# FEEDING THE NATION FOR A BETTER FUTURE: PRESERVING PEACE THROUGH AN AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION BETWEEN INDONESIA AND CHINA

# Adiyat Abdullah

International Relations Department, UIN Sunan Ampel, Surabaya Email: micfriboy27@gmail.com

# Rizki Rahmadini Nurika

International Relations Department, UIN Sunan Ampel, Surabaya Email: rr nurika@yahoo.com

#### **ABSTRACT**

The close ties between Indonesia and China cannot be separated from the history of cultural relation between them. Chinese traders were said to be the first people who brought Islam come to Indonesia and established an Islamic community here. Beyond it, Indonesia and China have some similarities on geographical and demographical condition too. Given these factors, they have established a very well bilateral relation. However, this relation is still disturbed by certain issues like the Uighur Muslims case. The actions of the Chinese government to the minority Uighur Muslims lived in Xinjiang triggered the rise of protest from Indonesian Muslims and question from the Indonesian government to the Chinese government about the human right abuse. It proves that the peace made between them is not strong enough, in which peace takes place more on the government level and less on the society level. This paper explores the potential of cooperation between Indonesia and China in agricultural sector, considering that they are having similar problem in agriculture, which is limited land for farming while they have to feed their great number of people. The striking difference here is China has an advanced agricultural technology to answer such problem while Indonesia has not. A collaboration may occur when China provides transfer of technology to Indonesia while Indonesia provides assistance for China in facing religious issue, due to the fear of Chinese government on religious extremism like what they did to Uighur Muslims. To analyze this concern, the concept of multitrack diplomacy will be used. It views the process of international peacemaking as a living system. The result shows that through the multi-track diplomacy, the peacemaking process will be conducted by state and non-state actors in a scattered-activities frame, then peace will spill over from the government to the society and vice versa.

**Keywords**: Indonesia, China, peace, agriculture, diplomacy

#### Introduction

Xianjing Province or familiarly called East Turkestan is located in northwest China. Its bordering Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Culture, religion, and the language of the Xinjiang people are very different from most provinces in China which there are more than 50 ethnic minorities that live in Xinjiang and both of them from China and Central Asia. One of the ethnic is called Uighur who originating from descendants of the Turk.

Yoq which means lost, or adem yoq which means that everyone disappeared is a term often used to describe the situation of the Uighur Muslims in Xianjing province<sup>1</sup>. The expression includes various acts of violence committed by the Chinese government against these minorities. Beyond torture, hunger and death that occurred in the region, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have reported that Uighur Muslims have been forced to swear allegiance to President Xi Jinping and be held in jail indefinitely, treated as a source of disease and forced to make party slogans Communist. Monitoring of identity cards, checkpoints, face identification and DNA collection was carried out strictly by the Chinese government towards the Uighur community too.

As a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, of course Indonesia has a strong reaction to the Chinese government's treatment of their brothers in Xianjing. On December 21, 2018, the Chinese embassy office in the capital city of Jakarta was visited by hundreds of Muslims to protest against the Chinese government which was considered to discriminate against minorities in their own country<sup>2</sup>. "The United Nations must speak out, the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) must speak out, Muslims must take a stand against the Chinese government, "Ridwan Abdul Ridho said as one of the demonstrators at the time.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Faisal Irfani, "Muslim Uighur: Mengapa Diberlakukan Berbeda di China" . diakses dari <a href="https://tirto.id/muslim-hui-dan-uighur-mengapa-diperlakukan-berbeda-di-cina-dcFR">https://tirto.id/muslim-hui-dan-uighur-mengapa-diperlakukan-berbeda-di-cina-dcFR</a> pada 16 Juni 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Kanupriya Kapoor, "Indonesian Muslims Protest Against China's Treatment of Uighurs" diakses dari https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-protests-uighurs/indonesian-muslims-protest-against-chinastreatment-of-uighurs-idUSKCN1OK195 pada 16 juni 2019.

The Indonesian government which is slow in handling this problem has also been the trigger for increasingly widespread protests from the public and accuses the government of being secular. But the truth is, it is difficult for Indonesia to interfere, considering that China is Indonesia's largest trading partner which according to the minister of trade, the transaction between two parties during 2018 has increased by 25%. In addition, Indonesia's free-active foreign policy principle emphasizes that the state is very neutral with various types of parties, however in some cases, Indonesia continues to try to lift the way when there are problems regarding oppressed Muslims. the real example is Indonesia has become the foremost pillar of supporting Palestinian independence since the Asia Africa Conference in Bandung 1955, besides that President Joko Widodo has actively negotiated with Myanmar regarding the protection of Rohingya Muslims. this shows that the government is not blind to the cases of persecuted Muslims as long as the efforts carried out remain in accordance with international law and sovereignty of each country.

Indeed, since the 9/11 attacks in America, the world has become very sensitive to the issue of terrorism and has a bad perception of Muslims, including the state of China. China said Xinjiang faced threats from militants and separatist Islamists at the time and refused all allegations of persecution and denied mass apprenticeship by them, despite Chinese officials said some citizens who were guilty of minor offenses were sent to vocational centers work. China is worried that Uighurs, who speak Turkish, have gone to places like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria and Iraq to fight for terrorist militants. The Indonesian foreign ministry itself said it had summoned Chinese envoys in Jakarta to Convey concern from various parties in Indonesia about the condition of the Uighur community in China and calls on China to respect religious freedom.

In Indonesia itself, many parties condemned the actions of the Chinese government and wanted the Indonesian government as the country with the largest Muslim population who have sufficient bargaining power to contribute to overcoming this problem. One of them was said by the chairman of Muhammadiyah Haedar Nashir as quoted by Antara on Wednesday. "The Chinese

government is an act of fear of injuring diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China, and the good relations of our people have been going on for centuries, especially for the Uighur community."he said.

The Indonesian Ulama Council advisory council leader, Din Syamsudin also urged the Indonesian government to take firm action on the incident that happened to the Uighur community. but as explained earlier, although Indonesia strongly rejects human rights violations in any form, according to Jusuf Kalla as reported by the Jakarta Post, Indonesia does not want to intervene in domestic affairs in other countries. Besides that, China Embassy in the same article said that Indonesia China has long supported each other's national interests and believed that if Indonesia knew the real situation, then they would certainly support the Chinese government's efforts in combating terrorism and security in Xinjiang<sup>3</sup>.

#### Indonesia – China Bilateral Relation in Common

Since the PKI (Indonesia Communist Party) betrayal and the massacres committed against the Indonesian people in 1965, diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China have ended. During President Soeharto's era, a meeting was held between Indonesian State Minister Moerdiono and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen from China in 1989 to discuss the resumption of diplomatic relationship. Subsequently at the Prime Minister's visit on August 6, 1990, with President Soeharto agreeing that both parties rebuild cooperation and friendship in looking at the Five Principles of Living Together with Peace and Ten Principles of the Bandung Conference. Since signing the Memorandum of Understanding on August 8, official diplomatic relations between the two parties have been rebuilt.

After diplomatic relations were rebuilt, many contacts and visits were made which culminated in talks of mutual understanding and trust in bilateral relations. In recent years, economic and trade cooperation has increased rapidly. Labor and Collaborative Exchange in many other fields also began.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Dian Septiari, "China Responds to Indonesia's Question About Alleged Abuse of Xinjiang's Muslims diakses dari <a href="https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/12/20/china-responds-to-indonesias-question-about-alleged-abuse-of-xinjiangs-muslims.html">https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/12/20/china-responds-to-indonesias-question-about-alleged-abuse-of-xinjiangs-muslims.html</a> pada 17 Juni 2019.

Since then, there has been a rapid increase in trade transactions between 1.18 billion US dollars in 1990 reaching 7.464 billion US dollars in 2000<sup>4</sup>. This makes China the 5th largest trading partner for Indonesia, while Indonesia is the largest trading partner 17 for China.

**Indonesia's Top 3 Export and Import Partners** 

Year	Top 3 Export Partners	Top 3 Import Partners
2005	Japan, US, Singapore	Singapore, Japan, China
2007	Japan, US, Singapore	Singapore, China, Japan
2009	Japan, China, US	Singapore, China, Japan
2010	Japan, China, US	China, Singapore, Japan
2013	Japan, China, US	Singapore, China, Japan
2015	Japan, US, China	China, Singapore, Japan
2017	China, US, Japan	China, Singapore, Japan

Source: World Integrated Trade Solution

Up above is the table top 3 of Indonesia's trade partners from 2005 to 2017. Is noted that China has been Indonesia's biggest trading partner since 2005 after Japan and continues from year to year. The security and defense sector is the sector that is most concerned by both parties and has become the largest trading land for both parties. In July 2005 a technological collaboration was signed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhyono where in the following year many Indonesian arms purchase transactions to China such as the purchase of Anti-Ship Missile in 2005, Portable SAM in 2006 and 2007, and Anti-Ship Missile and Portable SAM in 2008<sup>5</sup>.

In 2017, business cooperation between the two parties was very strong with a growth of 18.3% reaching 63.3 billion US dollars. Trade cooperation is also increasingly balanced where the initial level of Indonesian imports is higher,

<sup>4</sup> Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Indonesia, "Overall Relations" diakses dari <a href="http://id.china-embassy.org/eng/zgyyn/sbgxgk/">http://id.china-embassy.org/eng/zgyyn/sbgxgk/</a> pada 18 juni 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Rahul Mishra and Irfa Puspita Asri, "Indonesia-China Relations: Challenges and Opportunities", Airlangga University, Surabaya, 2010, Page 6.

now the level of exports is also increasing by 30% with a total of 3.4 billion US dollars. Many cooperation projects are carried out both in the aim of improving Indonesia's infrastructure at this time, for example the development of Jakarta-Bandung High Speed Railway which is a joint venture between several Indonesian state-owned enterprises and the China Railway International Corporation. At the end of 2017, Indonesian President Joko Widoo agreed to cooperate with OBOR with China as a new landmark project in an effort to synergize development cooperation.

Culture, science and technology, education, health, military and security, religion, tourism, communication are other fields that have been targeted by cooperation between the two parties which were further developed after official diplomatic relations were established. A series of documents to support collaboration in this field have been transferred by both parties. Among them are the Agreement Related to Scheduled Air Transportation signed in January 1991. China Air Airlines, China South Airlines, and Garuda Indonesia launch direct flights between the two countries. The Chinese Ministry of Radio, Film and Television and the Indonesian Ministry of Information about the MOU on information cooperation in January 1992. The China Xinhua News Agency and Antara Press of Indonesia set up branch offices in Jakarta and Beijing according to the relevant articles of the MOU. Both parties began a student transition program in 1994. The China-China Economic, Social and Cultural Cooperation Association was established in July 1992, and the China-Indonesia Economic and Cultural Cooperation Association was established in August 1993. The two associations requested an MOU on cooperation. In addition, both parties agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding on the promotion of cooperation in the field, and a Memorandum of Understanding on health and sports cooperation. In July 2000, the two countries agreed to an agreement to provide each other with judicial assistance. In 1997, the two countries formed a joint commission for scientific and technological cooperation and expanded these two meetings. "The agreement on conducting Chinese checks in Indonesia" was signed in May 2000. In September 2000, China approved Indonesia to become a traveling destination for Chinese citizens. In November 2001, the "Agreement for Cultural Cooperation" was signed again<sup>6</sup>.

### Indonesia - China Bilateral Relations in Islamic Context

Relations between Indonesia and China have not only developed in the economic and cultural fields, Indonesian Muslims of Chinese descent have freedom of movement and finally have their own communities since the fall of the new order regime in 1998<sup>7</sup>. Cheng Hoo's mosque raises a new perception of China's role in the spread of Islamic religion in Indonesia. As we know, there are 2 basic theories that explain how Islam entered the archipelago, but the Muhammad Cheng Hoo Foundation in Surabaya argues historically that Islamization in Indonesia is also influenced by the existence of China, in this context it is called the Chinese theory. This theory argues that Islam spreads in Indonesia not only from Arabia and India, but also from China. This began with the arrival of Cheng Hoo in the kingdom of Majapahit and carried out the transfer of knowledge and trade transactions. In the process, Islam was also taught there through a multicultural approach. Cheng Hoo whose real name is Ma Ho is a child of the Ma clan born in Yunnan, the name Cheng hoo is the name given by Emperor Yung lo of the Ming Dynasty (1403-1424)<sup>8</sup>.

It has been recognized by the fourth Indonesian president KH. Abdurrahman Wahid said that in line, Cheng Hoo was a descendant of the 37th Prophet and was part of the *wali songo*. His story was told in a film called "Cheng Hoo" played by Yusril Ihza Mahendra which shows the achievements of Cheng Hoo who with his knowledge of strengthening social relations of the community and as a businessman helped maintain political economic stability and the spread of Islamic religion through acculturation of non-violent Chinese Islam and radicalism.

<sup>8</sup> ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Indonesia, "Overall Relations" diakses dari <a href="http://id.china-embassy.org/eng/zgyyn/sbgxgk/">http://id.china-embassy.org/eng/zgyyn/sbgxgk/</a> pada 18 juni 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Choirul Mahfud, "Studia Islamika: Chinese Muslim Community Development in Contemporary Indonesia; Experiences of PITI in East Java. UIN Jakarta, 2018.

Since Zheng He's expedition in the archipelago, the development of the Islamic community both in Indonesia and China has experienced many developments. These developments were obtained through various means such as trade, marriage, familial, and socio-political interests. After that the relationship had stopped because of a misunderstanding due to a sheepfight brought by Dutch colonialism and the new order. The relationship went back after the collapse of the new order and developed to inspire Nusantara Islam.

In the Islamic context Chinese citizens in Indonesia have a role in protecting Chinese Muslims in Indonesia in a community founded by Abdul Karim Oei Tjeng Hien, Abdussomad Yap A Siong, and Kho Goan Tjien, this is because Chinese Muslims in Indonesia are still a minority if you look at ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, the majority of whom are Christians, Catholics, Buddhists and Confucianism. This group is gathered in an organization called The Chinese Muslim Association of Indonesia (PITI) which has 16 branches in major cities in Indonesia such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Semarang, Yogyakarta, and Pontianak.

PITI was built in Jakarta on April 14, 1961 with the aim to accommodate Indonesian Muslim communities of Chinese descent with its main program is preaching and guiding its members in implementing Islamic Sharia in their daily lives, trying to make the Chinese Muslim community blend with other Indonesian Muslim communities and help resolve issues related to social and cultural members and other communities. Many activities from PITI have contributed a lot in the process of assimilating Chinese culture and Islam such as the construction of Cheng Hoo mosque, blood donation, Nuzulul Quran, acupuncture, and environmental care programs with the planting of plants in 84 Islamic boarding schools in East Java. According to Bambang Sujanto, currently Cheng Hoo is not only defined as a place of worship, but also a symbol of the Chinese Muslim community which was built using Chinese architectural culture and has become one of the tourist destinations of tourists.

PITI plays a big role in the spread of Islamic teachings especially in East Java, where in Surabaya for example, the Cheng Hoo Mosque is the center of all Chinese Muslims activities there. According to Haji Abdul Halim Muhammad (Li

Guang Lin) as the founder of the Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Foundation, the level of development of Chinese Muslims in Surabaya is the fastest in Indonesia. Every year there are around 30 new converts mu'allaf joining this community<sup>9</sup>. Since the Cheng Hoo mosque was built, the spread of Islam in the ethnic Chinese community has become even greater.

# **Geoghrapical and Demographical Condition Among Parties**

Geographically, many similarities can be found between Indonesia and China. First is land and territory, China is the third largest country in the world with an area of 9,600,000 km2 including 5,400 islands, while Indonesia is ranked 15th largest country with a total of 1,904,569 km2 divided into 18,108 islands which making Indonesia the largest archipelago in the world<sup>10</sup>. Second, with substantial and humid rainfall, China has a semi-tropical climate, while Indonesia with an astronomical position right on the equator makes this region a tropical climate which is ideal for forest and plantation growth. Third, the two countries share a large area of water which China has the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, and the South China Sea and Indonesia with the Java Sea, Banda Sea, Sulawesi Sea and Maluku Sea. The two countries in the eyes of the world have been known for their geographical beauty and have been targeted by foreign tourists to enjoy natural beauty such as Mount Wutai in Shanxi, Jiuhua Mountain in Anwei, Yellow River, Mount Rinjani, Mount Semeru, Bali Islands and many more. Indonesia and China both have geographical conditions that have many rivers, mountains even though they have a somewhat different climate in which Indonesia has a more favorable position in agricultural sector.

Demographically, China was ranked first in the world as the world with the largest population of 1,419,912,180 in 2019. While Indonesia was ranked 4th with 260,000,000 individuals from various ethnic groups and religions while even though there were 56 different ethnicities that were officially recognized in China, 91.51% of the population is Han ethnic. This population problem in China has

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Hays, "Land and Geography of Indonesia" accesed at <a href="http://factsanddetails.com/indonesia/Nature Science Animals/sub6 8a/entry-4078.html#chapter-7">http://factsanddetails.com/indonesia/Nature Science Animals/sub6 8a/entry-4078.html#chapter-7</a> at 18 Juny 2019

become a serious issue that has been discussed by the government for a long time. The policy of "one-child policy" is one of the efforts made by the government to limit population growth which continues to increase every year. But the results of this policy caused the child birth rate to decline dramatically and caused fears that future economic developments would deteriorate seeing an aging population also increase, so this policy ended in 2016. In Indonesia itself, the problem of increasing population arises from uneven and focused development in some big cities, this causes a buildup of people in 1 city and creates traffic jams every day which naturally disrupts work activities, besides that the number of unemployed causes the government to work harder to improve the economy and create jobs.

With that many populations, Food basically will be a big problem for many people. Based on the report of the Food and Agricultural Organization in 2011 confirmed that the world's grain yield in that year achieved new record of 2.323 billion tons which China needs 0.5 billion tons of grain every year with only 7% arable land of the world.unfortunately there is not much high quality arable land and the country still face many natural disasters. There is much arable land in arid areas affected by desertification and degradation that happen is very serious.

Water is a necessity for every agricultural product, but statistically shown that the water storage capacity which can be used in production and people's daily life only accounts for 2.5% of its total storage capacity. Worse still, among the infinitesimal fresh water resources, more than 70% is frozen in the Antartctic and Arctic Pole areas. The fresh water that people can actually use are from riversand lakes and some underground water, which account for about 0.25% of the total water storage capacity on Earth, and if distributed to everyone, it is 0.25 km<sup>3</sup> per capita<sup>11</sup>.

By global climate change, natural disaster especially floods and droughts that often happen in both countries, the problem that occur in ecological environment including water and soil losses, deterioration of grasslands and farmland contamination become a subscription problem that is often faced by farmers and is difficult to deal with permanently. Also agricultural need a high

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Zhao Lingling, "Feeding a Nation: China's Innovative Agriculture, China International Press, 2013 page 8

production cost including chemical fertilizer, pesticide, machinery, and water. Considering the same demographic and geographical conditions. hence this collaboration in agriculture has the potential to benefit both parties in overcoming the problems faced today.

The development of China's agricultural system itself can be a great learning for Indonesia. The industrialization process of the Chinese agricultural system which was initially carried out conventionally then gradually became modern called "A Dragon in the field" where the dragon here is interpreted as an organized process. This phenomenon began with the Chia Tai Group, which in 1979 made an investment of USD 10 million to build a feed and poultry company in Shenzhen and obtain a license as a joint venture company Sino-Foreign No. 1 in Shenzhen. With the investment, Zhengda Feed Company created the "Zhengda Mode" program where companies and farmers collaborated by providing various facilities to Chinese farmers ranging from technical services, chicken livestock, and other aspects of production that support the development of the agricultural industry. This program allows farmers to produce appropriate and fast food products in accordance with high market demand <sup>12</sup>.

Many innovative discoveries from Chinese farmers are developing well because the support of the government. Among the hybrid rice discoveries by Yuan Longping who are on July 16th 2013 through China Longping High-Tech Rice Company and Indonesian Growth Steel Group held meeting for experimental planting and the result called OPTIMA seeds<sup>13</sup>. These seeds have been planted in various parts of the world and play an important role in overcoming food crises that occur in many countries. In addition there are many other breakthroughs found by Chinese farmers such as "Xiaoyan 6" a distand hybrid wheat discovered by Li Zhenseng, Ma Dehua's breeding system applied to Chinese cabbage, tomato and cucumber, and the most famous is China's bio-industrial technology that has been intensively developing technology in the agricultural industry in China and playing an important role in its economic growth.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibid page 104

<sup>13</sup> Ibid page 28

The investments made in this sector produced breakthroughs such as super rice, cotton resistant to transgenic insects, microbial soil inoculants, and synergistic microbial leaf surfaces produced by the development of biological fertilizer industries in China that use and develop bio-fertilizers that are very useful for developing plant quality, reduce costs, save land, reduce the level of environmental pollution, decomposition of organic matter and minerals that are slightly soluble in soil, resistance to disease, stimulation of plant growth and symbiotic roots. Even the American Rice Technology Company has to pay for China's Hunan Hybrid Research Center, more than 1 million dollars of technological achievements royalties where this is a major achievement and a great historical contribution made by Chinese agricultural science.

In the other side, as previously explained Indonesia is astronomically located right on the equator which makes this country has a warm tropical climate with temperatures of 90 F at noon and 70 F at night so it is suitable for the growth of various types of plants. Indonesia has 2 seasons that are well utilized by farmers, namely the rainy season which is used to plant crops and the dry season used for harvesting.

But unfortunately, Indonesian agricultural technology is still far behind when compared to other countries' agricultural technology. This can be caused by several things, for example according to data from the Indonesian Agricultural Census that most Indonesian farmers belong to the poor with small land so many of them choose to use their money to buy fertilizers and pesticides rather than tractors to plow fields, because according to them agriculture will not be able to walk without fertilizer while the tractor can still be replaced with animal power. Bank credit for capital is also difficult for farmers to access because according to them agricultural business is less profitable than oil palm farming. Even so, Indonesia still relies heavily on their agricultural products as an important export

commodity besides mining products such as oil palm, rubber, chocolate, tea, rice and others<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Indonesia investment. "Agricultural Sector of Indonesia" accesed in <a href="https://www.indonesia-investments.com/culture/economy/general-economic-outline/agriculture/item378">https://www.indonesia-investments.com/culture/economy/general-economic-outline/agriculture/item378</a> at 21 juny 2019.

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