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THE JAKARTA–BANDUNG HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY AS AN ECONOMIC BELT INITIATIVE: ANALYSIS OF CHINA’S FOREIGN POLICY IN INDONESIA

FADLAN MUZAKKI¹

ABSTRACT

Sino-Indonesian relations have always had ups and downs. However, relations are now getting much better. It can be seen that China succeeded in winning a bid for a high-speed railway line linking Jakarta to Bandung. There are several key factors as to why China was successful, such as budget consideration, length of the construction, the total number of workers, the marketing strategy, and the business model offered. This paper analyses the factors using SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. In addition, this paper uncovers the potency of choosing China in handling the project of the high-speed railway. This research brings a new and broad perspective on the borderless community between two countries. Moreover, also gives a new perspective for students, researchers and observers who want to conduct a research on China-Indonesia relations in today’s world. Suggestions are also included to increase closer bilateral relations between Indonesia and China.

Keywords: China, Indonesia, foreign policy, OBOR, high-speed railway

BACKGROUND

China–Indonesia relations have fluctuated for several decades. Nevertheless, a positive signal of bilateral relation had been occurring in 1990 after being frozen for just under a quarter of century. In 1990, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen met President Soeharto to normalise diplomatic ties that had been frozen for 22 years (Suryadinata, 1990). Meanwhile, in early 1997, President Soeharto warned that should these communist groups spread their activities, the country’s economic development would be jeopardised (Storey, 2000). Indonesia approves of the “One China Policy”; China reciprocated the gesture at the United Nations on the East Timor issue.²

China is now becoming Indonesia’s second largest trading partner, with bilateral trade standing at US\$ 66.2 billion; this is four times that of 2005. Both countries continue to make relations closer by agreeing on investments. China continues to encourage Chinese direct investment in Indonesia. Trade and Economic Corporations have been established to empower both domestic economies and also impact on international economy, especially in the region (China Daily, 2013). Furthermore, the relation is becoming much closer. It can be seen that China’s Minsheng Investment Corp, Ltd has invested in Indonesia. This investment shows the corporation’s commitment to support China and Indonesia’s existing international relations (China Daily, 2015).

Turning to the current relations between Indonesia and China, both countries seem to establish bilateral relations to collaborate more on economic development. It was clear that China won the bid to build a high-speed railway from Jakarta to Bandung. Therefore, the question is how China won the bid to construct the project. The next question to arise is whether

¹ Master Student, School of Public Affairs, Department of International Relations, Zhejiang University China. Fadlan is an awardee of ASEAN-China Extraordinary Exchange Scholarship under the Chinese Government Scholarship. E-mail:-fadlanmuzakki@zju.ac.id

² Megawati Sukarnoputri, the then Indonesian President after Abdulrahman Wahid (Gusdur), and her government refused Taiwan President’s request to visit Indonesia in 2002, on the grounds that Indonesia believed in the “One China Policy”. The Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono government also concurs with the views of the previous government.

Chinese foreign policy in this sector can be seen as a success or a failure. Hence, this essay will analyse One Belt One Road, especially the economic belt initiative, to answer these questions.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

China's High Speed Railway Diplomacy can be examined by several theoretical approaches, especially when it comes to the high-speed Jakarta–Bandung railway project in Indonesia. It can be approached by international finance, international organisation and international system, peace and government.

From the international finance perspective, China has played a fundamental role in the establishment of a funding mechanism, and in multilateral, bilateral and commercial institutions. There are also several financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank and many others.³

According to international organisation and international system, China has played a major role in setting up the Shanghai Corporation Organization, the Ba'ao Forum and several others. This organisation is seen as a calm institution compared with traditional international organisations (Xinhuanet, 2015), but the point is Chinese people play an important role in these organisations, thus meaning power can be maintained in them. Furthermore, in order to strengthen its foreign policy, especially in Indonesia, China has shown that the country has enough power to control and handle international organisations. Thus, it creates trust between the governments of two countries.

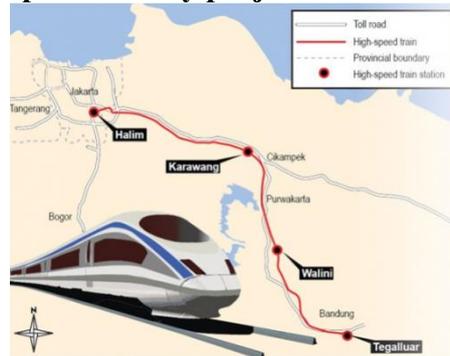
In terms of peace and governance, China's participation in organisations and financial institution has made the country be regarded as an inclusive country in economic development. China's approach to global governance is completely comprehensive and shows a mutual benefit to countries which seem to cooperate with China. This soft power diplomacy is to avoid military intervention (Chan, 2016). Hence, China's approach can achieve what can be called a "structural peace".

When a Chinese-led consortium sought a contract to build a high-speed railway between Jakarta and Bandung, Indonesia leveraged the consortium's eagerness to beat a Japanese-led rival to win a major concession: the consortium would drop its requirement for the Indonesian government to backstop China's loans. In the end, the consortium won the contract. But Indonesia offloaded the project's financial risk onto China (Chang, 2017). China welcomed Indonesia's choice, which meshes well both with Beijing's call for Chinese companies to "go global" and to increased infrastructure investments from China along the planned "Belt and Road routes".

JAKARTA–BANDUNG HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY

The Jakarta–Bandung high-speed railway is a complicated project which actually shows the competition between Chinese and Japanese companies. In early September 2015, Indonesia announced the plan to build a high-speed railway connecting Jakarta with Bandung. The purposes for constructing this rail line are to reducing transport time and improve economic development between the two cities. The Indonesian government even has a long-term goal to achieve by 2030 to extend the railway network up to 12,100 km to the major islands, including 3,800 km of urban rail network (Salim and Negara, 2016).

³ Such as the China Development Bank, the Export-Import Bank of China, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

Figure 1: Roadmap of high-speed railway project Jakarta Bandung

Source: *Indonesian Investment Website, 2017*

It can be seen that the high-railway project Jakarta Bandung will have four stops along the route: Halim, Karawang, Walini and Tegalluar. This fast train project from Jakarta to Bandung is a project connecting the capital city of Jakarta to the textile hub of Bandung. There was a long story behind the project before it was decided that China was to handle the project. China has been selected by Indonesian government over Japan to build the countries' first fast train rail link. The commencement year was 2016, the construction on the \$5.5 billion project will last for three years, with the completion schedule for 2019. The project will be developed by PT. Kereta Cepat Indonesia China, a joint venture formed in October 2015 between a consortium of Indonesian state-owned companies, and China Railway International. Moreover, the project will be carried out on a business-to-business basis with Indonesia having an interest in the joint venture, while China has 40% (Railway Technology, 2017).

The high-speed line between Jakarta and Bandung is generally regarded as an odd choice as existing infrastructure between both cities is relatively well-developed. Three-quarters of the investment required for the construction of the Jakarta–Bandung line will originate from the China Development Bank. The remaining 25% will come from Indonesian state-owned companies. Wijaya Karya said it may issue a global bond (Indonesia Investment, 2017).

Chinese State Councillor Wang Yong, who attended the ground-breaking ceremony for the project, read a congratulatory message from Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian President Joko Widodo at the ceremony. Xi said in the message that the successful launch of the project not only set a new record in pragmatic cooperation between China and Indonesia, but it will also become a new model for bilateral cooperation in various fields, particularly in infrastructure and production capacity (Huwaxia, 2016).

How Did China Win the Project?

The Jakarta–Bandung high-speed railway project was actually introduced in 2015. At the time, Japan had already proposed for the project for several years ago. Then, China participated in the project bidding process when Indonesian government officially announced opening the project. The result was that China won the bid. Several factors can be analysed to uncover the reasons why China won the project instead of Japan, which had already invested some resources (money) to conduct viability and feasibility studies on the project. First, these can be seen from economic and trade corporation between Indonesia and China. The corporation has a board prospect.

Table 1: Trade between Indonesia – China in thousand US\$

	2015	2016	%
Total trade	36,478,290.1	37,399,875.8	2.53
Export	12,446,116.3	12,827,738.8	3.07
Import	24,032,173.7	24,572,137.1	2.25

Source: BPS, Processed by Trade Data and Information Centre, Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia.

It can be seen from the table that trade between China and Indonesia experienced a gradual increase from around US\$ 36.4 billion in 2015 to approximately US\$ 37.4 billion in 2016, an increase of 2.53% in total trade. This condition has impacted on the relations between Indonesia and China in other sectors, not only in trade but also in industry. Thus, this can be counted as one of the factors enabled China to handle the high-speed railway from Jakarta Bandung. Other than that, the main relation has also strengthened to other sectors, such as education, oil, infrastructure, security, counter-terrorism, and other economic sectors. This close relation leads to the building of mutual trust, especially in the railway project.

Secondly, China's high-speed rail is considered to enjoy a competitive edge. China's high-speed rail has developed fast. It has developed with the longest operating mileage and the most comprehensive technology that the country has. This comprehensive and advanced technology are increasing the quality and reducing cost. Moreover, about 30 countries had discussed cooperating with China in the area of transport sector, such as Malaysia, South Africa, Argentina, Thailand, Cambodia and so forth (Kun, 2016).

The high-speed railway service in China was first introduced in 2007. Then, it became massively popular with an annual ridership of over US\$1.44 billion in 2016. That is why the Chinese high-speed railway system is trusted in numerous countries throughout the world (Smith, 2017). In other words, China's high-speed railway system has progressively and massively increased over the last few years since its establishment. It was recorded that 9,676km of tracks are in operation and a lot more will be followed in the years ahead. Meanwhile, the planning and construction is still on-going in various parts of China. The government plans envision of 16,000km high-speed railway lines at the cost of US\$293 billion to connect major cities by 2020 (Railway Technology, 2017). The graph below simplifies and shows the pace of China's high-speed railway construction.

Figure 2: China's planned high-speed rail network in 2011

Source: Businessweek "The Year of the Metal Rabbit: China's High-Speed Rail Network" Feb. 2, 2011 China-Mike.com

It can be seen clearly that China's high-speed railway has quickly developed; it only took a few years to connect several major cities in China. It can be clearly seen from the thick

lines on the graph that showed that the construction had already finished in 2011, only few years after the establishment. Therefore, the competitive edge in this way has made an impact on the Indonesian government decision when it comes to deciding China as a country to handle the high-speed railway project.

Thirdly, China has prestigious “salesman” who always promote their local companies. Chinese president Xi Jinping introduced the idea of high-speed train to Indonesia in 2013 when he introduced the One Belt One Road Initiative. Moreover, Premier Li Keqiang also promoted China’s high-speed railway technology when he visited other countries, including Indonesia. The effort of the leaders to always promote its high-speed railway is to build trust in other countries. Furthermore, Xu Shaoshi, President Xi Jinping’s special envoy and head of the National Development and Reform Commission, met Indonesian President Joko Widodo in Djakarta on 20 August 2015 and submitted a feasibility study for the Jakarta–Bandung high-speed rail project which was completely different from proposal submitted by Japan. During his visit, Xu also met other Indonesian cabinet ministers for further communications and lobbying.

In addition, Indonesia has seen that the local economic development will be boasted by choosing China in the project as China will undertake a technology transfer as part of the project. Hence, Indonesia took advantage of this by choosing China. The project is expected to greatly benefit local economic development as the project in Indonesia is also being implemented in several countries in South-East Asia (China Embassy, 2017). Furthermore, to be analysed more deeply, I use SWOT analysis to delve into how China won the bid.

Strengths

China is ready to provide guarantee-free loans, while Japan requested Indonesian Government Funding. The high-profile railway contract was cancelled mid-way through due to high costs and funding issues. Initial plans were changed to a medium-speed rail link that would be 40% cheaper. Indonesian authorities upgraded the proposal to a high-speed rail link, and awarded the contract to China.

In 2015, after months of speculation, the Indonesian government decided to choose China to build the high-speed railway from Jakarta to Bandung. This was as a response to dissatisfaction with the slow progress in Japan’s infrastructure in recent years (Asian Insight, 2017). Additionally, in the proposal and planning provided by Japan was greatly different from China proposals. This resulted in a long-time gap from the planning and implementation of the Japan’s project (Masahiro, 2015). Therefore, to make it clear, the table shown below explains the comparison between China and Japan’s proposals and plans. This also analyses the strength that China has in the project.

Table 2: The comparison of China and Japan proposal in the high-speed railway project between Jakarta and Bandung in Indonesia

	China	Japan
Total Cost	US\$5.5 billion (IDR 74.3 trillion)	US\$6.2 billion (IDR 83.7 trillion)
Government Commitment	No guarantee from government or state budget Business to business deal	Government guarantee (50% of project value) and financing from the state budget
Business Concept	25% equity, 75% loans from CBD Loan terms: 40-year, 10-year grace period	75% loans from JICA, 25% state budget Loan terms: 40-year, 10-year grace period
Financing	60% US\$, 2% interest per year 40% RMB, 3.46% interest per year	100% yen, 0.1% interest per year (government loan)
Construction	Excavation 16.6km Landfill 40.5 km Raised 70.5 km Tunnels 22.9 km	Excavation 24.22 km Landfill 34.58 km Raised 39.2 km Tunnels 42.14 km
Railway track	150.5 km of track Route: Gambir-gedebage eight stations	140.14 km of track

	<i>The revised version:</i> 142.3 km of track Route: Halim-Karawang-Walini-Tegalluar (4 stations)	Route: Dukuh Atas – Gedebage 5 stations
Speed	350–380 km per hour	320 km per hour
Ticket Price	IDR 200,000 (US\$ 14.8)	IDR 200,000 (US\$ 14.8)
	Begin construction in 2016 Completed 2018 Operational 2019	Begin construction in 2016 Completed 2019 Operational 2021

Source: Content and data from Indonesian Railway Company.

The table above reveals China's strength in comparison with Japan proposal. This leads China to handle the project of the high-speed railway project. It can be clearly seen that the total cost offered by China was comparatively cheaper than Japan's. China's proposal cost only US\$5.5 billion while Japan was more expensive, costing around US\$6.2 billion.

Interestingly, China offers full responsibility in covering all budgets in the project while Japan asks the Indonesian government to fund 50% of total budgeted project cost. This is a significant advantage for the Indonesian government as the government also wants to build other infrastructure in other areas based on Nawa Cita.⁴ Japan's business model and regulations have made it impossible [for Indonesia] to give a concession credit to Japanese companies. Besides, the construction and planning is also very important; the total excavations that China plan is only 16.6km, and it is 8km shorter than Japan's plan. On the proposal, China offers eight route stops while Japan offers only four. Actually, what China planned was what Indonesian government wanted. Nonetheless, Indonesian government has revised the stops from eight to four after the acceptance of the bid.

The speed of the high-speed railway between Jakarta and Bandung that China offers on the planning and the proposal was considered to be faster in comparison with Japan. The speed of China's railway is 380km/hour while Japan's was only 320km/hour. The last strength that became Indonesian government consideration on choosing China to undertake the project was about the time of the construction. It stated that China will take three years from construction to operation while Japan had a timeline of more than five years.

This analysis is also supported by the statement from the Indonesian government. It is stated that Indonesian government did not want to use any state funds for the project. This was completely in contrast with Japan proposal (Tiezzi, 2015). In the end, it appears it was the financing question that decided the issue in China's favour. Indonesia's National Development Planning Minister at the time, Sofyan Djalil, told Japan's chief cabinet secretary, Yoshihide Suga, that Indonesia's wish to see the project completed under a business-to-business model (without any guarantee of funding from the state) precluded Japanese involvement: Japanese companies would not be able to meet that requirement (Salim, 2015).

Weaknesses

Even though China's bid was stronger than Japan, that does not mean that China's bid was without any form of weakness in the proposal or in the process of construction. There are several factors which can be considered as weakness. These can become a threat for China and Indonesia if China cannot handle them properly.

Firstly, about 90% of that project was conducted by Chinese contractors, and the Indonesians had complained about the low quality of Chinese equipment, unqualified Chinese contractors, poor service maintenance and delayed completion (Salim, 2015). At the same time, there were also complaints from the Chinese contractors that the bidding price set by the

⁴ Nawa Cita is the main goal of Indonesian government under the leadership of President Joko Widodo. It aims to accelerate economic development in undeveloped area such as Papua and several provinces in the eastern Indonesia.

Indonesian government was too low by international standards. This had to be resolved by an extension in quality reduction (Salim, 2015). With regards to the delay, they drew attention to Indonesia's notoriously lengthy land acquisition process, and argued that the Indonesian government had failed to ensure land provision on time and this was what caused the construction delays.

There is also a misperception about China in Indonesia. This is because there are numerous poor quality Chinese goods sold Indonesia. This has affected the Jakarta–Bandung high-speed railway project. This is a complete challenge to China as a country should prove that the quality is a priority for the Indonesian project. Secondly, PT. KCIK asked the Indonesian government to play an important role if the project failed. The Indonesian government is firmly responding to the request and declining it due to Indonesian regulation. From the beginning, the Indonesian government has committed to avoid using national budget to construct this project. But then China's company does that.

These two requests made Indonesian government rethink the fast train project. Meanwhile, there are a great number of requirements that should be fulfilled by the Chinese company – for example, AMDAL, engineering design, special landscape planning, and basic requirement constructions. Nevertheless, not all Chinese investments have been criticised. Some infrastructure projects built by China have been successful, for example the Suramadu bridge linking East Java and Madura (Amin, 2016).

Opportunities

For Indonesia, it considered the high-speed railway project as opening up more opportunities to accelerate infrastructure development agenda and with the hope of boosting the slowing economy.

For China, the railway project opens opportunities to increase its infrastructure exports, strengthen its economic influence in Indonesia and the region, and secure long-term returns. It will also serve as a test for China to convince potential buyers that they can build an integrated and high-quality railway system at a competitive price. Further opportunities for China and Indonesia in terms of the high-speed railway project can be clearly seen from the table given below.

Table 3: Comparison parameters between Indonesia and Japan to establish opportunities for Indonesia

No.	Parameter	China and Indonesia Consortium	Jepang
1	Business Concept	Joint Venture Company (JVC) Indonesia (60%) and China (40%). Risk Project: Joint Venture Company (JVC)	Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC). Financing (ordinary contractor), risk: government
2	Procurement of Land	Indonesian Government does not have responsibility to procurement of land	Indonesian Government needs to take part in procurement of land
3	Local Content	58.6%	40%
4	New Job Creation	During the period of construction: 39.000 people a year. Chinese workers who will engage in the project are only expert staff and supervisors	During the period of construction: 35,000 people a year. Some of them are Japanese workers
5	Technology	Siemens Technology which is developed in China since 2003. Speed: 350km/hour and max 380km/hour. This technology is suitable for tropic weather. High-speed railway technology system is opened	Japan, since 1964. High-speed railway technology system is closed
6	Transfer of Technology	Through fabric construction of Rolling Stock in Indonesia	No programme mentioned in transferring technology

Source: PT. Kereta Api Indonesia

According to the table shown above, it can be seen that more opportunities can be obtained by Indonesia when it was decided to award China the project. This is also because China offers Joint Venture Company (JVC) which is almost 60% ownership by Indonesia and the rest for China. The Risk Project will be a responsibility of the JVC. This means that the government does not bear any risk of the project in case the project fails. On the other hand, Japanese mechanise asked government to bear part of the cost if the project failed. Meanwhile the project will be financed through a Chinese loan, without aid from the Indonesian State Budget. China Development Bank will provide approximately 75% of the funding, and the rest will be arranged by the joint venture partners. The loan will be for a 40-year period, with a 10-year grace period.

Further, the Indonesian government does not need to be involved in procurement of land when China handles the project. Nonetheless, Japan asked Indonesian government to take part in procurement of the land for the project. The high-speed railway project under Chinese construction will create 4,000 jobs in comparison with Japan. The technology China offered was apparently open, not like Japanese technology, which was closed. Indonesia can take this technology for further and other development in other area after completion of the project. Moreover, the Indonesian government will take more opportunities as China is guaranteeing the Indonesia transfer of technology in the project. It means that Indonesia will take advantage by choosing China without taking money from the government purse.

Threats

After the ground-breaking ceremony in January 2016, construction of the Jakarta–Bandung high-speed railway had to be suspended due to issues related to paperwork as well as revisions that had to be made to the project's development plan. There also surfaced reports that land procurement and a shortage of funds exacerbated the situation. Critics consider the project an odd choice as existing infrastructure between both cities is relatively adequate (railway and roads) while the route is not that critically important for business. Indonesia is plagued by inadequate infrastructure (both in quality and quantity), causing high logistics costs while making the country's investment climate less attractive. This also causes social issues as it limits people's access to healthcare (Indonesia Investment, 2015).

This situation has become a threat for Indonesia because if the project fails or does not continue, it will make Japan see the Indonesian government as an inconsistent country for deciding the development project. It is because Japan has offered the proposal earlier with more realistic implementation and covering risk with governmental fund.

CONCLUSION

China's foreign policy with Indonesia can be clearly seen from how China tries to lobby Indonesia in several projects or programmes. It has actually been happening several years before the leadership of Joko Widodo. For example, the Suramadu Bridge was constructed when Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono took the Indonesian presidential seat from 2004 to 2014. Moreover, when Joko Widodo took power in 2014, the relation between Indonesia and China became closer. With the focus of infrastructure development, transport construction and building ports in numerous parts in Indonesia, China's government is carrying out an "expansion" easily large enough to handle several projects in Indonesia.

With the same perception in maritime policy, it makes it easy for China to have a high-speed railway project. There are several factors why China succeeded in convincing Indonesia that it should undertake the high-speed railway project. Xi Jinping was active in promoting its railway company to Indonesia. As it stated on the economic and business theory, the success of business depends on the marketing, and marketing depends on a good and persuasive salesman. That is why Indonesia chose China to handle the project. Moreover, the fast-growing domestic railway in China has built trust in a number of countries. This seemingly proves that China is expert in handling the project.

RECOMMENDATION

According to the result using SWOT analysis, the author has concluded that threats and weakness should be taken care of so as not to affect the smooth running of the project. Therefore, several recommendations have been offered to strengthen China in order to succeed in the railway project.

- China and Indonesia should build a much closer relationship, not only in the scope of Government to Government, people to people relationship. This aims to get mutual understanding between two countries as people's perspective in Indonesia can influence its public policy.
- Sino-Indonesian relations should be strengthened through the Eminent Person Group Project. This scheme has already been implemented in relations with India and Malaysia. The result was satisfied as it will alter the negative tone in bilateral relations and strengthen relations.
- Soft diplomacy should be improved between two countries. The public diplomacy or soft diplomacy between two countries should be improved. For example, cooperation in the areas of research and education should be improved between the two countries. Furthermore, cultural exchange should also be improved.
- China should also have a good strategy in understanding current conditions in Indonesia. Recently, the sense of nationalism is apparently increasing due to political conditions. Many protests on social media and several places have happened due to China's company. Therefore, China should establish more strategies to give a deep understanding for the Indonesian citizen. This will be beneficial to both countries, not only to China.

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