own needs so that the country will still need assistance from other countries. Because every country depends on resources and products from other countries that are not owned by the country.¹² Therefore, every policy that will be issued by a country will have an impact/effect quickly and seriously to other countries, even with domestic policies that will have broad implications for other countries. Interdependence is formed because of cooperation between countries and where the end of the objectives of the cooperation that is established is determined by the equality of interests of each party involved. International cooperation is a necessity that must be done by the state or other international actors because of the interdependence between international actors with increasingly complex human life.¹³

The Concept of National Interest

The concept of national interest is one of the most frequently used concepts in the analysis of international relations, both to describe, explain, predict and encourage international behavior. The author uses this theory as a basis for explaining the foreign behavior of a country and this concept is often used to measure the success of a country's foreign policy. According to Hans J. Morgenthau, national interest is a tool to pursue power, with that power a country can control another country, more specifically the ability of a country to protect and maintain politics, physical identity and culture from interference/threats from other countries.¹⁴ The function of national interests is that it can be a reference in determining foreign policy and acts as the goal of a country, namely to provide welfare for every society it encompasses and then policies that have been decided become instruments to achieve the goals of the country.¹⁵

Method

In this paper, the authors used a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research is research that has results that cannot be obtained from statistical research and qualitative research can be used to examine the history, people's

lives, behavior, social activities, etc.¹⁶ This research method is more directed at finding meaning, understanding (understanding) symptoms, phenomena, events, besides that in this method can also understand the deepest meaning and essence contained in phenomena, events, events.¹⁷ While descriptive means that the data produced will be in the form of writing (depiction) about the phenomenon, the event under study, so as to provide a deep description of the phenomenon or event carried out by an individual, group, or organization in a comprehensive and holistic context. So qualitative descriptive research aims to interpret, understand, and describe the data concerned with facts, events, and phenomena.

This study will use data collection techniques in the form of library research. This technique uses good print literature such as books, magazines, newspapers, printed journals, reports, and various documents, as well as non-print in the form of various electronic media, slides, online journals, e-books, etc.¹⁸

Result and Discussions

OBOR is a form of inter-regional cooperation that runs in the fields of economy, investment, and infrastructure development. In the Liberal Theory, Institutional OBOR is seen as an international institution in which it functions to build cooperation between countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. With the OBOR, countries that are in it cooperate in a regular/organized manner, this is because an international institution has regulations, obligations, and structures in its operations. In such cooperation, each country gets its own advantages, the interests of each country will be fulfilled by the cooperation in OBOR. The benefits that are evenly distributed to each country such as the OBOR jargon that is "Benefit for All" can be seen from the existence of AIIB loans for each country in assisting the country's infrastructure development. The benefits for all of them apply to every country that cooperates in the OBOR, including cooperation between China and Indonesia.

Looking at the contents of the Interdependence Concept which is essentially cooperation between countries in order to meet their respective national needs, it is better if the authors identify the national interests of each country first.

1. China's National Interest

To Improve the State's Economy

Based on the view of macroeconomic theory, the infrastructure sector is an important means of supporting the economy of a country because it can increase efficiency and mobilize the flow of goods and services that have an impact on profits in the business sector. Therefore, China is trying to boost infrastructure in the OBOR to get the national income and stimulate its economic growth through areas that are passed by the infrastructure network. But according to some observers, OBOR is a Chinese instrument in mastering the world trade and world economy in order to eliminate US influence from Asia. The trend towards this is seen as not going there because China's focus is on developing the country's economy. Since the US exit from the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), Asia has experienced a fading effect from the US and this momentum is utilized by China to strengthen its influence in Asia through this OBOR collaboration.¹⁹ But it is only soft-power and is considered not threatening because it aims to increase China's bargaining power in the eyes of the world.

Equity of Development

The western part of China is an area that is still experiencing poverty due to the lack of even distribution, even though China's economy has developed rapidly in recent times. The sections are Gansu, Hainan, Ningxia, Qinghai and Tibet provinces which contribute the lowest per capita income in 2016.²⁰ Poverty is feared to cause separatism because the government is less able to overcome the problem of poverty. Therefore, the Chinese government proposed an OBOR initiative so as a tool to develop infrastructure networks that could stimulate the economy in western China. The policy is part of the "belt" that is building infrastructure on lands such as bridges, highways and other infrastructure.²¹ The existence of this initiative is expected to make the western regions of China flowed by international trade channels to develop into advanced regions and can alleviate the poverty there.

As a Safeguard for China's Sea Trade Routes

In an effort to secure its maritime trade routes, China sought to build a sea trade route that connected countries in the OBOR policy with the name "road". This is intended to avoid sea blockades that are sometimes carried out by the US in a state of conflict, and the existence of sea piracy along the route.²² In addition, OBOR is also a media to ease tensions over the South China Sea conflict with countries around the waters. For example, since the operation of this

OBOR, the relationship between the Philippines and China has gradually subsided.²³

1. Indonesia's National Interest

The Need of Infrastructure Development

Indonesia is a country that has a large area. So, equitable development is needed. In reality, there is development inequality, especially in the infrastructure sector outside Java. Infrastructure in the periphery region is still lagging behind.²⁴ This greatly affects the progress and competitiveness of Indonesia and other countries. As a developing country, Indonesia certainly needs a large injection of funds and investment investments which can be aimed at building infrastructure. Therefore, in order to realize this goal, OBOR is the solution to the problems faced by Indonesia.

Realizing Indonesia's goal as a "Global Maritime Fulcrum"

The program that makes Indonesia the world's maritime axis is in line with the One Road program or "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". This is because the maritime silk route passes through Indonesian waters in parts of Jakarta and the Malacca Strait which incidentally is the busiest sea traffic lane.²⁵ Indonesia did not waste this opportunity to build supporting infrastructure such as ports with fast and efficient dwelling time, strengthen marine security institutions, and others. The opportunity to become a maritime axis was initiated by President Joko Widodo because he assumed that the geo-economic and geopolitical center was shifting towards Asia and triggered the rise of countries in Asia.²⁶ From this idea produced a regulation concerning Indonesian Maritime Policy in accordance with Presidential Regulation No. 16 of 2017.²⁷

Development on Industry and Technology Sector

In order to realize industrial and technological competitiveness, Indonesia needs a collaborative partner to develop the field. OBOR is a place for mutual transfer of technology between the two countries so that each can advance the field that is deemed necessary to be developed. The concrete steps that have been taken are the construction of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Belitung, and the construction of a 35,000 MW coal-fired power plant.²⁸

Seeing the exposure of the national interests of the two countries we can draw a conclusion, that is in cooperation there must be interest that is carried out in order to meet domestic needs. If we collaborated with the

Interdependence Theory, then we can see whether the needs of each country have been fulfilled in this OBOR collaboration.

For Indonesia

The collaboration of OBOR is certainly very beneficial for Indonesia because in realizing the idea of its Global Maritime Fulcrum, China has lent funds to build supporting infrastructure. Especially for Indonesia, China through its AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) funds infrastructure projects by 90% of its cost requirements.²⁹ The construction of this infrastructure is carried out in order to improve sea connectivity which aims to process the circulation of goods and services efficiently and without obstacles. This sea connectivity can be built by establishing ports located in line with the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and functioned as a sea port that handles cargo and ships and to supply human resource needs. Besides the port, the development that receives investment from OBOR is the sea highway. The idea of the sea highway aims to reduce the logistics costs of domestic trade throughout the archipelago so that domestic basic needs are met evenly in the regions. On the same occasion, the island economy outside Java continued to grow which led to the emphasis on regional disparities.³⁰ So with the construction of the sea toll, it will affect the loss of inequality in areas outside Java and can facilitate the marketing of both domestic and export products along the OBOR line. In addition, the benefits that can be developed by Indonesia in addition to sea connectivity are to advance the marine tourism sector. This is something that has a significant impact considering that Indonesia is a country that has the fourth longest coastline in the world and can invite foreign tourists to visit this country. The tourism sector is clearly a thing that must be developed because Indonesia has a charming natural beauty and has a lot of potentials to bring in foreign exchange for the country. Adequate maritime tourism infrastructure development, especially in eastern Indonesia such as by making infrastructure that can accommodate visitor needs, consumption, sanitation, transportation, health, information centers, security, guide services, and trade facilities. The development of adequate tourism infrastructure will lead to the recognition of these destinations among local and foreign countries that can bring benefits to both the surrounding community and the state so as to reduce economic inequality in eastern Indonesia. So if we analyze, OBOR bringing benefits for the Global Maritime Fulcrum program initiated by President Joko Widodo and can help to meet Indonesia's national needs in the field of maritime infrastructure and development. The program contains five pillars about the world's maritime axis, and which in line with our analysis is the third point that reads "commitment to encourage infrastructure development and maritime connectivity by building sea tolls, seaports, logistics, shipping industry, and maritime tourism".³¹ This is expected to grow Indonesia's maritime economic

activities, as well as a tool to equalize the distribution of goods and services throughout Indonesia. From the creation of smoothing, it will produce prosperity, from welfare will result in the loss of economic and social inequalities in society. The OBOR line will also increase Indonesia's trade volume to penetrate the country's markets through the OBOR line. The value of the program, which is trade without tariff barriers, is expected to further Indonesian industrial producers to be more active in exporting activities which will eventually bring incomes to the country.

For China

OBOR is an opportunity for China to improve the country's economy. Because, through the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road line, the circulation of goods becomes unhindered and that momentum is utilized by China to market its products in Indonesia. Chinese export products can penetrate the Indonesian market which results in an increase in the country's foreign exchange. Goods from China that are notoriously cheap but whose quality is maintained are starting to be the choice of the Indonesian people compared to goods from expensive competitors, but the quality is not much different from those made in China. This is the key to the success of Chinese goods products that can penetrate the Indonesian market. In addition to goods, the flow of service trade has also increased, such as with the increase of Foreign Workers (Foreign Workers) in China to Indonesia to build infrastructure projects for cooperation between Indonesia and China.³² There are workers who are experts in their fields who are supervisors in development as well as Chinese workers whose economies in the middle and lower classes can participate in building projects to improve their economies and have an impact on increasing per capita income. This is useful in development because it allows for sharing technology among these workers, which is clearly mutually beneficial. In addition, the presence of the OBOR lane can open access to the Indian Ocean that passes through the Malacca Strait. For China, this is beneficial because it can open a wider market to distribute goods and services to countries in the Indian Ocean waters, while for Indonesia with the passing of these vessels through the Malacca Strait region, it will be able to increase foreign exchange for the country this. The investment invested by China through the OBOR is indeed very tempting for Indonesia. Through AIIB, China can lend funds to countries that are building infrastructure including Indonesia. In addition, the advantage of this AIIB is the low-interest rate loan compared to the IMF or World Bank.³³ No wonder many countries borrow from AIIB to boost infrastructure development in their country. So that with many countries borrowing from AIIB, the interest can be used as an addition to China's income which leads to the development and improvement of the country's economy.

With various data presented above, it can be said that Indonesia depends on China especially in maritime infrastructure and land infrastructure development sector funded by AIIB. In addition to the involvement in OBOR, Indonesia is one step ahead in realizing the dream of becoming a maritime axis. Indonesia's dependence on China in the OBOR is considered able to advance the Indonesian economy. Furthermore, China's dependence on Indonesia can be seen from the broad market sector, Indonesia being the country that opened up the Chinese market to India, Africa through OBOR. In addition, Indonesia is one of the biggest markets for Chinese products. Chinese investment in Indonesia is also large, starting from business, energy, infrastructure, and others. Based on these various benefits, China is also seen as being able to further advance its economy.

Conclusion

The maritime history of a country can make the country in the future will revive its strength, in this case it is seen that China which once triumphed in the maritime region in the Ming Dynasty was initiated by the establishment of a maritime silk lane by admiral Zheng He now touting cooperation includes reopening the track. In addition, Indonesia, which once triumphed in the maritime field during the Sriwijaya empire, re-initiated its ideals as the world's maritime axis. In cooperation between Indonesia and China in OBOR, researchers can draw conclusions that Indonesia and China depend on each other in meeting their national interests, and have mutual ambitions to make the maritime sector one of the strengths of the two countries. Besides the maritime sector, the two countries also seem to want to build an economy for the better.

Endnotes

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