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Article

Chinese Scholarship on Concurrent Analyses of Indonesia and Timor-Leste: Patterns, Themes, and Positioning

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Abstract: This paper systematically examines Chinese academic discourse that concurrently addresses Indonesia and Timor-Leste, analysing 137 articles from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and indexed by the Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI). The analysis reveals significant publication trends, particularly during periods of heightened geopolitical and economic engagement, such as the global expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It identifies predominant themes such as economic cooperation, security concerns, and historical-cultural dynamics. The findings highlight China's strategic interests and leadership aspirations in Southeast Asia, providing insights into how Chinese scholars perceive and articulate China's strategic interests and diplomatic efforts in the region involving Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); Chinese Scholarship; Indonesia; Timor-Leste; Content Analysis; Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

Southeast Asia is increasingly becoming a focal point of scholarly efforts which aim to make sense of China's emerging role as a significant player in the region (Shambaugh, 2020; Strangio, 2020). With their vast economic potential and pivotal positions in Southeast Asia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste, a relatively young republic with close ties with China since its independence, hold strategical positions in China's regional strategies (Anwar, 2023; Leandro *et al.*, 2023).

Chinese scholars' increasing focus on concurrent analyses of Indonesia and Timor-Leste reflects the countries' growing importance in regional politics in Southeast Asia. The Chinese-language academic discourse surrounding Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and their relations provides invaluable insights into how Chinese scholars perceive and interpret their country's foreign policy and strategic interests. By examining relevant Chinese academic articles, one can discern the underlying narratives and thematic patterns that shape the discourse on Indonesia and Timor-Leste within the context of China's geopolitical strategies. Scholarly efforts in this area are meaningful for two reasons. Firstly, existing literature has demonstrated that academic discourse in China reflects, to a large extent, the state's perspectives and is profoundly shaped by the state (Tao and Griffith, 2018; 2019). Therefore, these efforts can help understand the intellectual foundations of China's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia. Moreover, under certain circumstances, expert advice – including those from academics – can influence the policymaking process in China (Zhu, 2011; Xu and Tao, 2022a). These efforts can reveal Chinese scholars' academic frameworks and positioning, inspiring a deeper understanding of China's engagement with Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

This paper aims to systematically analyse the Chinese academic discourse concurrently engaging with Indonesia and Timor-Leste, providing a comprehensive overview of the prevailing themes, narratives, and scholarly interpretations. After introducing the data and research methods, it first reveals the publication trends in the selected scholarship. It then reports the results of detailed examinations of the predominant keywords and emerging themes in Chinese scholarship, such as economic cooperation under the BRI, security and strategic interests, and the socio-cultural dynamics

between the nations. Finally, the paper offers a critical discourse analysis to understand the relational positioning of China within the scholarly narratives, concluding with a discussion on the implications of these findings for future research and policymaking.

2. Materials and Methods

This study utilises the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) as the primary source for academic articles. CNKI is a leading digital platform in China, renowned for its comprehensive coverage of Chinese academic literature across various disciplines. The significance of CNKI lies in its ability to provide access to a vast repository of high-quality, peer-reviewed articles that reflect the latest research trends and developments in China.

Within the articles available via CNKI, this research focuses exclusively on those published in journals indexed by the Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI). The CSSCI is an esteemed citation index that covers leading academic journals in the field of social sciences in China. Managed by the Nanjing University Centre for Chinese Social Sciences Research and Assessment, the CSSCI is akin to the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) in the English-language academia, serving as a critical tool for evaluating the impact and quality of social science research within the Chinese academic community (Chen, 2019). The emphasis on CSSCI journals provides a robust foundation for the analysis, as these publications are recognised for their scholarly excellence and significant contribution to advancing knowledge within the social sciences in China. In other words, by focusing on articles from CSSCI-indexed journals, this study ensures that the selected articles are high quality and represent the essential areas of attention in Chinese scholarship.

A two-step selection process was employed to ensure the robustness and relevance of the literature included in this study. The search terms were carefully chosen to ensure precision and relevance. For Timor-Leste, the term “东帝汶” was used, requiring an exact match to appear at least five times within the full text of the articles. For Indonesia, both “印尼” and its full name “印度尼西亚” were used, again requiring an exact match to appear at least five times within the full text. These terms were combined using the following Boolean operators to refine the search: **(Full Text: “东帝汶” * 5 (exact)) AND ((Full Text: “印尼” * 5 (exact)) OR (Full Text: “印度尼西亚” * 5 (exact)))**.

The initial dataset comprised 140 articles retrieved to capture the intersection of scholarly discussions on Indonesia and Timor-Leste within Chinese academic discourse. Three publications, including one book review and two journal advertisements, were subsequently excluded from the list, resulting in a final database of 137 academic articles for analysis. These articles were highly relevant and of sufficient depth to provide meaningful insights into the scholarly discussions on Indonesia and Timor-Leste within the context of Chinese academic discourse. They formed the basis for further thematic analysis, narrative examination, and contextual interpretation to understand how Chinese scholars position China's perspective on Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and their relations.

Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis software, was employed to code and analyse the selected articles. The coding process served two primary purposes. Firstly, it utilised Charmaz's (2006) Constructing Grounded Theory method to systematically delineate the essential themes within the sample articles. Following the methodology outlined in Xu and Tao (2022b) and Xu *et al.* (2024), this process was divided into three phases: initial, focused, and axial coding. During the initial phase, sentence-by-sentence coding was employed to scrutinise the data and generate preliminary codes, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the sample articles. The subsequent phase, focused coding, involved a more concentrated, selective, and conceptual approach than the initial phase. Here, the preliminary codes were evaluated to identify the most coherent categories within the data. The final phase, axial coding, sought to align these identified categories with the overarching objectives of the study. This systematic coding approach was instrumental in generating the essential themes across the sample articles, providing a robust foundation for further analysis. Secondly, throughout the coding process, sections explicitly and implicitly highlighting how Chinese scholars position China vis-à-vis Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and the broader region were marked for subsequent critical discourse analysis.

3. Publication Trends

Publication trends can provide invaluable insights into the evolution of scholarly discourse and the shifting priorities within a particular field of study. By examining how the frequency and focus of publications change over time, researchers can identify emerging themes, persistent gaps, and evolving theoretical frameworks. Tracking publication trends can reveal the influence of major geopolitical events and policy shifts on academic research. In this study, analysing publication trends related to Indonesia and Timor-Leste within Chinese scholarship sheds light on how China's academic community has engaged with and interpreted the bilateral relations between these countries, reflecting broader geopolitical and economic strategies.

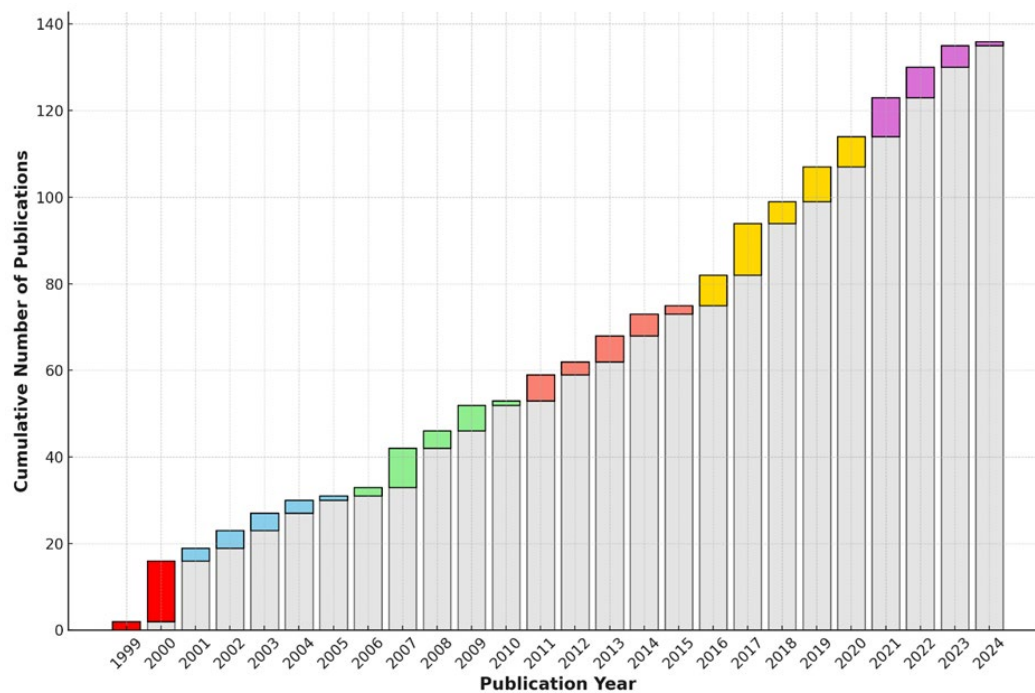


Figure 1. Cumulative Trend of Publications with Yearly Increments Highlighted.

Figure 1 shows the cumulative number of publications over the years, with yearly increments highlighted in different colours for each 5 years. The light grey sections represent the cumulative total up to the previous year, while the coloured segments indicate the number of new publications added each year. The data indicates a significant increase in publications in recent years, with a particularly sharp rise starting around the early 2020s. This trend suggests a growing academic interest among Chinese scholars in the geopolitical and socio-economic dynamics of Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

Figure 1 also reveals that two periods have witnessed significant increases in Chinese scholarly publications that address Indonesia and Timor-Leste simultaneously. The first period is between 2007 and 2009, and the second is between 2017 and now. These surges can be attributed to several interconnected geopolitical and economic developments.

Following Timor-Leste's independence in 2002, the new nation grappled with substantial challenges in achieving political stability and economic growth (Joseph and Hamaguchi, 2014). The 2006 political crisis exacerbated these issues, drawing international attention and prompting increased involvement from various countries, notably China (Engle, 2020). By 2007, China had significantly escalated its financial aid and investments in Timor-Leste, engaging in substantial infrastructure projects such as the construction of hospitals and participation in energy sector ventures (Barreto Soares, 2011; Talesco, 2017). By supporting Timor-Leste's stabilisation and development, China aimed to secure a reliable partner in a geopolitically vital region, which provided access to crucial maritime routes and natural resources (Talesco, 2014). This strategic engagement can be considered part of a broader effort to expand China's presence and influence in Southeast Asia,

set against the backdrop of competition with other regional powers such as Australia and the United States (Shambaugh, 2020; Oliveira, 2023).

Post-2017 saw a renewed surge in scholarly interest, coinciding with the global expansion of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Tao, 2017). This ambitious infrastructure and investment programme aimed to enhance connectivity and cooperation between China and various countries, including those in Southeast Asia (Yu, 2017; Gong, 2019). Given its developmental needs and strategic location, Timor-Leste became a significant beneficiary of Chinese investments under the BRI (Martínez-Galán, 2019). The comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Timor-Leste, formalised in 2023, exemplified this deepening engagement, focusing on energy, agriculture, and infrastructure sectors. This partnership enhances China’s influence in Timor-Leste’s economic development, especially its reliance on the oil and gas sectors for revenue (Cardoso, 2023). It is reasonable to expect this geopolitical development will lead to a further uptick in research and publications on Timor-Leste, with its relations with Indonesia as an indispensable dimension.

The spikes in scholarly publications on Indonesia and Timor-Leste during 2007-2009 and post-2017 reflect a confluence of Timor-Leste’s political and economic transitions, China’s strategic investments and aid, and the broader geopolitical context influenced by the BRI. For Chinese researchers, these factors collectively enhanced the academic and practical relevance of examining the politics, development, and international relations involving Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

4. Predominant Keywords

A thematic analysis of keywords extracted from the sample articles can reveal the prevailing themes and narratives within Chinese scholarship that shape the discourse on the bilateral relations between these nations. Table 1 presents all keywords appearing in three or more sample articles. This analysis can provide insights into how Chinese academics interpret the geopolitical, economic, and cultural dimensions of Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and their relations.

As demonstrated in Table 1, a significant cluster of keywords revolves around geopolitical themes, highlighting the strategic importance of Indonesia and Timor-Leste within Southeast Asia. The most frequently occurring keyword, “Southeast Asia” (东南亚), underscores the regional context in which these countries are analysed. Chinese scholars often emphasise the geopolitical dynamics of Southeast Asia, particularly concerning China’s expanding influence through the Belt and Road Initiative. The keyword “geopolitics” (地缘政治) further illustrates the focus on strategic considerations, including maritime security and territorial disputes. The presence of terms such as “maritime delimitation” (海洋划界) and “South China Sea” (南海) indicates a keen interest in maritime issues. The South China Sea, a critical region for international shipping and resource exploration, is a focal point of contention (Dutton, 2011; Morton, 2016). Chinese scholarship frequently addresses the maritime disputes involving Indonesia, particularly around the Natuna Islands, highlighting the strategic importance of these waters for both economic and security reasons. The narratives often align with China’s official stance on maritime sovereignty, reflecting a broader geopolitical strategy.

Table 1. Frequency Analysis of Selected Keywords in Sample Articles.

Keyword in Chinese	Frequency of Sample Articles with the Keyword	English Translation of the Keyword
东南亚	24	Southeast Asia
印尼/印度尼西亚*	17	Indonesia
东帝汶*	14	Timor-Leste
东盟	7	ASEAN
澳大利亚	7	Australia
“一带一路”	6	Belt and Road Initiative
中国*	4	China
地缘政治	3	Geopolitics

国际法	3	International Law
东南亚国家	3	Southeast Asian Countries
美国外交	3	US Diplomacy
争端解决	3	Dispute Resolution
海洋划界	3	Maritime Delimitation
共同开发	3	Joint Development
东南亚研究	3	Southeast Asian Studies
南海	3	South China Sea
美国	3	United States

¹ Only keywords that appear in 3 or more sample articles are included.

² The terms referring to China, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste are followed with an asterisk (*) as they are used in the Boolean operators to select sample articles. However, it should be noted that the initial article selection was based on full text rather than keywords.

The Belt and Road Initiative (一带一路) has emerged as a central theme in the discourse on economic cooperation between China, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste. The initiative is narrated as a pivotal framework for enhancing infrastructural connectivity and economic integration in the region. Keywords such as “joint development” (共同开发) and “economic cooperation” emphasise the collaborative efforts in resource management and infrastructural projects. Chinese scholars often highlight specific projects under the BRI that have significant implications for Indonesia and Timor-Leste. These projects include the development of ports, railways, and energy infrastructure, which are vital for regional economic growth. The keyword “Indonesia” (印尼 or 印度尼西亚) frequently appears alongside discussions of BRI projects, indicating a focused analysis of how these initiatives transform Indonesia’s economic landscape. Similarly, “Timor-Leste” (东帝汶) appears in the context of development aid and infrastructure investments, reflecting China’s growing involvement in Timor-Leste’s development.

The sample articles also explore legal and diplomatic dimensions, with keywords such as “international law” (国际法) and “dispute resolution” (争端解决) highlighting the role of legal frameworks in addressing regional conflicts. Chinese scholars have researched extensively the application of international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in resolving maritime disputes (Hong, 2012; Ma, 2019). Their interpretations often align with China’s broader legal strategies in asserting its claims while promoting peaceful dispute-resolution mechanisms (Wang, 2017). Keywords related to diplomacy, such as “US diplomacy” (美国外交), reflect the analysis of external influences on Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Chinese academics critically assess the impact of US foreign policy in the region, often contrasting it with China’s diplomatic approaches. This comparative analysis sheds light on the strategic manoeuvring of significant powers in Southeast Asia and their implications for regional stability.

The cultural and historical contexts form another vital aspect of the analysis, highlighting a scholarly interest in understanding the historical affinities and cultural ties between Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and China. Keywords like “Southeast Asian Studies” (东南亚研究) indicate a significant focus on area studies, suggesting that Chinese scholars are deeply invested in exploring the distinct characteristics and dynamics of Indonesia and Timor-Leste, often contextualising these within the broader Southeast Asian region. This emphasis is likely driven by China’s recent leap forward in policy-oriented area studies and country-specific studies focusing on Southeast Asia (Xie, 2021). Chinese scholars often draw on historical narratives to frame their analysis of current events. Therefore, articles in this field often explore how historical interactions shape contemporary diplomatic and economic relations. For instance, the post-independence development trajectory of Timor-Leste is examined concerning its historical ties and tensions with Indonesia and its evolving relationship with China (Chang and Ma, 2022). By engaging with these historical and cultural contexts, Chinese scholars offer a more comprehensive understanding of the region’s ongoing and potential future dynamics.

5. Emerging Themes

Following the analytical results of predominate keywords, three emerging themes in the sample body of Chinese-language scholarship will be identified: economic cooperation and development, security and strategic interests, and the region's historical, cultural, and social fabrics.

Economic cooperation is a recurring theme, with numerous articles analysing the economic interdependencies between Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and China. For example, the article by Du *et al.* (2024) underscores the importance of economic stability and cooperation in mitigating regional geopolitical risks. It is noteworthy that Chinese scholars frequently discuss China's diplomatic strategies in the region with a focus on development, particularly in the context of the BRI. For example, Yang and Li (2023) illustrate China's approach to fostering economic and political ties with Southeast Asian nations, including Indonesia and Timor-Leste, through infrastructure projects and high-level diplomatic engagements.

The academic discourse in sample articles also prominently features security concerns and strategic interests. For example, Qin (2023) examines the strategic alliances and security frameworks that influence regional dynamics, including the roles of Indonesia and Timor-Leste within these frameworks. In addition, Wang (2022) analyses the maritime security cooperation between Australia and Indonesia within the context of the Indo-Pacific strategy, highlighting the increasing geopolitical risks in the region. Moreover, Li (2022) discusses the adjustments in Australia's maritime strategy, shaped by its perception of regional security threats and strategic dependence on alliances. These articles underscore the intricate interplay of strategic interests, security concerns, and regional geopolitical dynamics.

Several articles emphasise the historical context of Indonesian-Timor-Leste relations, particularly during the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste (1975-1999). For instance, Gao (2023) analyses the geopolitical dynamics during and after the Cold War, highlighting the influence of American hegemonic policies on regional stability. In addition, Chang and Ma (2022) investigate the unique historical logic behind the governance model transformations in Timor-Leste's primary and secondary education systems, reflecting the broader strategic shifts in the region. Cultural and social interactions between Indonesia and Timor-Leste and their implications for regional diplomacy are less frequently discussed but remain an essential aspect of the discourse. For example, Wu (2023) sheds light on how cultural diplomacy and international health initiatives have historically shaped Indonesia's foreign relations.

The Chinese academic narratives largely align with China's official diplomatic positions, reflecting the broader strategic goals of the Chinese government. This alignment is evident in the emphasis on economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and strategic alliances, which are critical components of China's foreign policy under the BRI framework (Lewis *et al.*, 2021). However, the scholarship discourse often offers more nuanced insights beyond the official discourse. For example, the analysis of geopolitical risks and security concerns presents a critical perspective on the potential challenges and opportunities in the region. Despite such concerns, the emphasis on shared economic interests, strategic cooperation, and cultural diplomacy indicates a positive outlook among Chinese scholars on the region's potential for collaborative development and stability.

6. Relational Positioning

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is crucial for understanding the underlying power dynamics and ideological constructs within Chinese academic discourse on international relations. By dissecting the language and narratives employed in scholarly articles, CDA can reveal how China positions itself in relation to other countries, particularly Indonesia and Timor-Leste. This analysis is essential for uncovering how China projects its influence and frames its leadership in regional geopolitics, development, and strategic partnerships.

Examining the relational positioning within the sample academic articles on China versus Indonesia and Timor-Leste reveals that the narratives foremost frame China as a pivotal leader and initiator in regional development. This positioning is expressed in many ways. In addition to explicitly emphasising China's leadership, the academic discourse in the sample articles also

highlights China's roles as a leader or initiator in developmental commitments and strategic partnerships. Moreover, many sample articles take the BRI as an analytical lens, frame, or context for their examinations of the relationship between China, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste, inexplicitly underscoring that the cooperative relationships between these countries are led and advocated by China, positioning China as the principal architect of regional collaboration.

6.1. *Explicit Framing of China's Leading Roles*

The academic discourse in the sample articles frequently positions China as a leading actor and influencer in regional geopolitics, evident in the use of phrases such as "China's leading role" (中国的领导角色) and "strategic partner" (战略伙伴). These terms underscore China's perceived centrality and authority in shaping the geopolitical landscape of Southeast Asia in the sample academic articles.

The narratives often highlight China's proactive engagement and leadership in regional affairs, positioning it as a stabilising force and a key player in promoting peace and security. For instance, China's involvement in regional organisations such as ASEAN and its initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative are portrayed as instrumental in fostering regional connectivity and economic development. The discourse also frequently mentions China's diplomatic efforts and strategic investments, which are expressed as crucial in mitigating conflicts and building alliances.

Furthermore, terms like "China's leadership" (中国的领导力) and "dominant position" (主导地位) are frequently employed in the sample articles to emphasise China's authority and central role in regional affairs. These articles often depict China as a major economic powerhouse and a pivotal political entity whose decisions and actions significantly influence regional stability and growth. This portrayal aligns with the broader narrative of China as a benign power committed to mutual development and cooperation, further cementing its image as an indispensable partner in Southeast Asia's future trajectory.

6.2. *China-led Partnership and Cooperation*

It should be noted that the emphasis on development and cooperation is a recurring theme in the sample articles. Terms such as "win-win cooperation" (合作共赢) and "joint development" (共同发展) are prevalent, reflecting China's commitment to fostering mutual growth and shared prosperity. Phrases such as "mutual benefits" (互利共赢) and "shared interests" (共同利益) highlight the perceived advantages of China's partnerships with Indonesia and Timor-Leste, reinforcing the theme of mutual growth and cooperation.

In the sample articles, Indonesia and Timor-Leste are depicted as China's significant partners in regional stability and development. These countries are frequently described in terms that emphasise mutual benefits and shared interests, positioning them as existing or potential allies in China's regional strategy. Descriptions often highlight the reciprocal advantages of these partnerships, focusing on collaborative efforts to achieve common objectives. The narratives often refer to "strategic cooperation" (战略合作) and "partnership" (伙伴关系), framing China's relationships with these countries as strategic alliances aimed at achieving common goals. However, a paternalistic undertone also depicts, for example, Timor-Leste as a recipient of Chinese aid and development projects. Phrases like "aid recipients" (受援国) and "development aid" (发展援助) reflect a view of China as a benefactor, extending support and resources to foster development in these nations. This portrayal reinforces China's image as a generous leader, contributing to the upliftment and progress of its regional partners.

6.3. *Alignment with China's Development and Strategic Frameworks*

Many sample articles employ the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as an analytical framework or contextual backdrop to explore the relationships between China, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste. BRI has become a flagship project in China's diplomatic and engagement activities, aimed at enhancing infrastructural links and fostering economic integration across the Global South (Yu, 2017; Gong, 2019). By emphasising the BRI, these narratives highlight China's role in regional development and

frame it as the driving force behind these initiatives, implicitly expressing that the cooperative dynamics among these countries are initiated and driven by China, positioning it as the primary architect of regional collaboration.

In addition, the academic narratives within the sample articles often reflect China's broader geopolitical strategies, such as countering US influence and promoting regional stability. For instance, notable references to "geopolitical strategy" (地缘政治战略) and "countering US influence" (对抗美国影响) indicate a deliberate effort to position China as a counterbalance to Western dominance in the region. This strategic alignment underscores China's ambition to enhance its influence and shape the geopolitical order in Southeast Asia (Storey, 2013). The emphasis on international relations patterns within these narratives highlights China's strategic importance in maintaining and expanding its regional influence..

7. Concluding Remarks

Through a comprehensive and systematic survey of 137 Chinese academic articles that simultaneously engage with Indonesia and Timor-Leste, this study reveals multiple dimensions of Chinese academic discourse on these two countries, their relations with each other, and their relations with China. It shows that Timor-Leste and its relations with Indonesia have increasingly become a focal point for Chinese scholarship since the final years of the 20th century.

The findings reported in this paper indicate that Chinese scholars, when simultaneously engaging with Indonesia and Timor-Leste, place significant emphasis on economic cooperation within the BRI framework, highlighting the importance of infrastructural development and economic integration in Southeast Asia. Regarding security and strategic interests, the research shows that Chinese scholars are deeply engaged with maritime security issues, geopolitical risks, and strategic alliances, often emphasising China's role in maintaining regional stability. These discussions align with broader Chinese geopolitical strategies, including balancing the influence of traditional powers active in the region, such as the United States and Australia. Notably, some Chinese scholars contextualise contemporary issues within historical narratives, such as colonial histories and independence movements, providing a rich background for analysing current events and strategic engagements.

The study also highlights a China-centric positioning strategy within Chinese academic narratives, explicitly and subtly underscoring China's leadership and strategic frameworks. Scholars frequently use terms like "leadership role" and "strategic partner," implicitly emphasising China's central position in regional development. The BRI is both a central theme and a lens through which many aspects of bilateral relationships are examined in the surveyed scholarship, indicating a perception that China drives cooperative dynamics between China, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste under the BRI. Moreover, the BRI is portrayed as a transformative force for regional development, aligning with China's goals of fostering economic ties with Southeast Asia. This portrayal reflects a perceived role of China as a stabilising force and helping hand in the region, a nuance that individual scholars may not be consciously aware of but emerges as a collective trend in the literature.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis of diplomatic strategies between China and the United States, as featured in some sample articles, provides nuanced insights into how Chinese scholars see and understand the strategic manoeuvring of significant powers in Southeast Asia. In this area, Chinese scholarship often contrasts China's developmental and cooperative strategies with the perceived dominance and interventionist policies of the United States. Further analysis may compare the results of this research with studies that use similar methodologies but focus on different topics within Chinese academic discourse. The results could reveal whether the notion of US-China competition observed in this study is unique to the context of Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Southeast Asia or if it reflects a broader pattern shaped by the current international order, which may have influenced various topics, affecting how Chinese scholars perceive regional and global dynamics in international relations.

In conclusion, Chinese academic discourse on Indonesia and Timor-Leste is characterised by narratives emphasising China's leadership, economic cooperation, and strategic partnerships within

a broader geopolitical context. These discussions align closely with China's official diplomatic positions while sometimes offering deeper, nuanced insights into relevant historical and cultural contexts. As China continues to expand its influence in Southeast Asia, relevant Chinese scholarship will remain crucial for understanding the ideas, perceptions, and visions that Chinese scholars—and, to some extent, the Chinese state—hold regarding China's roles within the region and the country's relationships with Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at the website of this paper posted on Preprints.org. Table S1: Mata Information of the Sample Articles.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: Mata information of the sample articles, including keywords, are available as a supplementary material.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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