

EDITORIAL NOTE

SECURITY AND DIPLOMACY AMID UNCERTAINTIES ©Σ

ZARINA OTHMAN*, BAKRI MAT† AND MUHAMMAD DANIAL AZMAN ‡

ABSTRACT

The Volume 4, Issue 2, 2024 edition of *the SINERGI: Journal of Strategic Studies & International Affairs* examines key themes in history, diplomacy and security, with a strong focus on China's role in shaping global and regional dynamics. From its historical connections with Islam during the Tang Dynasty to its modern Belt and Road Initiatives in Southeast Asia, China's influence remains pivotal. Articles explore China's impact on Indonesia's foreign policy, Malaysia's migrant labour governance, and Taiwan's technological aspirations. Broader topics, including the US presidential election, Gulf States' responses to the Palestine-Israel conflict, and Myanmar's instability, are also addressed. This edition further highlights Malaysia's developmental policies, its ties with China, and critical book reviews on regional strategies. Together, the articles offer diverse perspectives on historical legacies and modern political challenges, providing valuable insights into international diplomacy and the complexities of a multipolar world.

Keywords: China; diplomacy; history; security; USA

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* **First Author:** Zarina Othman, PhD (*Denver*) is a current Editor-in-Chief of SINERGI, and a Professor at the Research Centre for History, Politics, History, and International Affairs (SPHEA), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) 43600, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: zo@ukm.edu.my / zaiothman02@gmail.com

† **Second and Corresponding Author:** Bakri Mat, PhD (*UKM*) is a current Deputy Editor-in-Chief of SINERGI, and an Associate Professor at the School of International Studies, College of Law, Government, and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia Sintok, 06010, Bukit Kayu Hitam, Kedah, Malaysia. Email: bakri@uum.edu.my

‡ **Third Author:** Muhammad Danial Azman, PhD (*St. Andrews, UK*) is a Senior Lecturer, Department of International and Strategic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya, 50603, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Adjunct Professor, International Relations Program, Faculty of Business, Asia Pacific University, Bukit Jalil, Malaysia. Email: danial@um.edu.my

NOTA EDITORIAL**KESELAMATAN DAN DIPLOMASI DI TENGAH KETIDAKPASTIAN**ZARINA OTHMAN, BAKRI MAT AND MUHAMMAD DANIAL AZMAN

ABSTRAK

SINERGI: Journal of Strategic Studies & International Affairs, *Jilid 4, Isu No.2 (Disember) 2024* meneliti tema utama sejarah, diplomasi dan keselamatan, dengan fokus pada peranan China dalam membentuk dinamik serantau dan global. Dari hubungan sejarahnya dengan Islam pada zaman Dinasti Tang hingga Inisiatif Jalur dan Laluan di Asia Tenggara, pengaruh China kekal penting. Artikel-artikel mengupas kesan China terhadap dasar luar Indonesia, pengurusan buruh migran Malaysia, dan aspirasi teknologi Taiwan. Isu lebih luas seperti pilihan raya presiden Amerika Syarikat, respons negara Teluk terhadap konflik Palestin-Israel, dan ketidakstabilan di Myanmar turut dianalisis. Edisi ini juga mengetengahkan dasar pembangunan Malaysia, hubungannya dengan China, dan ulasan buku strategi serantau. Artikel-artikel ini menyajikan perspektif mendalam tentang warisan sejarah dan cabaran moden, memberi pandangan berharga tentang diplomasi antarabangsa dalam dunia multipolar.

Kata Kunci: China; diplomasi; sejarah; keselamatan; Amerika Syarikat

Introduction

When Mao Zedong declared the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the United States suspended diplomatic relations with that Communist country. World War II had just ended and partly witnessed the decline of British hegemonic power in many of its empires. Meanwhile, Chiang Kai-shek and his nationalist troops and other 'refugees' retreated to Taiwan. Not only was China divided, but the 'international system' became two different worlds. The world was confused as China and the United States were among the five permanent United Nations Security Council members, other than Russia, the United Kingdom, and France. The Communist and the capitalist worlds competed for power and exercised the right of veto at one time or another.

After almost three decades, Deng Xiaoping launched its 'Open Door Policy' in 1978, contributing to China's economic growth through foreign capital and technology. Ever since then, the economy has continued to grow rapidly. The United States later approved the US-China trade agreement, and in 2001, China joined the World Trade Organisation.

Today, China is the second largest economy and has invested heavily overseas as part of its Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI). It has the world's largest population, home to more than 50 ethnic groups, including the Chinese Uighur Muslims. However, while the 'dragon' has been perceived as a threat to the West, the East considers it an opportunity. The article collection in this volume attempts to explain the security and diplomacy related to China and beyond. While China was not the only major issue, international politics has been coloured by other unsettled regional instability issues, including conflicts in Myanmar and Palestine.

In "*Faktor China dalam Dasar Luar Indonesia*" (China's Factors in Indonesia's Foreign Policy), Suhaiza Senin examines the importance of China in Indonesia's foreign policy by applying three levels of analysis: systemic, domestic, and individual factors. The article concludes that while the international system plays a major role in influencing Indonesia's relationship with China, Indonesia's economic and political interests and leadership roles facilitated the cooperation between them, thereby contributing to stability in the region.

Similarly, the second article discusses "Contemporary Sino-Indonesian Relations." While the former article focuses on systemic levels, the current writing by Tian Tiechen, Zarina Othman, and Aizat Khairi emphasises Indonesia's China's Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI). The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Rail project reflects the closer relations between these two populous countries. While the Indonesian government took it as an opportunity, the general public is concerned about the state's debt dependency and over-reliance on China's investments. Economic opportunities did not stop political interest between the two countries, as demonstrated by the tensions in the South China Sea, specifically around overlapping claims near the Natuna Islands of Indonesia, fearing the external power, i.e. involvement of the United States.

From Indonesia, we now move to Malaysia, another significant member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Malaysia has been a favourite destination for migrant workers. In the article "Human Security and Governance: Indonesian Illegal Migrant Workers in Malaysia," Rahimi Ahmad and Aizat Khairi analyse irregular migrant workers. Human security factors, including poverty, unemployment rates, and political instability, have pushed Indonesians to search for jobs overseas. Concurrently, Malaysia's economic prosperity, which impacts its labour

shortages, has attracted Indonesians to work there. Nevertheless, their presence provides challenges and partly contributes to social instability in Malaysia.

While focusing on China, the current issue has not forgotten Taiwan, another leading player in the region. In “Taiwan's Space Future: The Impact of Technological Autonomy and International Cooperation,” Kuan Yu Lin discusses the country’s space technology development. The study exemplifies how Taiwan engages in international cooperation as it pursues the idea that technological independence will make Taiwan influential. Nevertheless, its focus on autonomy may constrain its global status.

Despite the increasing influence of the Asian global influence, Muhammad Zaki Abd Aziz and Nurhidayu Rosli have not forgotten the Western powers. In “From Allies to Partners: A Historical Analysis of the US – UK Relations,” the authors trace the distinct relations between the two major powers. The UK-US relationship has been characterised by cooperation and divergence and influenced by economic interdependence, military alliances, and shared democratic ideals. However, challenges, such as conflicting priorities and shifting global dynamics, have occasionally tested its robustness despite geopolitical events, shared values, and mutual strategic interests in a multipolar world.

The political instability in the Middle East has continued to attract scholars to understand and explain the political tension in the region. Nasruddin Khalid and Bakri Mat analyse the situation in their “Responses of Gulf States to the Palestine-Israel Conflict in the Post 7th October 2023.” In particular, they examine how the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) responded to the Israel-Palestine conflict that erupted in 2023. Different GSCC states reacted distinctly, with some focusing on humanitarian aid, several on pro-Palestinian sentiment, and others on Israel. The divergent diplomacy style of the GCC demonstrated the complexity of the conflict in the region.

China’s Factor did not stop in Indonesia. Ye Zhi Ping, Azlizan Mat Enh, and Sufian Mansor trace the history of Chinese Muslims to understand how Chinese Muslims have shaped the world’s history. In “Internationalization of the Chinese Muslims during the Tang Dynasty,” the authors highlight that Islam started during the Tang Dynasty, and the Silk Road further contributed to the spread of the world’s religion when missionaries from the Arab Peninsula immigrated to China. In addition, the maritime trade has also contributed to the mobilisation of the religion, allowing it to spread to Southeast Asia and throughout the Indian Subcontinent.

Md Mahbulul Haque has taken us to witness an ethno-religious conflict in Myanmar, a strategic country in the region. In “Protracted Conflict in Myanmar and the Role of International Actors,” Mahbulul tries to analyse the situation, especially with the conflict in 2021. Aung San Suu Kyi was once again arrested, with millions of people forced to be displaced while the regime did not help much in eradicating poverty. The conflict has partly contributed to the instability in the country and the region.

Norhafizah Mohd Hed shifts our attention from Asia to the United States. In “*Pilihan Raya Presiden Amerika Syarikat 2024: Dinamika, Isu dan Implikasi Global*,” Norhafizah analyses the 2024 elections, which witnessed Donald Trump come to power for the second time. His triumph has made it a history in Uncle Sam’s country. Coming from a Republican political party, Trump’s winning provided important changes in US politics, where younger generations have yet again shown significant influence. Economic, climate change, and human rights issues became crucial agendas again for the United States. However, more time is needed to see Trump’s approach to international politics, especially concerning the Palestine-Israel issue in the Middle East.

Abdul Muein Abadi provides a good overview of *Dasar Pembangunan dan Populisme di Malaysia*, authored by Sity Daud. Abdul Muein Abadi has commented on how the state can develop while simultaneously reducing the risks of instability due to the influence of 'populism'. Meanwhile, Safiqah Abdul Sunnat and Nurqamarina Baharuddin have reviewed a book on *61 Tahun Grand Strategy Malaysia – China*, co-authored by Mohamad Ikhran Mohamad Ridzuan, Mohd Iqbal Mohd Huda and Sity Daud. Their review traces the evolution of the importance of bilateral relations between Malaysia and China.

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