



China's Military Engagement in The Pacific Region: Implications For Australia's Defence and National Security Policy

Muhammad Ferdy Aditya | Khoirul Amin* | Devy Indah Paramitha

INSTITUTION/ AFFILIATION

The Department of International Relations,
Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan
Timur, Samarinda, Indonesia

CORRESPONDENCE

*Khoirul Amin, Universitas Muhammadiyah
Kalimantan Timur, Jl. Ir. H. Juanda No.15,
Sidodadi, Kec. Samarinda Ulu, Samarinda,
Kalimantan Timur 75124, Indonesia
Email: ka163@umkt.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The Pacific region has become a major focus of international attention following indications of increasing Chinese military involvement in the past decade. This involvement has raised significant concerns, especially for countries in the region, including Australia. As one of the regional powers and traditional actors in the Pacific, Australia faces complex national defense and security policy challenges as a result of Chinese military involvement in the region. Using a qualitative approach with desk study analysis, this paper attempts to explain the implications of Chinese military involvement in the Pacific region for Australia's national defense and security policy through the framework of security dilemma analysis and strategic perspectives in foreign policy making. This paper finds that China's military presence in the Pacific region affects defense strategy and poses new security challenges for Australia, including increasing security pressures and changes in Australia's defense strategy. In response, Australia has taken proactive steps by strengthening cooperation with regional allies, enhancing defense capabilities and strengthening security diplomacy in the Pacific region as a form of transformation of its defense policy.

KEYWORDS

China's military engagement; Australia; Pacific Region; defence strategy; national security policy

INTRODUCTION

In the past three decades, China has rapidly increased its military capabilities, investing heavily in modernizing its armed forces and developing advanced weaponry. China's rapid economic growth has provided the resources needed to increase military spending and develop military technology. According to data released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China's military budget has increased 24-fold by 2020. China's military spending in 2020 reached US\$261 billion, a figure that is not comparable to the military spending in 1990, which was only US\$10.7 billion ([Silva et al., 2022](#)). The trend of increasing spending allocations will increase until 2023, reaching 1.55 trillion yuan (equivalent to 224.79 billion US dollars) ([Erina, 2023](#)). China's aggressiveness in increasing military spending allocations is part of an effort to secure its strategic interests globally. China seeks to become a major world power and play a greater role in global politics. To achieve this goal, China needs to have strong and modern military capabilities. Consequently, China's military modernization has changed the balance of power and the landscape of security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region and globally ([Satris, 2015](#)).

China's military development has become an important issue for the stability of the global security architecture, especially for the stability of security in the Indo-Pacific region. This is because China's military modernization and expansion are accompanied by a more assertive foreign policy, especially in responding to issues related to territorial conflicts. Also, China's efforts to project its power and influence beyond the boundaries of its sovereignty. One of the efforts to expand this projection is manifested in the form of assistance and assistance to several partner countries in the form of economic development and increasing defense capabilities. In the context of China's presence in the Pacific region, China has provided significant foreign assistance to several countries in the region, such as Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tonga, and Fiji in the form of infrastructure development projects, economic cooperation, trade and investment, humanitarian assistance, and technological assistance. In the defense and military sector, although China does not officially publish military assistance and cooperation with Pacific island countries, in the last two decades, China is known to have consistently provided military assistance to four Pacific island countries, namely Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu ([Liang, 2022](#)). The military assistance provided includes equipment assistance, personnel training, and joint exercises. Although the quantity of military assistance provided by Beijing is relatively small and cannot yet be categorized as deadly combat equipment assistance, Beijing's efforts to normalize its military presence in the region are a form of ambition to expand China's military power in the Pacific islands ([Liang, 2022](#)). The signing of a security pact reached by China and the Solomon Islands in 2022 is also a historic step for both countries, while opening up greater potential for China to gain military reach in the Pacific islands ([Harding & Pohle, 2022](#)). China's military presence in the region allows China to increase its military

power projection and get closer to Australia as a major ally of the United States in the region ([Harding & Pohle, 2022](#)).

The approach of Chinese military power in the Pacific islands is not only a potential disruption of Australia's sea and air communication lines. However, the serious implication for Australia and its allies of China's success in gaining a foothold to present its military power is the possibility of establishing military bases in the region ([Wallis, 2020](#)). The projection of China's military presence as an existential threat to Australia clearly disrupts its strategic interests and reduces its role as a traditional and dominant actor in the Pacific islands region. Furthermore, China's economic assistance to Pacific island countries also has the potential to encourage political instability and corruption, which has implications for undermining Australia's efforts to strengthen democracy and its position as a regional leader and facilitator in promoting stability and cooperation among Pacific countries ([Wallis, 2020](#)). Australia has developed strong bilateral relations with Pacific countries over many years and is also an active member of regional organisations such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Organisation for South Pacific Economic Co-operation and Development. Australia also actively provides support in areas such as health, education and security in the Pacific region ([El Haq & El Islam, 2020](#)). On security matters, Australia leads the Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which aims to help stabilise the political and security situation in Solomon Islands.

Australia is an active member of regional security partnerships such as the Pacific Islands Forum, the South Pacific Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and QUAD membership with the United States, Japan and the United States. Australia also works with countries in the region to develop their military capabilities and build good relations with them. One of Australia's primary objectives in maintaining regional security in the Pacific is to ensure that countries in the region are able to protect their sovereignty and address security threats, including ensuring that no external power poses a potential existential threat to Australia ([Wallis, 2020](#)). In the context of China's military presence in the Pacific islands, Australia is seeking to counter China's influence in the Pacific region by strengthening regional cooperation and development ([Febriani, 2018](#)). This is done by strengthening its relationships with Pacific nations, providing them with security support, including for broader purposes such as addressing issues such as drug trafficking, terrorism and human trafficking. Australia also actively participates in joint military exercises with countries in the region, including the biennial Talisman Sabre exercise with the United States and Japan ([Wuryanti, 2012](#)).

In its development, the possibility of weakening Australia's important role as a traditional actor in the Pacific region after the security pact agreement between China and the Solomon Islands is one thing that is a source of concern for Canberra. The position that can be accessed by the Chinese military in the southern part of the Solomon Islands is only 2,000 miles from Australia. This allows Beijing to deploy troops and other activities with

strategic objectives ([BBC, 2022](#)). The construction of Chinese military bases is the most threatening discourse for Australia because it is directly correlated to the stability of Australia's national and strategic interests in the region ([Medcalf, 2023](#)). In response, Australia has taken stances and policies to secure its national interests by increasing the defense budget, modernizing the military, and developing defense cooperation with countries in the region ([Azim, 2018](#)).

In fact, Australia has been concerned about China as a revisionist power. In Australia's 2009 defense white paper, it was stated that Australia views China as a security challenge to the regional order. A similar statement was reiterated in the 2013 defense white paper, which contained a warning about the dangers of China as an aggressive great power and has plans to build bases around Australian territory with the aim of projecting its power ([Varrall, 2021](#)). Furthermore, the Defense Policy released by the Australian Department of Defense in 2020 also expressed concerns about the increasing presence of the Chinese military in the Indo-Pacific region. This policy document emphasizes the importance of strengthening alliances and partnerships with countries in the region, including the United States and Pacific countries, and strengthening their defense capabilities. In addition, Australia's national defense policy also emphasizes the importance of defending its rights in international waters and opposing illegal territorial claims by other countries, including China. The policy also underlines the importance of strengthening Australia's own defense capabilities, for example by investing in defense technology and developing the skills of defense personnel ([Australian Government Department of Defence, 2020](#)). In general, Australia has a clear and comprehensive national security strategy in dealing with regional power shifts, especially regarding the potential threat from China, which is still considered quite ambivalent ([Farneubun, 2022](#)).

However, Australia is a country that has strong economic ties with China as its largest trading partner. Therefore, Australia is required to implement a strategy that ensures a balance between security and economic policies in the face of the increasing presence of Chinese power. China has increased its presence and influence in the Indo-Pacific region, including through expansion and controversial territorial claims in the South China Sea. This increasingly strong presence has raised concerns about regional stability and security ([Kurniawan, 2021](#)). In the article entitled the relationship between Australia and China in the Asia-Pacific region. Case study: Chinese expansionism in the Asia-Pacific written by Meita A. Nindyawati and Badrus Sholeh stated that the impact of Chinese expansionism in the Asia-Pacific region on Australia's foreign policy, especially in the context of security and defense, has triggered Australia's concerns about security and stability, especially regarding territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Therefore, both countries need to start constructive cooperation and dialogue to achieve regional stability ([Nindyawati & Sholeh, 2020](#)).

As a traditional actor in the region, one interesting thing to study further is how Australia responds to and manages defense policies in the face of potential threats from China's presence. Siti Nadjiha Hariri in her article entitled China-Australia Competition in the struggle for influence in the Pacific region, Hariri stated that as a form of effort to stem China's presence in the Pacific, Australia is encouraging greater involvement to create political, economic and security stability. This is achieved through intensive cooperation with countries in the region, especially in the South Pacific. Australia is also actively involved as a major actor in peacekeeping missions in the Solomon Islands and development assistance for countries in the Pacific Region ([Hariri, 2020b](#)). In line with Hariri, James Batley in his article entitled Australia and Security in the Pacific Island also highlighted Australia's role in maintaining security in Pacific Island countries. Australia has established strong diplomatic relations with Pacific countries and implemented various aid and training programs to improve security capacity in the region ([Batley, 2021](#)). Several previous articles have generally placed China's presence in the Pacific Islands as the main source of threat to Australia. However, the analysis of its implications for Australia's security and how Australia responds to the projection of the Chinese threat is not placed in the framework of an asymmetric and complex relationship, given that China's military power posture after modernization is in a superior position. All previous articles also normatively maintain Australia's status quo as the main actor in the region amidst China's presence as a revisionist power that has the potential to shift Australia as a provider of security stability in the Pacific Islands. This article contributes to explaining how Australia's defense policy is managed amidst ambivalence in responding to the presence and expansion of China's military threat in the Pacific Islands.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the context of national defense and security policy, there are several theoretical frameworks that are relevant to understanding the implications of China's military involvement in the Pacific region for Australia. In this study, two theoretical frameworks that will be explained are the Security Dilemma and the Strategy Model.

Security dilemma is a term used in international relations to describe a situation in which a country's actions to enhance its security may be perceived as a threat by other countries around it, thereby creating tension and increasing the likelihood of conflict ([Jervis, 1978](#)). In the context of Australia and China's military engagement in the Pacific region, the security dilemma becomes relevant because steps taken by Australia to defend its security interests may be perceived by China as a potential threat, and vice versa. In the security dilemma, countries tend to increase their defense capabilities and build alliances with other countries to strengthen their security. However, such actions may be interpreted as provocations by other countries, which then respond by increasing their own defense

capabilities or seeking stronger alliances. Thus, the security dilemma creates a spiral of tension and an arms race between countries.

In the Australian context, China's increasing military involvement in the Pacific region could exacerbate the security dilemma. Australia, as a country with strategic interests in the region, tends to enhance its defense capabilities and build alliances with allied countries to safeguard its national security. However, these actions could trigger a response from China, which may see it as Australia's attempt to limit China's influence in the Pacific region. Thus, there is a risk of escalating tensions and an arms race between Australia and China in the Pacific region.

Furthermore, in a strategic perspective, a state is seen as a rational actor in pursuing its national interests and goals in the global political arena. This means that a country's foreign policy is based on rational considerations and careful calculations of the possible consequences of each action taken. In this perspective, the focus is on interactions and transactions between countries, so that every event that occurs is considered from the perspective of all participants. Therefore, foreign policy analysis not only considers the respondent's perspective, but also considers the perspective of other countries involved in the interaction ([Jensen, 1982](#)).

The Strategic Perspective also emphasizes that a country's foreign policy is based on the strategic objectives it wants to achieve. However, a country's policy choices will depend heavily on the situation in its strategic environment, including the distribution of the powers involved, especially the relationship between great powers and middle powers. Middle powers are often associated with a group of countries that occupy a middle position on the international political spectrum, just below the superpowers ([Yilmaz, 2017](#)). Another definition also states that middle power countries are countries that are between the great powers and the most obvious criterion to distinguish between the two is their geopolitical position ([Park, 2022](#)). In general, the behaviour of middle power countries is different from superpowers that tend to impose leadership strategies and foreign policy orientation as a global platform. While the characteristics of middle power foreign policy such as Australia are focused on reducing conflict by involving other countries that have the same vision to reach a compromise that can be implemented and is usually achieved through multilateral mechanisms ([Jordaan, 2003](#)). Policymakers will conduct a risk-benefit analysis to determine the right policy to achieve these objectives. In addition, this perspective also shows the continuity and changes in a country's foreign policy that are influenced by changes in global conditions and changes in national interests over time ([Lovell, 1970](#)).

Lovell's analysis of the factors influencing the process of formulating a country's foreign policy strategy provides an important picture of the various things that a country must pay attention to in formulating its foreign policy. The structure of the international system includes international rules and norms, global policies, and military and economic power in the world. These factors can influence how a nation-state formulates its foreign

policy, because a country's foreign policy cannot be separated from the context of the existing international system. Elite perception means the views and understanding of the country's political elites about the international and national situation as well as national goals and interests. These perceptions can influence how political elites formulate foreign policy and how they make decisions in certain situations. The strategies of other nation-states also influence how a nation-state shapes its foreign policy. The actions and strategies of other nations can affect the nation's security and national interests, so the nation must adjust its strategy to the actions of other nations. State capacity is also important in shaping foreign policy. Military, economic, and diplomatic capabilities can influence how a nation-state interacts with other nations on the international stage. Based on these factors, there are four models of interaction between nations from a strategic perspective, namely Leadership Strategy, Confrontation Strategy, Accommodation Strategy, and Concordance Strategy (Lovell, 1970).



Figure 1. Matrix of policy makers' choices regarding other nation-state strategies and estimates of their own relative capabilities as determinants of interaction styles. Source: Lovell (1970)

The relevance of using this theory is to see China's military involvement as a threat and influence on Australia's national defense policy. Australia's interest is to build joint defense cooperation in the Pacific region which is also in line with the idea of China's

military presence in the region. By looking at Australia's entry into China's idea and also Australia's foreign policy which prioritizes regional defense, this can then be analysed from the perspective of foreign policy strategy. This study uses two variables that determine political strategy according to Lovel. Where the first variable is the perception of one's own country's strategy towards other countries and the second is the estimate of one's own country's capabilities towards other countries. By looking at China's strategy whether it benefits Australia or not, Australia also sees which Chinese capabilities are superior or weaker by comparing them between Australia and China. Which will then form a strategic interaction between Australia's foreign policy and China's military presence in the Pacific region.

By taking this approach, Australia can build a pragmatic relationship with China while still prioritizing strategic issues such as defense and security. In terms of national defense and security policy, a confrontational strategy underlies Australia's defense policy through building military power and strengthening alliances with regional allies in order to contain the threat of China's military presence.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study to explore the implications of China's military presence in the Pacific region for Australia's defense and national security policies. This research begins by formulating research questions that will determine the data collection and analysis methods used. Qualitative methods allow flexibility and adaptability in the analysis process, so that they can accommodate changes, additions and replacement of concepts during the research.

In this research, the focus is on China's military involvement in the Pacific region and its impact on Australia's defense and national security policies. By using literature study, the author will collect and analyze various sources of relevant information, including research reports, scientific journals, government policies, and other related documents. Data analysis in this paper will be based on content analysis of all referenced literature studies. The analysis will be conducted by examining the literature with a focus on China's military presence in the context of Australian defence policy, including changing power dynamics, regional power balances and economic relations with China.

Thus, this research aims to see the impact of China's military involvement in the Pacific region on Australia's defense and national security policies. In the context of qualitative methods with a literature study approach, the author will analyze various relevant sources of information to answer research questions and reveal implications that can shape Australia's defense and security policies in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

China's Military Presence in the Pacific

China has experienced significant economic growth in recent decades and has become the second largest economic power in the world. This powerful economic force provides China with the resources necessary to develop and modernize their military forces. China has increased their defense budget substantially and allocated significant resources to military development. The Chinese government has set the 2023 defense budget at 1.54 trillion yuan. This represents an increase of 7.2% compared to 2022. China's defense budget increase in 2023 is the highest since 2020. In 2022, China's defense budget will also increase by 7.1%, reaching 1.45 trillion yuan. Meanwhile, in 2021 and 2020, the increase in the defense budget reached 6.8% and 6.6% respectively. In 2019, China recorded a higher increase in its defense budget, namely 7.5%, reaching 1.19 trillion yuan ([Agustiyanti, 2023](#)).

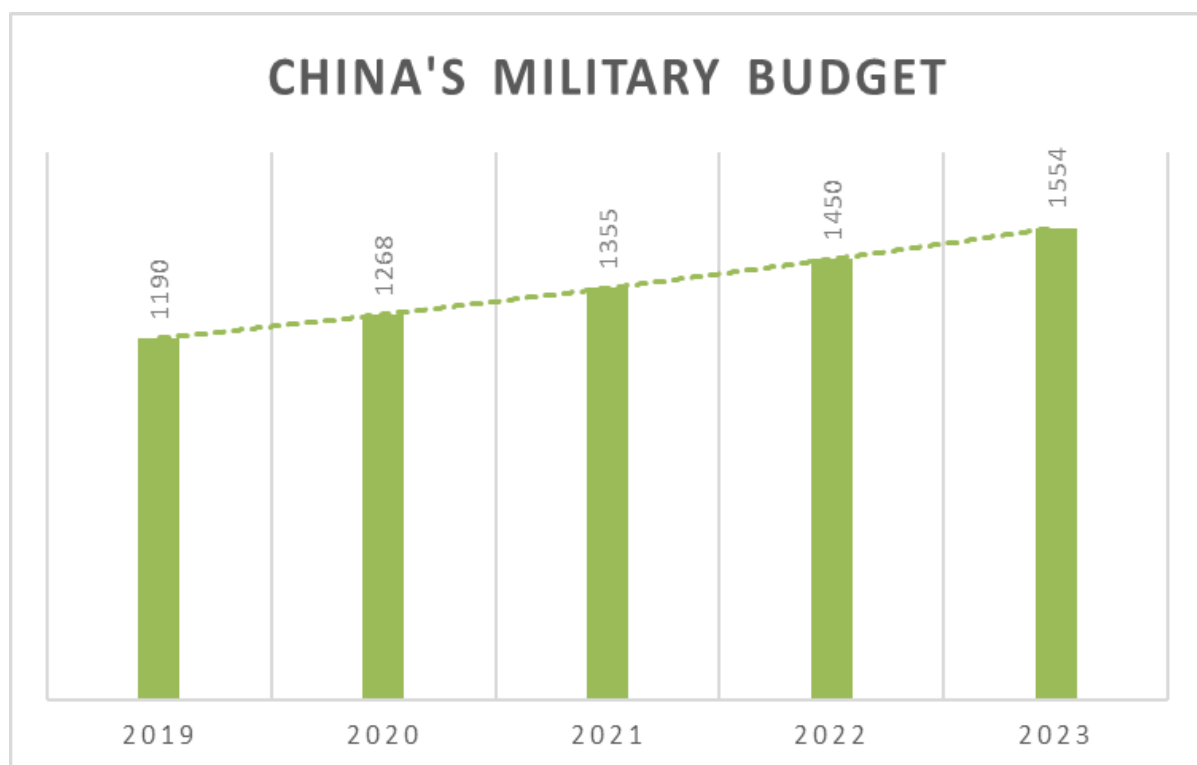


Figure 2. China's Defense Budget 2019-2023 (Billion Yuan). Source: [Xuanzun \(2023\)](#)

Statement from Wang Chao, spokesperson for the first session of the 14th NPC, stated that China's defense spending as a share of GDP has been kept relatively stable over the years and is below the world average. The average defense expenditure of countries in the world is about 2 percent of GDP, while China has expenditures of less than 1.5 percent of its GDP.

In comparative context, the United States (US) has a very large defense budget, with a budget of about \$817 billion for the Pentagon in the same year, more than three times China's defense budget. The US, with a defense budget approaching 4 percent of its GDP, is

the country with the highest defense budget in the world. Several other countries such as Japan, India, the UK, France, Germany and Australia also plan to increase their defense spending in 2023. However, China chose a different path by maintaining a relatively stable defense budget and not engaging in an arms race with other countries. -other countries on the path of peaceful development, in accordance with their defensive national defense strategy ([Xuanzun, 2023](#)).

China has actively expanded its military presence in the Pacific region, primarily through the development of military bases, port facilities and infrastructure projects. Examples include the construction of military installations in the South China Sea, the establishment of a military base in Djibouti, and increased naval activity in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. These military bases allow China to have a permanent presence in strategic areas near the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. This gives China easier access to important maritime routes, especially in the context of protection against piracy and security of energy resources ([Zuraya, 2018](#)). The expansion of China's military presence in the Pacific region has become the focus of significant attention and debate in the context of regional defense and security policy. China has taken steps to increase their military presence through the construction of military bases, port facilities and infrastructure projects in several strategic locations along important maritime routes. China has claimed most of the South China Sea and has built artificial islands equipped with runways, ports and military installations ([Sorongan, 2022](#)).

China considers important maritime lanes, including the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, as vital trade and communications routes for their economic growth. Therefore, they want to ensure the safety and continuity of their access to these routes. The expansion of China's military presence can be seen as an effort to protect national security and economic interests ([Hariri, 2020a](#)). The move has increased China's power projection capabilities in the region and fueled tensions with neighboring countries that also have overlapping territorial claims. Countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia have expressed their concern about China's military expansion and consider it a threat to their sovereignty ([Wardah, 2022](#)).

Furthermore, China has also increased their naval activities in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. China's naval fleet has carried out routine operations in these waters involving aircraft carriers, submarines and other warships. This shows China's efforts to expand their operational reach and influence in the region. This activity has worried several countries in the region who consider it an attempt by China to expand their military presence and achieve strategic superiority in the Pacific region. China is planning a regional agreement with 10 Pacific Island countries including the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, the Cook Islands, Niue and the Federated States of Micronesia. This agreement includes cooperation in various fields, including handling policing, security, data communications and fishing. If this agreement materializes, it will be

a shift in China's policy and strategy in the Pacific Islands, from a bilateral approach with individual countries to a multilateral approach involving the entire region ([Hadi, 2022](#)).

By entering into this regional agreement, China seeks to strengthen its collective cooperation and influence in the Pacific Islands. This multilateral approach is expected to provide strategic advantages for China in achieving political, economic and security goals in the region. Through this agreement, China can strengthen its position in regional competition with other countries that have interests in the Pacific Islands. By building greater cooperation in the region, China can increase its influence and broaden the scope of its policies and projects in the region.

In 2018, China provided assistance to Vanuatu totaling 243 million US dollars. This assistance includes investment in infrastructure development in Vanuatu, including the construction of roads, ports, airports and other public facilities. China has also assisted in the maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure in the country. One example of a project that has been carried out by China is the installation of a telecommunications network in Vanuatu, with a project value of around 37 million US dollars ([Hendrajit, 2019](#)). This project aims to improve access and quality of communications in the country. China's assistance and investment in the development of this infrastructure has made an important contribution to Vanuatu's economic and social development. These projects not only improve internal connectivity in the country, but also help increase the accessibility and competitiveness of Vanuatu's economy at regional and global levels. At the time, there were reports that a \$114 million Chinese-funded project in Vanuatu could be used as a facility for docking cruise ships as well as warships. These reports also note that Beijing is allegedly seeking to build permanent military bases in the Pacific region and is targeting Vanuatu. However, Vanuatu's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ralph Regenvanu, immediately denied this claim emphatically. Regenvanu stated that no one in the Vanuatu Government had ever discussed or spoken about any plans to establish a Chinese military base in Vanuatu in any form ([detikNews, 2022](#)).

In April 2022, the Solomon Islands agreed on a joint security pact with China. The contents of the pact include Chinese military mobility and logistics in the Solomon region ([DW, 2022](#)). Furthermore, China, through its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, visited Kiribati. During this visit, Kiribati signed 10 documents aimed at increasing cooperation in various fields, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project, climate change, employment, disaster risk reduction, road infrastructure, tourism, sending medical teams, supplying COVID-19 vaccines, and sea transportation for the Line Islands ([detikNews, 2022](#)). On June 3, 2022, China and Papua New Guinea held talks regarding a potential free trade agreement between the two countries. China has been one of the main investors in Papua New Guinea and has purchased large amounts of gas, minerals, timber and other natural resources from the country. Bilateral trade between China and Papua New Guinea has become an important factor in the economic relations between the two countries. China,

with its large economic scale, competes with Australia to become Papua New Guinea's main trading partner. In recent years, China has intensified its investment in the energy, mining and infrastructure sectors in Papua New Guinea. China's presence as a major investment provider has had a significant impact on Papua New Guinea's economy. These investments have facilitated the development of important infrastructure projects and helped create jobs for the people of Papua New Guinea. However, the competition between China and Australia to become Papua New Guinea's main trading partners also reflects geopolitical dynamics in the Pacific region. Both countries have strategic interests in the region, especially related to natural resources and market access ([VOA Indonesia, 2022](#)).

Finally, the expansion of China's military presence in the Pacific region is a significant phenomenon in the context of national defense and security policy. This reflects shifting power and security dynamics in the region. While China sees it as part of their national security and economic interests, neighboring countries and other regional actors confront it with concerns and challenges that need to be carefully addressed through diplomacy, cooperation and dialogue to maintain regional stability and security in the Pacific region.

Implications for Australian Defense Policy

China's presence in the Pacific region has created a threat perception for Australia. This is due to several factors including changing power dynamics in the region, China's increasing political and economic influence, and China's increasing military power. In fact, as stated by the Minister of Defense, Richard Marles, when delivering the 2023 strategic security review, the Australian government emphasized that China's military power increase is the largest of all countries in the post-war era, including its military strength in the Pacific islands and by itself increases the potential for military conflict in the region. ([Forrest, 2023](#)). Similar statements were also made by former Defence Minister Stephen Smith and former Chief of Defence Angus Houston, both of whom stressed that the greatest threat to Australia's security came from its largest trading partner, China ([Knott, 2023](#)). Despite scepticism about such seemingly exaggerated concerns, China has emerged as a clear threat to Australia's strategic and military interests. This can be seen in the phrase "biggest military buildup" used by the Australian government to describe the perceived threat and challenges to the strategic environment as an implication of China's military expansion since 1945 ([Austin, 2024](#)).

In addition, the presence of Chinese-funded infrastructure projects in Pacific countries also raises concerns about debt and economic dependency. Australia is concerned that Pacific countries trapped in loans to China could become vulnerable to political and economic pressure that China could use to gain strategic advantage, while undermining Australia's efforts to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in the region ([Wallis, 2020](#)). However, what is of greater concern to Australia are the various scenarios of military activity that China could be conducting near its sovereign territory. These include military

exercises, increased defence capacity and increased surveillance activities. Australia sees these as potential indicators of China's expanding influence and power projection in the Pacific region, which could impact Australia's security and strategic interests in the region ([Knott, 2023](#)). This threat perception ultimately also prompted Australia to increase security and defense cooperation with both Pacific countries and its allies. The immediate adaptation to the changes in its strategic environment was to make minilateralism frameworks such as QUAD and AUKUS the foundation of its security infrastructure ([Bisley, 2024](#)). In the context of regional defence cooperation, Australia is also adapting its existing defence cooperation strategy and seeking effective collaborative solutions with neighbouring countries in the Pacific Region. This involves active participation in regional security forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), where Australia can promote dialogue and cooperation to achieve greater security and stability ([Saju, 2022](#)). In addition, Australia also has a significant presence in the Pacific Islands region and is responsible for ensuring security and stability in the region.

Furthermore, in order to respond to the unpredictable security environment, especially concerns about China's use of military power in several crisis-prone areas in the Indo-Pacific, such as the South China Sea, East China Sea and Taiwan Strait, which could increase risks to Australia's freedom of navigation and maritime rights in the future, Australia is determined to develop its defense capabilities by developing long-range strike weapons and nuclear-powered submarines ([Grady, 2022](#)). This is based on the premise that Australia has a strategic interest in maintaining freedom of navigation and keeping international maritime lanes open. Therefore, Australia ensures that adequate defense resources are allocated to protect its strategic interests, including its maritime interests ([Saju, 2022](#)).

The security threat posed by China's military involvement in the Pacific region not only affects Australia's perception of the threats it faces, but also has implications for the extent of military readiness required, both in terms of defense doctrine and modernization of military forces to support the implementation of defense policies in accordance with changes in its strategic environment ([Martinez, 2024](#)). Australia's 2023 strategic defense review also reflects the approval of the AUKUS partnership agreement to build a stronger Australian fleet through the US nuclear-powered submarine construction project. The results of the review were also supported by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese who stated that the strategic findings were an effort to prepare and fundamentally position Australia's defense projection in accordance with the challenges of the changing strategic environment in the region marked by the end of US unipolarity in the Indo-Pacific with the presence of Chinese power ([Mcguirk, 2023](#)). The adaptation of the defense policy is, once again, based on the drastically changing strategic environment. It is not surprising that the Australian Defense Minister often shows his concerns, including at the Shangri-La dialogue forum in Singapore. These concerns are based on several incidents indicating PLA aggression towards the Australian fleet in recent years, such as the activity of Chinese

warships pointing lasers at Australian Air Force (RAAF) aircraft in early 2022, the incident of Chinese air force fighter jets dropping chaff in front of ADF patrol jets, Chinese warships injuring Australian navy divers in November 2023 and the maneuver of Chinese fighter jets dropping soars in front of ADF helicopters ([Layton, 2024](#)). Several dangerous incidents became the basis for a strategic defense review as an effort to reposition defense policy and build defense and military capabilities in order to secure national interests and regional security from the presence of Chinese military power in the region ([Mcguirk, 2023](#)).

Australia's response to China in the Pacific region

China's military presence in the Pacific region has been a matter of international concern in recent years. China has been actively expanding its influence in the region through various means such as massive infrastructure development assistance and economic investment. China's military presence in the Pacific region has a direct impact on Australia's defense resource allocation. China's rapid economic growth has allowed the country to significantly increase military spending. Between 2010 and 2019, China's military spending increased by 76%, including the development of warships, fighter aircraft, submarines and other advanced weapons systems ([Saju, 2022](#)). The exponential development of China's military posture or what is also known as China's militarization has prompted Australia to consider a defense policy that is oriented from a military security perspective and to establish military solutions to deal with it ([O'keefe, 2020](#)). The Australian government's response to changes in its strategic environment was stated in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper strategic document, which stated that Australia's modern era would be a challenging and difficult era as China's power and influence increased ([Australian Government, 2017](#)). The document also states that China's economic growth is vital to global stability, including to Australia's benefit, but also notes that China has geostrategic ambitions that could threaten Australia's national interests ([Australian Government, 2017](#)). It is undeniable that China is Australia's largest trading partner. By 2022, the trade value achieved by the two countries under the framework of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement since 2015 has doubled to a total of 221 billion US dollars ([Krukowska, 2024](#)). In the same year, China also became Australia's main export destination, absorbing 25% of total exports with a value reaching 104 billion US dollars ([Krukowska, 2024](#)). However, diplomatic friction and tension caused by differences in responding to strategic issues in the region often disrupt economic relations and encourage gradual, careful reconciliation carried out by the two countries, especially Australia's hard work in seeking a balance in relations and pragmatic diplomacy with China is a challenge faced by Australia in maintaining stable relations with China ([Li, 2024](#)). The main factor of major concern for Australia as stated in the 2023 strategic defense review document is the lack of transparency regarding the intent of China's military build-up in the Indo Pacific region which has a negative impact on Australia's security ([Houston et al., 2023](#)).

Australia's anticipatory steps have actually begun since the last ten years. In October 2020, when Australia was under the administration of Prime Minister Scott Morrison, he scheduled an official visit to Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands - three member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) - as part of an effort to strengthen Australia's relations with countries in the Pacific region as an effort to strengthen partnerships in creating stability in the region ([Khoirur, 2019](#)). In addition, in July 2020, Australia also announced an increase in its defense budget by AUD 270 billion (around USD 186 billion) over the next ten years as the most feasible defense policy option in the face of ambivalence and uncertainty from the presence of Chinese military power in the region. The spending is focused on improving defense technologies such as high-tech underwater surveillance systems, cyber capabilities, and more advanced offensive weapons ([Kamaruzzaman, 2020](#)). Australia is also paying \$800 million for the US Navy's 158-AG Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM). Australia's AGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missiles, launched in the early 1980s, have a range of only 124 km, while the 158-AG Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) has a range of more than 370 km. The move is also an effort to prepare for long-range strike capabilities. The \$9.3 billion budget will also be allocated for research and development of high-speed long-range weapons, including hypersonic weapons ([Macmillan & Greene, 2020](#)). Not only that, in the period 2017-2023, Australia has carried out military cooperation with the United States and Japan to maintain regional stability and counter China's geostrategic ambitions ([Adhi, 2022](#)).

With increased defense spending and military cooperation with the US and Japan, it seems that the Australian government is trying to maintain support from other regional powers while establishing a safe and favorable policy with China. Australia's decision to continue to actively participate in AUKUS can be seen as a containment policy in the face of the aggregation of China's increasing presence in the Indo-Pacific region. As one of the security infrastructures it has, AUKUS provides a platform that allows Australia to stabilize its trade relationship dependence with China and gain access to technology and information that is essential to maintaining security and stability in the Indo-Pacific through its allies ([Graeme, 2023](#)). The formation of AUKUS also shows that Australia is not only relying on the United States as its only strategic partner in dealing with China's presence in the Pacific region. By involving the UK as a partner in this partnership, Australia can expand its network of cooperation and increase its diplomatic influence and military power in the region ([Bisley, 2024](#)).

Next, another strategic step taken by Australia is to sign an agreement with the US to build nuclear-powered submarines for the Australian Navy. According to the annual assessment of military capabilities worldwide conducted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, China currently has six nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) equipped with nuclear missiles. In addition, China also has 40 attack submarines, six of which are nuclear-powered. On the other hand, data from the United States Navy

states that the US military has 21 attack submarines and eight SSBNs operating in the Pacific region, with most of them based around Pearl Harbor. Meanwhile, Australia is known to have six Swedish-designed submarines that use electric-diesel power, the Collins class type. These ships have been in operation since the mid-1990s ([VOA Indonesia, 2023](#)). The imbalance of naval power between Australia and China is a factor that is being considered in building a strong naval fleet to face China's military presence in the Pacific region.

Most recently, in May 2023, Australia announced a priority decision on defense and security to purchase long-range weapons equipment. This was announced directly by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese after reading a report from the Defense Strategic Review Agency. Albanese said "the report's calculations are in line with current global security developments. The world is no longer the same as it was 35 years ago and we need the right approach" ([Anwar, 2023](#)).

Australia currently allocates 2 percent of its gross domestic product to defence spending. However, Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese has proposed that the budget be increased further in line with recommendations from the Defence Strategic Review report. While there is no certainty about the percentage increase in the budget, the Australian government is re-planning its A\$7.8 billion spending plan that has been approved by parliament. The initial plan was to buy 450 armed armoured vehicles but the number was eventually reduced to just 129 units. The remaining funds from the purchase were then diverted to buy the HIMARS missile launcher rocket system from the US which has a long-range capability of up to 500 kilometers ([Anwar, 2023](#)).

Based on Australia's strategic defense review, the projection of defense policy is built with awareness of the drastically changing strategic environment. Therefore, the stable relationship with China over the past two decades, especially in the economic sector, must be separated and clearly distinguished from security issues as an implication of increasing concerns about China's military threat that cannot be normalized. Increased military spending allocations, modernization of the fleet and defense equipment, and support for US-led security infrastructure under the AUKUS defense pact are clear transformations of Australia's defense policy ([Korolev, 2023](#)). From a strategic perspective, the identification of the strategic environment, elite perceptions and national capability reviews have cumulatively placed Australia's defense policy projections in accordance with the strategic situation faced in responding to China's increasing military involvement and potential threats in the region.

CONCLUSION

The findings as a result of the conclusion in this paper state that the presence of Chinese military power in the Pacific Region has driven changes in the strategic environment in the region and has implications for the transformation of Australia's national defense and security policy. Although China is Australia's largest trading partner, the perception of

Chinese military threats resulting from the success of the Chinese military in gaining close access to Australian territory and supporting the PLA to have a strong foothold to build a military base in one of the island countries in the region, forced Australia to end its ambivalence of attitude by choosing the United States as a navigator in managing regional security stability. Through strengthening the multilateral infrastructure framework built with the US and UK, rejuvenating defense forces and militarization oriented towards long-range attack capabilities, Australia confirms the projection of defense policy and attitudes towards security issues as something that cannot be compromised. This finding is based on the limitations of several variables analyzed within the framework of a strategic perspective, including elite perceptions that determine China as the main security threat, urgent changes in the strategic environment and awareness of the disparity in the asymmetric military power posture with China as a new global economic and military power, representing a transformation of defense policy that is linear with Australia's national and strategic interests in responding to the increasing presence of China's military power in the Indo-Pacific region. The complexity of the strategic environment due to the increasing competition of great powers in the Indo-Pacific region, between the United States and China, will remain a determining factor for the projection of foreign and security policies of middle powers in the region. For this reason, the findings in this paper are expected to be one of the references for researchers on similar topics in the future to find various implications of changes and challenges from China's rise, especially its military power.

REFERENCES

- Adhi, I. S. (2022, October 2). *AS, Australia, dan Jepang Sepakat Tingkatkan Kerja Sama Militer Lawan China*. Kompas. <https://www.kompas.com/global/read/2022/10/02/064500170/as-australia-dan-jepang-sepakat-tingkatkan-kerja-sama-militer-lawan-china>.
- Agustiyanti. (2023, March 5). *Cina Alokasikan Rp 3.458 Triliun untuk Anggaran Pertahanan 2023*. <https://katadata.co.id/agustiyanti/berita/6404506490fc8/cina-alokasikan-rp-3458-triliun-untuk-anggaran-pertahanan-2023>
- Anwar, L. A. (2023, April 25). *Hadapi China, Australia Prioritaskan Belanja Pertahanan*. Kompas. <https://www.kompas.id/baca/internasional/2023/04/24/hadapi-china-australia-prioritaskan-belanja-pertahanan>
- Austin, G. (2024, February 19). *China's Military Buildup: the Biggest Since 1945? - Australian Institute of International Affairs* - Australian Institute of International Affairs. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/chinas-military-buildup-the-biggest-since-1945/>
- Australian Government. (2017). *Opportunity Security Strength*. In *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*. <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/>
- Australian Government Department of Defence. (2020). *2020 Defence Strategic Update*.
- Azim, P. (2018). *Kepentingan Australia Dalam Kerjasama Keamanan Force Posture Dengan*

- Amerika Serikat. Universitas Mataram.
- Batley, J. (2021). Australia and security in the Pacific Islands. *Australian National University*.
- BBC. (2022, March 25). *Solomon Islands confirms China security draft, alarming Australia*. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-60870238>
- Bisley, N. (2024). The Quad, AUKUS and Australian Security Minilateralism: China's Rise and New Approaches to Security Cooperation. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 00(00), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2024.2365241>
- detikNews. (2022, June 8). *Seperti Apa Duit China Dibelanjakan di Pasifik? Mari Kita Periksa*. Abc Australia. <https://news.detik.com/abc-australia/d-6117029/seperti-apa-duit-china-dibelanjakan-di-pasifik-mari-kita-periksa>
- DW. (2022, April 8). *Kenapa Aliansi Keamanan Cina dan Kepulauan Solomon Dianggap Berbahaya?* Deutsche Welle DW. <https://www.dw.com/id/kenapa-aliansi-keamanan-cina-dan-kepulauan-solomon-dianggap-berbahaya/a-61394864>
- El Haq, M. N., & El Islam, M. S. (2020). Australia Sebagai Kekuatan Regional Dalam Eksploitasi Sumber Daya Alam Di Kawasan Pasifik. *Indonesian Journal of International Relations*, 4(1), 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.32787/ijir.v4i1.117>
- Erina, R. (2023, March 6). *Pengamat: Ancaman Asing Meningkat, Wajar Saja China Naikkan Anggaran Militer*. Republik Merdeka Online. <https://dunia.rmol.id/read/2023/03/06/565836/pengamat-ancaman-asing-meningkat-wajar-saja-china-naikkan-anggaran-militer>
- Farneubun, P. K. (2022). China's Rise and its Implications for Australian Foreign Policy. *Papua Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, 2(2), 142–162. <https://doi.org/10.31957/pjdir.v2i2.2234>
- Febriani, W. (2018). *Kepentingan Australia Dalam Intervensi Di Kepulauan Solomon Melalui Regional Assistance Mission To Solomon Islands (RAMSI)*. Universitas Airlangga.
- Forrest, A. (2023, June 1). *Why China is a national security threat to Australia* | The Strategist. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/why-china-is-a-national-security-threat-to-australia/>
- Grady, J. (2022, July 12). *Australia Developing New Defense Strategy in Response to China, Says Deputy Prime Minister* - USNI News. <https://news.usni.org/2022/07/12/australia-developing-new-defense-strategy-in-response-to-china-says-deputy-prime-minister>
- Graeme, D. (2023, September 20). *Stabilizing China Trade and Seeking Indo-Pacific Balance - Comparative Connections*. Comprative Connections. <https://cc.pacforum.org/2023/09/stabilizing-china-trade-and-seeking-indo-pacific-balance/>
- Hadi, M. S. (2022, May 25). *China Ubah Strategi di Kepulauan Pasifik, dari Pendekatan Bilateral ke Multilateral Kawasan*. Kompas. <https://www.kompas.id/baca/internasional/2022/05/25/china-ubah-strategi-di-kepulauan-pasifik-dari-pendekatan-bilateral-ke-multilateral-kawasan>
- Harding, B., & Pohle, C. (2022, July 21). *China's Search for a Permanent Military Presence in the*

Pacific Islands | United States Institute of Peace.
<https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/07/chinas-search-permanent-military-presence-pacific-islands>

- Hariri, S. N. (2020a). Persaingan China-Australia Dalam Perebutan Pengaruh Di Kawasan Pasifik. *Asia Pasific Studies*, 4(1), 33–45.
- Hariri, S. N. (2020b). Persaingan China-Australia Dalam Perebutan Pengaruh Di Kawasan Pasifik. *Jurnal Asia Pacific Studies*, 4(1), 33–45. <https://doi.org/10.33541/japs.v4i1.1640>
- Hendrajit. (2019, July 18). Cina Bangun Pangkalan Militer di Vanuatu? - The Global Review. <https://theglobal-review.com/cina-bangun-pangkalan-militer-di-vanuatu/>
- Houston, A., Smith, H. S., Burrell, G., Dean, P. J., & Vagg, R. (2023). *Defence Strategic Review*.
- Jensen, L. (1982). *Explaining foreign policy*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.,.
- Jervis, R. (1978). Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma. *World Politics*, 30(2), 167–214. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009376>
- Jordaan, E. (2003). The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers CORE View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk provided by Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. *Traditional Middle Powers. Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 30(1), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0258934032000147282>
- Kamaruzzaman, S. (2020, July 6). *Australia Siap Lawan Cina, Plot Anggaran Militer Rp 2.700 T, Ini Senjata Canggih yang Akan Dimiliki*. *Tribunnew Aceh*. <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2020/07/06/australia-siap-lawan-cina-plot-anggaran-militer-rp-2700-t-ini-senjata-canggih-yang-akan-dimiliki>
- Khoirur. (2019, May 28). *Australia-Cina Berebut Pengaruh di Kepulauan Pasifik*. *Gatra*. <https://www.gatra.com/news-418832-Internasional-australiacina-berebut-pengaruh-di-kepulauan-pasifik.html>
- Knott, M. (2023, April 24). *Defence Strategic Review pulls no punches: China is the biggest threat to Australia*. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/defence-review-pulls-no-punches-china-is-the-biggest-threat-we-face-20230424-p5d2r7.html>
- Korolev, A. (2023). Transition from hedging to balancing in Australia's China policy: theoretical and empirical explorations. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 77(5), 548–568. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2023.2274446>
- Krukowska, M. M. (2024). Australia and China: Friends or Foes? Implications for Security in the Indo-Pacific Region. *Journal of Modern Science*, 56(2), 357–370. <https://doi.org/10.13166/jms/187204>
- Kurniawan, A. (2021, April 24). *China Sebenarnya Mitra Dagang Terbesar Australia, Kini Hubungan Keduanya Memanas*. *Sindo News*. <https://ekbis.sindonews.com/read/407056/34/china-sebenarnya-mitra-dagang-terbesar-australia-kini-hubungan-keduanya-memanas-1619215492>

- Layton, P. (2024, June 12). *Deterring China's military violence against Australians* | Lowy Institute. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/deterring-china-s-military-violence-against-australians>
- Li, Z. (2024, August 24). *Recalibrating Australia–China relations* | East Asia Forum. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2024/08/02/recalibrating-australia-china-relations/>
- Liang, X. (2022, June 20). *What can we learn from China's military aid to the Pacific?* | SIPRI. <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2022/chinas-military-aid-pacific>
- Lovell, J. P. (1970). *Foreign Policy in Perspective: Strategy, Adaptation, Decision Making*. Rinehart Holt and Winston.
- Macmillan, A., & Greene, A. (2020, July 2). *Antisipasi China, Australia Siapkan Rp2.700 Triliun Belanja Persenjataan*. ABC News Indonesia. <https://www.abc.net.au/indonesian/2020-07-02/australia-tingkatkan-belanja-militer-untuk-antisipasi-serangan/12415352>
- Martinez, E. (2024, June 27). *Australia's Balancing Act: Navigating China's Influence in the Indo-Pacific Region* > Air University (AU) > Wild Blue Yonder. <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Wild-Blue-Yonder/Articles/Article-Display/Article/3800926/australias-balancing-act-navigating-chinas-influence-in-the-indo-pacific-region/>
- Mcguirk, R. (2023, April 24). *Australia plans major overhaul of defenses as China rises* | AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/australia-defense-strategic-review-china-be313bcbd58e6793a8c85b79682c0e34>
- Medcalf, R. (2023, February 24). *How Australia can counter China's Pacific ambitions*. Financial Review. <https://www.afr.com/policy/foreign-affairs/how-australia-can-counter-china-s-pacific-ambitions-20230220-p5cm0r>
- Nindyawati, M. A., & Sholeh, B. (2020). *Relations between Australia and China in Asia-Pacific Region . Case Study : China ' s Expansionism in Asia-Pacific*. *Jurnal Transborders*, 4(1), 13–23. <https://www.journal.unpas.ac.id/index.php/transborders/article/view/2489%0Ahttps://www.journal.unpas.ac.id/index.php/transborders/article/download/2489/1685>
- O'keefe, M. (2020). *The Militarisation of China in the Pacific: Stepping Up to a New Cold War?* *Source: Security Challenges*, 16(1), 94–112.
- Park, A. S. (2022). *Beyond Great Powers: Middle Power Paths to Resilient Multilateralism*. *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 10(1), 131–157. <https://doi.org/10.18588/202205.00a274>
- Saju, P. S. B. I. N. (2022, April 20). *Militerisasi China di Tiga Pulau Dinilai Ganggu Stabilitas Kawasan*. https://www.kompas.id/baca/internasional/2022/04/20/militerisasi-china-di-tiga-pulau-dinilai-ganggu-stabilitas-kawasan?utm_source=external_kompascom&utm_medium=berita_terkini&utm_campaign=kompascom
- Satris, R. (2015). *Peningkatan Anggaran Persenjataan Militer China sebagai Bagian dari Security Dilemma di Kawasan Asia Pasifik*. *The POLITICS: Jurnal Magister Ilmu Politik*,

1(1), 95–104.

- Silva, D., Lopes, D., Tian, N., Beraud-Sudreau, L., Marksteiner Alexandra, & Liang Xiao. (2022). *Trends in World Military Expenditure*, 2021. SIPRI Fact Sheet, April, 1–12.
- Sorongan, T. P. (2022, October 29). *China Bangun “Kerajaan” Militer Dekat RI, Ini Fakta-faktanya*. CNBC Indonesia. <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20221029022408-4-383437/china-bangun-kerajaan-militer-dekat-ri-ini-fakta-faktanya>
- Varrall, M. (2021). Australia's Response to China in the Pacific: From Alert to Alarmed. In G. Smith & T. Wesley-Smith (Eds.), *The China Alternative: Changing Regional Order in the Pacific Islands* (pp. 107–141). The Australian National University Press. <https://doi.org/10.22459/CA.2021.03>
- VOA Indonesia. (2022, June 3). *China dan Papua Nugini Bahas Kesepakatan Perdagangan Bebas*. Voa Indonesia. <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/china-dan-papua-nugini-bahas-kesepakatan-perdagangan-bebas-/6601633.html>
- VOA Indonesia. (2023, March 15). *AUKUS Sepakati Perjanjian Pembuatan Kapal Selam Bertenaga Nuklir*. Voa Indonesia. <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/aucus-sepakati-perjanjian-pembuatan-kapal-selam-bertenaga-nuklir/7004594.html>
- Wallis, J. (2020). How Should Australia Respond to China's Increased Presence in the Pacific Islands? *Security Challenges*, 16(3), 47–52.
- Wardah, F. (2022, July 27). *Kekuatan China di Kawasan Indo Pasifik Semakin Berkembang*. Voa Indonesia. <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/pengamat-kekuatan-china-di-kawasan-indo-pasifik-semakin-berkembang/6674509.html>
- Wuryanti, M. (2012). *Keterlibatan Australia Dakam Keamanan Regional Pasifik Selatan (Era John Howard)*. Universitas Veteran Yogyakarta.
- Xuanzun, L. (2023, March 5). *China's 2023 defense budget to rise by 7.2%, a “reasonable, restrained” increase amid global security tensions*. Global Times. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202303/1286643.shtml>
- Yilmaz, S. (2017). *Middle Powers and Regional Powers - International Relations - Oxford Bibliographies*. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0222.xml>
- Zuraya, N. (2018). *Cina akan Bangun Pangkalan Militer di Pasifik Selatan*. Republika. <https://internasional.republika.co.id/berita/p6yjxh383/cina-akan-bangun-pangkalan-militer-di-pasifik-selatan>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Muhammad Ferdy Aditya is a student in International Relations Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur and graduated in 2022.

Khoirul Amin is a lecture in International Relations Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. The Area of expertise is foreign policy and international politics. The latest research and publications are about the implications of China's rise toward geopolitical stability in the Asia Pacific region and published a book entitled 'Rivalitas Dua Raksasa Asia: modernisasi militer Cina dan respons India.'

Devy Indah Paramitha is a lecturer in International Relations Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur since 2019. She has expertise in international security, peace and conflict resolution. Current research and publication topics are on territorial disputes and conflicts involving countries in the Asia and Indo-Pacific region.

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Aditya, M.F., Amin, K., & Paramitha, D.I. (2024). *China's Military Engagement In The Pacific Region: Implications For Australia's Defence And National Security Policy*. *Papua Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, 4(2), 63-84. DOI: 10.31957/pjdir.v4i2.3545