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PROTECTING NATIONAL SECURITY AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM: RELEVANCE IN 3 SOUTHEAST ASIA COUNTRIES, 2014–2021

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This paper takes the initiative to study the causality between military spending (MS), GDP of military sector (GMS), armed forces personnel (AFP), arms exports (AE), and arms imports (AI) and economic freedom (FE). Objectivity is determined in Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore. Panel data regression is using to test a series of hypotheses over the period 2014–2021. Furthermore, the probability parameter applied is $\rho < 0.05$. Various conclusions show that there are differences in the three observations. First, AFP and AE have a significant effect on EF in Indonesia. Second, MS, GMS, and AI actually affect EF in Malaysia significantly. Third, MS, GMS, and AFP have significant links to EF in Singapore. The results of the investigation provide useful insights into the progress of the military industry and weapons technology, thereby bringing about a more progressive economic escalation. Economic freedom as an identity that symbolizes the maturity of a country's prosperity. Therefore, peace is difficult to achieve if the demands to fight for prosperity are not carried out.

Keywords: national security, military spending, GDP of military sector, armed forces personnel, arms exports, and arms imports, economic freedom, panel data regression

JEL Classification: E6, H56, F5, O38, F14, P16, C23

INTRODUCTION

Security is key to social, political, ethnic and economic stability in many countries (Goryakin et al., 2015; Lim & Kim, 1998; Oh et al., 2009). The level of security is also seen as a dignity and splendour of a nation (Kelman, 1977; McCrudden, 2008). Poor defense crisis, defined as weak recognition of military protection (e.g. Feaver, 1999; Hirsch Ballin et al., 2020; Samaras et al., 2019). Substantially, the government is authoritarian in the process, checks, and convergence of military regulations (Emily, 2022; Sebastian et al., 2018).

The world's great commitment to fighting crime is actualized through the revolution of its military institutions that oversee transnational security. This great work is a global demand for peace. Each country also has the opportunity to focus on domestic security, where every soldier is prepared with a comprehensive weaponry aspect (Riedel, 2004). Given the urgency and essence of national security being an integrated package, the military attributes will inherit a more successful cycle of change, agency, and democratic structures (Croissant et al., 2011). The depth of military strength can improve institutional patterns and prevention capacities from internal and external threats (Croissant & Kuehn, 2009).

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Like emerging markets, such as Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore, the military and armaments are industries that have bright prospects (Bitzinger, 2010; 2013; 2022; Shiddiqy, 2019). Considering geographical factors that are close to each other, these countries always collaborate in military training and revitalization of defense in the air, land and sea territories, so that the diplomatic side continues to increase (Acharya, 1991; Milia et al., 2018; Simon, 2007). Technically, all three are also incorporated in the Southeast Asian region, so that security connectivity is operated by tightening security from terrorists, illegal immigrants, trafficking in women and children, illegal workers, and asylum seekers who trigger commercial or state financial losses (Stubbs, 1992; Thayer, 1992). 2007). Borderlines in Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore, allow inter-sub-regional guarding (Singh, 1969). When there is a vertical and horizontal conflict between these three countries, the resolution of the problem is bridged by the United Nations council.

Often, military constraints and interests interfere with partnership interactions, such as economic freedom (Long & Leeds, 2006; Wignaraja et al., 2019). In fact, a good corporate atmosphere indicates a positive state image (Dutton et al., 1994). In the context of emergency situations such as economic bankruptcy, destruction by natural disasters, disturbances to public peace, ceasefires, widespread terrorist aggression, and expansive demonstrations, security protection is generally under the control of the military hierarchy (Callejas & Cazeau, 2016). Publications highlighting the relationship between national security and economic freedom were reviewed by Djidrov et al. (2013), Dokmanović & Cvetićanin (2020), Markina et al. (2018), and Retter et al. (2020). Empirical evaluation in the Balkans, Ukraine, and the Netherlands shows that the performance of economic freedom reflects integrated national security. On the one hand, Beckley (2010), Brkić (2020), Gehring (2013), Graafland (2020), and Menshikov et al. (2017) argues that the national security system stimulates economic freedom for 86 countries, including the European Union (EU).

Stimulating economic freedom is one of several constitutional goals for the establishment of a prosperous, united and sovereign state (ZA et al., 2021). As a "universal terminology" that emphasizes the loci of various conditions that represent quality in human life (Lees, 2016; Mcvilly & Rawlinson, 2009). Among the various criteria are prosperity, physical and mental health, capacity for reasoning, skills, a[33] of course, the happiness of living life as a human being. Meanwhile, the word "universal" attached to the "concept of economic freedom" bridges the nature of society, in which every citizen has the right to enjoy welfare (e.g. Chirimbu & Barbu-Chirimbu, 2011; Cruz-Martínez, 2019; Fujimura, 1998). It is clear that the ideals of welfare as outlined in this state ideological consortium are complex and cannot be reduced to merely economic affairs. It is also undeniable that economic freedom in an integral sense can be realized if certain economic conditions are also successfully implemented (Walker et al., 2021). According to Mensah (2019), implementing economic principles that are compatible with the prosperity agenda will never lack relevance in any endeavour.

Referring to the facts above, it proves that domestic security is a tool to guarantee contemporary economic freedom. Ideally, the nationa[19]ecurity strategy plays a vital role and represents the economic safety of a nation. So, the motivation of this article is to investigate the effect of national security on economic freedom in 3 Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore).

Furthermore, this article is organized into seven sessions. Part 1: presents the means to achieve the goal. Section 2: introduces a literature review related to national security, military and armaments industry, economic freedom, and hypotheses development. Section 3: details the research methodology. Section 4: tells the results and discussion based on the findings. Finally, in section 5: conclusions summarize the main results, practical implications, recommendations for further research, and limitations of the study. The output of the article will make a credible and accurate contribution to the continuous and comparable study of the exploration of national security policies through military and weaponry maturation to promote economic freedom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

National security

National security implies a set of judgments about the ways in which the political community can protect itself from potential harm. In security initiation, such a characterization justifies referral. Yet, it is also often assumed that national security is interpreted as a particular concept, practice, and type of security. It has become commonplace, when referring to the "traditional" paradigm of national security, as if the state is unable to adapt to very drastic changes (Nicholls, 2012; Sussex et al., 2017).

Unifying national security is a common perspective, from which all participation in security activities changes that aim to contribute to one common proposition (Clarke et al., 2022). Although security policymakers now display different approaches, the agenda tends to be harmonized through conventional rubrics in the pillars of national interest (Rubin, 1982). Without worrying about intellectual demarcation, which is partly understood with academic thinking to study the problem of national security developments. Today, national security observations have grown rapidly to refer to threats to welfare and survival (Baldwin, 1995). Intelligence analysis is elaborated on general illustrations and basics of the focal point of problem-solving in science-based intelligence (Grizold, 1994).

White (2018) explains that domestic security is a profession, field and practice that has emerged recently in an established proportion of national security. To guide national security, a set of basic principles and theory development are linked to an exclusive consensus (Lantis, 2002). From a different perspective, O'Sullivan & Ramsay (2015) combine the issue of "homeland security" with resource competition, climate change, environmental security, and conflict. Risk management to national security is closely linked to assisting security strategies and responding to nature.

Military and armament industry

Before the end of the "Cold War", research on the arms industry in developing countries received little attention (Brauer, 2002). The popularity of research studying military spending and its impact on economic growth and development is more crucial than examining the arms industry in countries with relatively military power. It should be noted, since "World War II", technology has played a central role in defense spending in arms-producing countries. Since the 1990s, despite the absence of major conflicts or threats, the defense sector absorbs the bulk of research, military spending, and public development. To

avoid strategic surprises, a technology centric paradigm is generated in the context of the uncertainty surrounding defense needs and issues. The supply side elasticity of weapons encourages defense companies to develop business clusters through the launch of new military programs (Bellais, 2013). A market, centred on technology, tends to be favoured by defense companies with connections to security governance.

Dombrowsk et al. (2003) believe that military transformation does not mean accommodating the defense industry prominently. Much of the innovation is required to integrate systems that can affect warfare into defense networks. Most likely, the defense base industry is also building platforms. But, there are differences in evaluation standards for the navy. To change the shipbuilding landscape, suppliers will have a stake in the industry of the future, where innovative technologies by the company keep an eye on the offering of new concepts.

Case studies in the US, recent developments in the defense industry have attracted demand in the global market. Dombrowski & Gholz (2009) clarified that innovative product quality attributes can help investment decisions in the military sector.

Recently, the Asian continent is a leading consumer of weapons, where the most advanced and most modern weapons are starting to enter the military inventory of the Asian region. As a result, Asian militaries have experienced a significant surge. Over the past few years, this has been unprecedented, both quality and quantity. After all, all these trends make Asia the largest arms producer. Local weapons production also adds some value to military capabilities. Although arms dependence is important for some countries in the Asia-Pacific, they have attempted to at least reduce the supply of foreign weapons by equipping and replacing them with manufacturers of the weapons systems needed (Bitzinger, 2017).

Economic freedom

Economic freedom is a framework, in which a structure compatible with a concern for prosperity is implemented in economic processes and institutions (Chen & Sophie Huang, 2009; Duan et al., 2022; Kabir & Alam, 2021; Kapás & Czegledi, 2010; Sambharya & Rasheed, 2015). In the item of economic freedom, it includes many principles that are imbued with the spirit of freedom for all human beings in various economic activities to increase their level of personal well-being, but also that individual independence in the pattern of their interactions with one another, provides mutual benefits, and supports extensive welfare.

At a very basic level, these points include protection of persons and private property from aggression by others, freedom to compete and enter market share, voluntary exchange coordinated by the market, and personal choice (Gwartney et al., 1999; Ökte, 2010; Rapsikevicius et al., 2021). The goals of the economic freedom program focus on increasing public appreciation and a more appreciative understanding of public policy on economic rights designed for these four items.

It is often misunderstood that economic freedom will erode plural welfare because it rests on individual freedom, which is rooted in ideological prejudices that oppose freedom, and equality, where abundant facts show that the interval of economic freedom is directly proportional to the increase in social welfare

(e.g. Näsström, 2021; Pildes & Anderson, 1990). This welfare is not only focused on the economic aspect, but also in the health and education aspects (Irwansyah et al., 2022).

To mention one study that relies on countries with free economies having more competent human development than countries with non-free economic backgrounds (Elistia & Syahzuni, 2018; Fatah et al., 2021; Grubel, 1998; Petrovi, 2010). Economic freedom is a condition that must be met by a country to overcome health, education, and prosperity problems (Altman, 2008; Sinding, 2009).

Hypothesis development

Military spending and economic freedom

The relationship between military spending and economic growth (GDP) has been studied in the extensive literature. However, there are no studies that concentrate on the relationship between military spending and economic freedom. Military spending is projected to decrease as potential external threats and internal turmoil have decreased in countries with high economic freedom (Kennedy, 2018). In regions such as North Africa and the Middle East, there is a bidirectional causality between military spending and economic freedom (Sözen & Tufaner, 2020). When the military budget allocation increases, it will benefit community sovereignty, economic governance, and trade independence in Mediterranean countries or lower middle income countries (Korkmaz, 2015; Nugroho & Purwanti, 2021). Uniquely, military spending does not benefit social welfare, but instead harms economic growth for non-OECD countries (Azam, 2020). Too, military manufacturing expenditures also have an opposite impact on the economic burden in OECD countries (Cappelen et al., 1984). The first hypothesis is set as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Military spending has no significant effect on economic freedom.

GDP of military sector and economic freedom

Currently, Saudi Arabia is experiencing dependence on oil exports and uncertain economic growth. For this purpose, labour, capital, oil prices, terrorism, military spending, tourism, and exports are added to the analysis. Through short-term and long-term analysis, there is a systematic effect between economic freedom and GDP of military, or vice versa (Aziz et al., 2021). Dudzevičiūtė & imelytė (2022) examine the relationship between the defense burden on NATO countries and economic indicators. The three largest countries in terms of defense spending such as Greece, Turkey, and the US were selected for analysis. As a result, the defense burden responds negatively to changes in economic development output. From observations in Pakistan, India, and China, Syed (2021) confirms that the GDP of the military sector does not have an asymmetric impact on industrial productivity and economic freedom. So far, democracy relies on political power, economic resources, and military ownership in more than 100 sample countries (Birchler, 2012). It makes sense to plan the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). GDP of military sector has no significant effect on economic freedom.

Armed forces personnel and economic freedom

Sezal & Giumelli (2022) state that the country's security and defense policies largely depend on military capabilities. This is because the defense sector relies on public funds, the allocation of which has a spillover effect on the civilian sector. In addition, the effect is moving for global-regional markets and a greater potential for innovation and technological movement oriented towards economic freedom. Stein (2016) examines the role of the military in understanding political-economic developments in Myanmar. Under the leadership of the Tatmadaw, militaristic and socialist institutions became a conspicuous unitary element of significant market productivity. Although government institutions in Myanmar were distorted causing economic shocks, but since market liberalization grew, they have abandoned socialism and embraced the capitalist system.

In countries in Asia and Africa, the habitat of national soldiers is quite prominent. Fundamentally, political-social development consistently moves in a more massive direction (Mirsky, 1981). But, it is a contrast in parts of North Africa and the Middle East. The presence of a political-economic structure actually hinders the distribution of welfare. Often, government spending on improving social security clashes with military spending (Gunes & Aysan, 2014). The praetorian relationship between the government and the military is contradictory. The high personnel unit of the armed forces does not provide comfort for the distribution of welfare in the region. It is very logical to formulate the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Armed forces personnel have a significant effect on economic freedom.

Arms exports and economic freedom

Yakovlev (2004) exposes more conclusive evidence if there is a significant effect between net arms exports and economic growth in the OECD sub-sample and non-oil countries. From an economic perspective, since 1995, international arms trade has entered a more dominant channel than other commodities. van Lieshout & Beeres (2022) distinguish five classifications in the military goods and services market, namely dual-use goods, light and moderate weapons, primary weapon systems, and weapons of mass destruction. The dominance of these commodities is addressed to countries with developing markets through legal agreements. Smith et al. (1985) revealed that the international arms trade has an important economic motive. The market structure is initiated by the evolution of supply and demand, which has implications for income and prices. The promotion of arms exports by a country also makes up a lucrative proposition. The process of arms supply countries runs smoothly, if given for political and strategic purposes. Because of the increasingly strong dependence of certain interests, arms exporters create a large economic lobby. Although this has undermined and demonstrated contradictory relationships, arms exports have opened up positive economic freedom (de Soysa et al., 2009). Possibly, cooperative behaviour among arms trading partners cannot stem the influence and openness of the global economy (Kinne, 2018). The interaction between military spending and the arms trade and their impact on growth. Yakovlev (2007) also examines the linearity between arms trade and military spending on growth. The impact of the two is to interact with each other towards inclusive economic growth. The following hypotheses are presented as follows:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). Arms exports have a significant effect on economic freedom.

Arms imports and economic freedom

After the "Cold War", fiscal revival momentum from arms transfer financing increased, particularly from credit, military aid, barter trade, and cash financing. These sources of flow of funds are financed by international restraints on the economy (Smith & Tasiran, 2005). The burden of credit in developing countries appears to be greater which cannot be separated from arms imports. Interestingly, the excessively high debt due to arms imports during 1980-1990 had an impact on the commercialization of the arms trade (Brzoska, 2004). For manufacturers of new weapons, customers who are less well off financially is something that is not attractive, where they have to pay for imports or otherwise impose imports of small arms or old weapons. In the end, free trade is like an arms race (Reuveny & Maxwell, 1998).

For Grobar et al. (1990) and Herrera & Gentilucci (2013), military spending as a productive activity and can have a positive impact on GDP. Moreover, the effects of stability and risk reduction affect major expenditures in some countries. Over time, the production of military goods and services, the economy, and income levels also increased.

The two-way phenomenon is inherent in public policy in the field of military spending in Romania. In the long run, military spending has a strong effect on GDP. With reference to the identification discussed, the following fifth hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis (H5). Arms imports have a significant effect on economic freedom.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data

The purpose of this paper is to answer the relationship between military spending, GDP of military sector, armed forces personnel, arms exports, and arms imports on economic freedom in Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore for 8 periods (2014–2020). Secondary type of research supporting data which is recapitulated through online publications. This data is compiled through an official source, i.e. The Global Economy. The sample data are grouped into panel data that combines time-series and cross-section with the following scenarios:

$$N = i \; x \; t \quad (1)$$

$$N = 6 \; x \; 8 \quad (2)$$

$$N = 48 \quad (3)$$

where, N is the sample (observation), i is the entity, and t is the period (time).

Therefore, the sample selected for each case study is 42, which is obtained from the multiplication of the entity size with the variable component. After that, the panel data is tabulated into Microsoft Excel software.

Variable list

A set of variables is divided into two schemes. The dependent variable is played by economic freedom. Then, the independent variable is measured by national security, in which five indicators (military spending, GDP of military sector, armed forces personnel, arms exports, and arms imports) are added to the analysis. The five independent variables were designed to simulate their determination of economic freedom. Completely, Table 1 displays the specifications of all variables.

Table 1 Operational definition of each variable

Variable name	Abbreviation	Description	Measures	Time lag
Dependent variable				
Economic Freedom	EF	Overall, the Economic Freedom Index as a whole has ten factors grouped into four broad categories including open markets, regulatory efficiency, limited government, and the rule of law.	Skala	2014–2020
Independent variables				
Military Spending	MS	Military expenditure allocated by a country's government, including military assistance, military research and development, procurement, operations and maintenance, pension funds, military and civilian personnel, military space activities, paramilitary forces, ministry of defense spending, and peacekeeping.	Billion US$	2014–2020
GDP of Military Sector	GMS	A signal to know the military economic condition in a certain country in a certain period.	Percentage	2014–2020
Armed Forces Personnel	AFP	Military personnel who are active or on call for duty, including paramilitary forces if they control and advise other military members to replace or support regular military forces, change equipment, are involved in organizational structures, and are undergoing training.	Peoples	2014–2020
Arms Exports	AE	Arms transfers include manufacturing licenses, gifts, assistance, and supplies of military weapons for sale such as ships designed for military use, missiles, radar systems, artillery, armored vehicles (tanks), aircraft, and primary conventional weapons.	Million US$	2014–2020
Arms Imports	AI	Similar to the intensity of exports, imports are transactions from suppliers of weapons equipment or military manufacturers to the country of purchase (consumer). The buying and selling process does not include the transfer of other military equipment such as other services, technology transfer, support equipment, ammunition, small artillery and light weapons.	Million US$	2014–2020

Source: The Global Economy (2022)

From Figure 1, illustrates the conceptual path of work referring to the compilation of several previous studies that support and verify the study procedure.

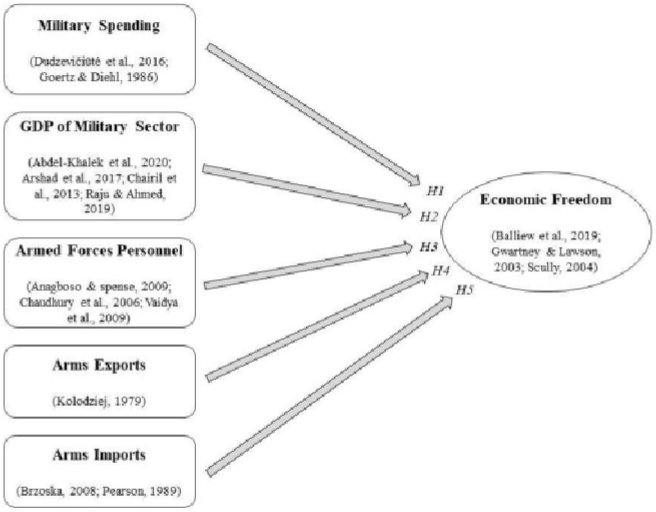

Figure 1 Proposed research framework

Source: Authors

Econometrics

To get quantitative evidence, the data were validated through panel data regression analysis techniques. In this paper, a statistical tool in the form of IBM-SPSS version 26 is used to calculate empirically with a series of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, partial testing (e.g. Blanchard et al., 1999; Brkić, 2020; Mura et al., 2017; Rasuli & Farzinvash, 2013). In the correlation method, the formulation of the correlation coefficient adopted from Darma et al. (2022) and Fitriadi et al. (2022a, b) as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum(x-x)(y-y)}{\sqrt{(\sum(x-x^2)(\sum y-y^2)}} \quad (4)$$

where, r is the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable, xy is the deviation from the mean for the values of the independent variable and the dependent variable, $\sum x.y$ is the total multiplication between the values of X and Y, x^2 is the square root for the value of X, and y^2 is the square root for the value of Y. The following describes the confidence range of the correlation coefficient.

$$H_0 : r = 0 \quad (5)$$

where, there is no positive correlation between X and Y.

$$H_1 : r \neq 0 \quad (6)$$

where, there is a positive correlation between X and Y.

The basic statistical functions are assumed with the following notation:

$$Y = f(\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5) \quad (7)$$

To simplify the unit of account for each variable, the model regression equation reads as follows:

$$ln\ EF_{it} = \alpha + ln\ \beta_1 MS_{it} + ln\ \beta_2 GMS_{it} + ln\ \beta_3 AFP_{it} + ln\ \beta_4 AE_{it} + ln\ \beta_5 AI_{it} + Y_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (8)$$

where, α is a constant, f is the equation function, $\beta_1 \ldots\ldots \beta_5$ is the standardized coefficient, ln is the natural logarithm, i is the set, t is the time period (2014.....2020), Y is a fixed effect of IDN, MYS, and SGP, and ε is the error term and other variables outside the model.

Then, the conditions for determining the null hypothesis (H_0) and the alternative hypothesis (H_a). As for decision-making, if $\rho < 0.05$, then there is a relationship between military spending, GDP of military sector, armed forces personnel, arms exports, and arms imports on economic freedom, while if $\rho > 0.05$, it is interpreted that there is no relationship between military spending, GDP of military sector, armed forces personnel, arms exports, and arms imports on economic freedom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics on all variables. There are mean scores and standard deviation (SD) scores that vary from MS, GMS, AFP, AE, AI, and EF. In Indonesia, the highest mean score is on AFP with 676,053.125 points, while the lowest is GMS (0.831). But, the highest SD score was AI (549,534) and the lowest GMS was 0.062. For Malaysia, the most dominant mean value compared to the others is AFP with a score of 134,695 and the smallest is GMS of 1.255. In SD, the lowest point was GMS (0.221), while the highest was AFP (1,433.854).

Table 2 Summary of descriptive statistics

Variables	IDN		MYS		SGP	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
MS_X1	8.154	0.891	4.133	0.599	10.061	0.596
GMS_X2	0.831	0.062	1.255	0.221	3.016	0.118
AFP_X3	676,053.125	478.573	134,695	1,433.854	117,357	42,381.772
AE_X4	28.529	38.561	7.378	5.797	31.67	25.294
AI_X5	672.649	549.534	119.43	79.387	403.894	271.197
EF_Y	63.375	3.461	72.875	2.417	88.375	1.847

Source: Authors

Surprisingly, from Singapore, the highest mean value was AI which reached 403,894 and this was actually different from the smallest mean, which was GMS of 3,016. There is the largest SD value (AFP = 42.381.772) and the smallest (GMS = 0.118).

Correlation analysis

Pearson correlation was made to see the relationship between all variables (see Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5). For the most part, the independent variables show a negative correlation coefficient with the dependent variable for the case study in Indonesia. Only MS and AE appeared to have a positive association with EF ($C = 0.372$, $C = 0.582$).

Table 3 Correlation matrix

IDN						
Variables	MS_X1	GMS_X2	AFP_X3	AE_X4	AI_X5	EF_Y
MS_X1	1	0.510 (0.197)	-0.393 (0.336)	0.052 (0.903)	-0.403 (0.323)	0.372 (0.365)
GMS_X2	0.510 (0.197)	1	0.251 (0.548)	-0.355 (0.388)	0.013 (0.976)	-0.419 (0.302)
AFP_X3	-0.393 (0.336)	0.251 (0.548)	1	-0.391 (0.338)	0.329 (0.427)	-0.800* (0.017)
AE_X4	0.052 (0.903)	-0.355 (0.388)	-0.391 (0.338)	1	0.064 (0.880)	0.582 (0.130)
AI_X5	-0.403 (0.323)	0.013 (0.975)	0.329 (0.427)	0.064 (0.880)	1	-0.542 (0.165)
EF_Y	0.372 (0.365)	-0.419 (0.302)	-0.800* (0.017)	0.582 (0.130)	-0.542 (0.165)	1
MYS						
Variables	MS_X1	GMS_X2	AFP_X3	AE_X4	AI_X5	EF_Y
MS_X1	1	0.920** (0.001)	-0.591 (0.123)	-0.268 (0.522)	-0.149 (0.724)	-0.261 (0.532)
GMS_X2	0.920** (0.001)	1	-0.752* (0.031)	-0.388 (0.342)	0.155 (0.714)	-0.151 (0.721)
AFP_X3	-0.591 (0.123)	-0.752* (0.031)	1	0.511 (0.196)	-0.533 (0.174)	-0.282 (0.498)
AE_X4	-0.268 (0.522)	-0.388 (0.342)	0.511 (0.196)	1	-0.439 (0.276)	-0.561 (0.148)
AI_X5	-0.149 (0.724)	0.155 (0.714)	-0.533 (0.174)	-0.439 (0.276)	1	0.546 (0.161)
EF_Y	-0.261 (0.532)	-0.151 (0.721)	-0.282 (0.498)	-0.561 (0.148)	0.546 (0.161)	1
SGP						
Variables	MS_X1	GMS_X2	AFP_X3	AE_X4	AI_X5	EF_Y
MS_X1	1	-0.219 (0.603)	-0.891** (0.003)	0.113 (0.789)	-0.039 (0.926)	-0.382 (0.351)
GMS_X2	-0.219 (0.603)	1	0.235 (0.575)	0.449 (0.264)	-0.478 (0.231)	-0.721* (0.044)
AFP_X3	-0.891** (0.003)	0.235 (0.575)	1	-0.165 (0.696)	0.062 (0.885)	0.369 (0.368)
AE_X4	0.113 (0.789)	0.449 (0.264)	-0.165 (0.696)	1	0.156 (0.713)	-0.189 (0.653)
AI_X5	-0.039 (0.926)	-0.478 (0.231)	0.062 (0.885)	0.156 (0.713)	1	0.604 (0.113)
EF_Y	-0.382 (0.351)	-0.721* (0.044)	0.369 (0.368)	-0.189 (0.653)	0.604 (0.113)	1

Note: *) $\rho < 0.05$, **) $\rho < 0.01$
Source: Authors

Based on the correlation level in Malaysia, the four independent variables showed a negative relationship to the dependent variable, but AI had a positive impact on EF, where $C = 0.546$. Referring to the degree of coefficient in Singapore, among the five independent variables, AFP ($C = 0.369$) and AI ($C = 0.604$) are positive for EF.

Regression estimation

In connection with the completion of statistical estimates, panel data regression technique was applied in the study. To investigate the specific impact of MS, GMS, AFP, AE, and AI on EF, a partial test was performed. Not only presents the relationship of the independent variable to the dependent variable, but Table 4 also displays the performance of the intercept, simultaneous effect (F-statistics), standard error (SE), and coefficient of determination (R^2). Starting from the intercept, the slope in Indonesia and Singapore represents that each variable value in the dependent variable has a fixed value, then the independent variables will increase by 4.280 and 4.612 systematically. From the intercept value in Malaysia, when FE increased by 1 point, it also caused an increase to reach 23,576, but it was not systematic or short term.

In other instruments, such as the coefficient of determination, from the three countries, Singapore has an R^2 score of 95.2% and is close to 1 or "very strong". Meanwhile, R^2 in Malaysia is 84.7% which indicates that there is a "strong" determination and a "medium" pattern of determination in Indonesia with an R2 of 69.5%. Besides, the simultaneous feasibility implied by F-statistics concludes that in the three models (Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore) there is a chain effect of all independent variables that affect the dependent variable.

Table 4 Panel data regression

	IDN (*Obs. = 48*)	MYS (*Obs. = 48*)	SGP (*Obs. = 48*)
Intercept	4.280* (0.005)	23.576 (0.378)	4.612* (0.016)
MS_X1	0.307 (0.722)	0.875 (0.596)	-0.022 (0.965)
GMS_X2	-0.388 (0.639)	-1.649 (0.320)	-0.955 (0.074)
AFP_X3	0.834* (0.037)	-0.605 (0.448)	0.653* (0.031)
AE_X4	0.330* (0.018)	-0.577 (0.233)	0.369 (0.285)
AI_X5	-0.452 (0.485)	0.369* (0.029)	0.129 (0.618)
R^2	0.695	0.847	0.952
F-statistics	1.712	2.209	7.982
SE	0.045	0.025	0.009

Note: *) $\rho < 0.05$
Source: Authors

In more detail, Table 4 demonstrates that the SE score at the first location (IDN) was 0.045, then at the second location (MYS) it was 0.025, and the third location (SGP) was 0.009. Overall, the most prominent

model is the Singapore case study, where the distribution of all independent variables to the dependent variable is in variation of 99.1% and the remaining 0.9% are other components outside the scope of the study. Based on the case in Malaysia, only 2.5% of the residual factors outside the variables that affect EF or as much as 97.5% are fixed variables that control the dependent variable. The SE score in Indonesia shows that 95.5% as a model constant in the relationship of MS, GMS, AFP, AE, and AI to EF, although there is 4.5% as a factor not examined in the study.

The results of other analyse highlight the partial interrelationships across the five hypotheses. Using a significance level of 5%, for the case of Indonesia, MS, GMS, and AI have no significant effect on EF. Two other variables such as AFP and AE actually have a significant effect on EF. In the case of Malaysia, only one variable has a significant effect, while four variables (MS, GMS, AFP, and AE) have no significant effect on EF. In line with Malaysia, in Singapore, many variables have no significant effect on EF, i.e. MS, GMS, AE, and AI. Unfortunately, the only thing that significantly affects EF is AFP.

Justification

When examining the results of the regression above, in Indonesia, four relationships are accepted and are in line with the hypothesis. The rest, one, was rejected because it contradicted the proposed hypothesis. The probability value has supported MS (ρ = 0.722), GMS (ρ = 0.639), AFP (ρ = 0.037), and AE (ρ = 0.018). In AI, ρ = 0.485. Furthermore, in the second model or the Malaysian case, three hypotheses were accepted, yet, two of them rejected the proposed hypothesis. This is showed by the achievements of MS (ρ = 0.596), GMS (ρ = 0.320), AFP (ρ = 0.448), AE (ρ = 0.233), and AI (ρ = 0.029). In fact, for the case of Singapore, there is a match in the literature in MS (ρ = 0.965), GMS (ρ = 0.074), and AFP (ρ = 0.032), thus the hypothesis is accepted. Sequentially, the two rejected hypotheses were AE (ρ = 0.285) and AI (ρ = 0.618).

In 8 years, the average military spending realized by the governments of Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore to eradicate violence and chaos, both at the domestic and foreign levels, shows a striking nominal difference (see Figure 2). So far, the average military spending in Indonesia during 2014-2021 is around 8.15 billion US$ (2nd place). In first position, is Singapore, where the average for military spending reaches US$ 10.06 billion. In fact, the area and population in the country is still far behind Indonesia and Malaysia. However, Singapore's military capacity and popularity deserves to be reckoned with on the world stage. Ranked last, with an average allocation of military spending around 4.13 billion US$, making Malaysia a country that is also in the spotlight in the ASEAN region. It is natural that Malaysia's nominal military spending is the least when compared to Indonesia and Singapore. Although the population in Malaysia is less, there are 2 parts (autonomy) that must be guarded by the Malaysian government. In general, the budget posture for military spending in Singapore is quite consistent from time to time.

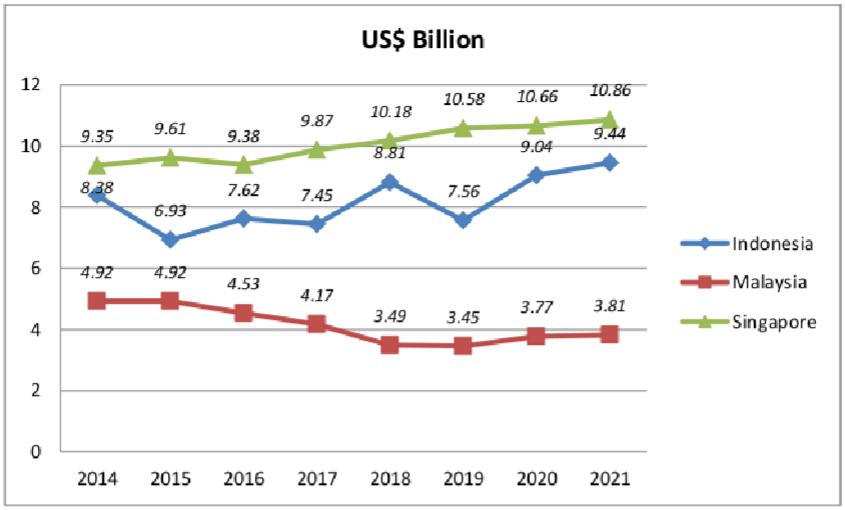

Figure 2 Military spending of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (2014–2021)

Source: Authors

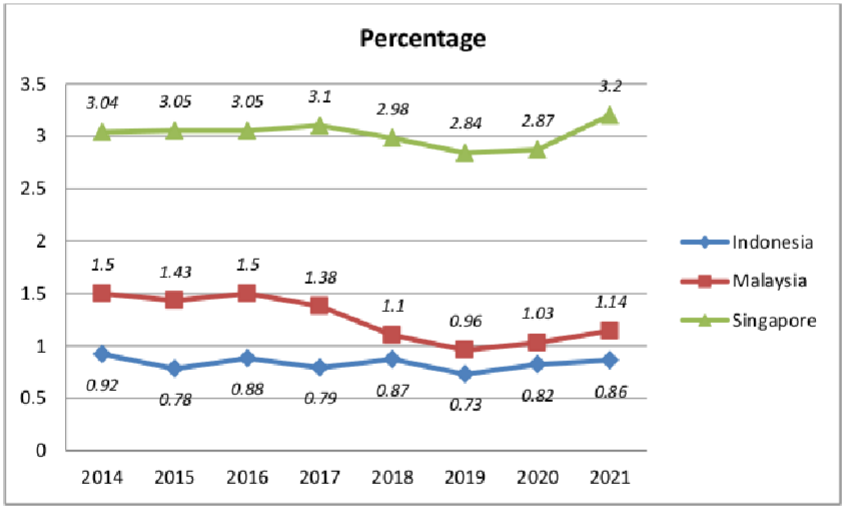

Figure 3 GDP of military sector in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (2014–2021)

Source: Authors

In Figure 3, the contribution of the military sector to GDP accumulation appears to be less consistent, be it in Indonesia, Malaysia, or Singapore. The role of this sector in GDP is still relatively low, with an achievement of no more than 4%. But, Singapore's GDP of military sector is far above its two neighbouring countries with a range of >2% to <3.5%. This percentage makes Singapore in the 1st rank. Malaysia and Indonesia are ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively. Spontaneously, the average GDP of military sector in Singapore was 3.02%, followed by Malaysia (1.26%), and Indonesia (0.83%).

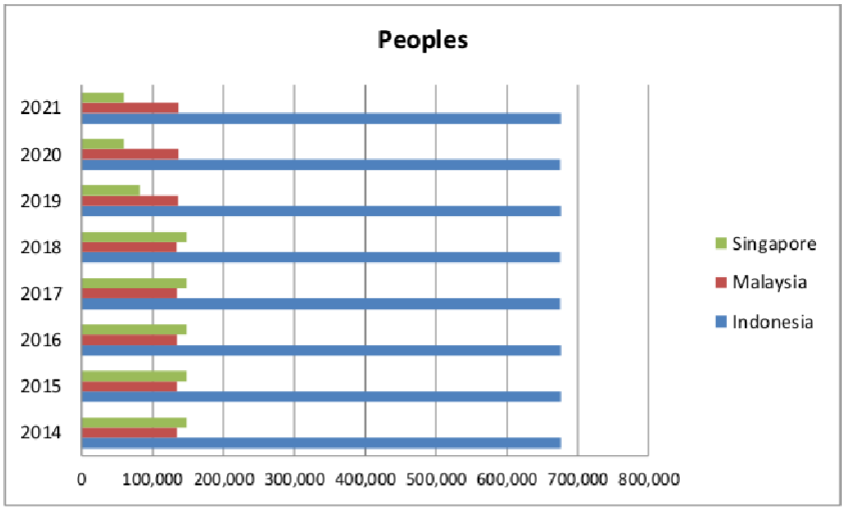

Figure 4 Armed forces personnel in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (2014–2021)

Source: Authors

Each country provides armed forces personnel based on budget execution capability, level of military need, potential for conflict, and various threat control, Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore is no exception. The use of armed personnel resources from three spheres (air, sea, and land military units), as a whole, is more widely used in Indonesia. The crucial reason that makes the armed forces in Indonesia so dominant compared to Singapore and Malaysia is the very large area size factor, the population which has the opportunity to cause many internal and external problems such as ethnic diversity, religious elements, political dimensions, to colourful social structures. With the average armed forces personnel around 676,053 people, it triggers the absorption of a large military budget as well. On the other hand, the allocation of Singapore's military spending is actually inefficient when compared to its armed forces personnel, which on average is 117,357 people. Malaysia is a country that is quite successful in saving military spending. In Figure 4, it implies the position of the armed forces personnel in Malaysia, between Indonesia and Singapore, or the second rank with an average of 134,695 personnel.

The establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community or called "AEC", whose blueprint has been agreed upon since 2015, makes trade flows in the Asian region very free (Jiuhardi & Michael, 2022). One of the partnerships in it focuses on increasing the equitndy of weapons. Import urgency exists because some countries have their own advantages, thus requiring the exchange of goods and services commodities to complement each other (Ernst, 1981). Military competition and empowerment is a form of cooperation that benefits various parties. The movement of arms exports in Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore fluctuated. Figure 5 visualizes the intensity of arms exports from three countries. In a period of 8 years, the average nominal in arms exports in Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore was 28.53 billion US$, 7.38 billion US$, and 31.67 billion US$.

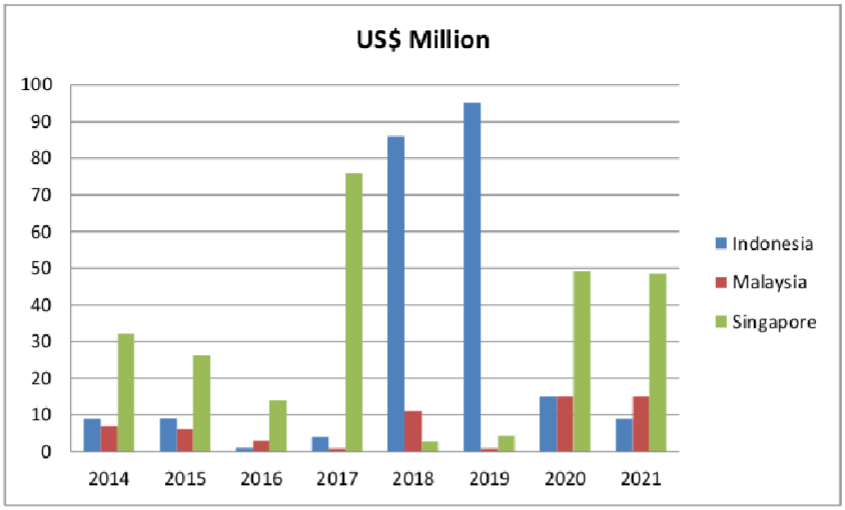

Figure 5 Arms exports of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (2014–2021)

Source: Authors

To get to a solid foundation of resilience, a nation will never stop to continue to improve the military. In all countries, of course, this will not override the tendency in territorial integrity (Elden, 2006; Gudeleviciute, 2005). Although the flow of exports is smaller than imports, the military is a means of state defense to ward off, resolve, and take action against any threats related to inter-regional disputes. Marton (2008) that the state's territorial line needs to be maintained, so as not to become a polemic with other countries. The imbalance in the export-import trade balance in weapons depends on the performance of the domestic arms industry.

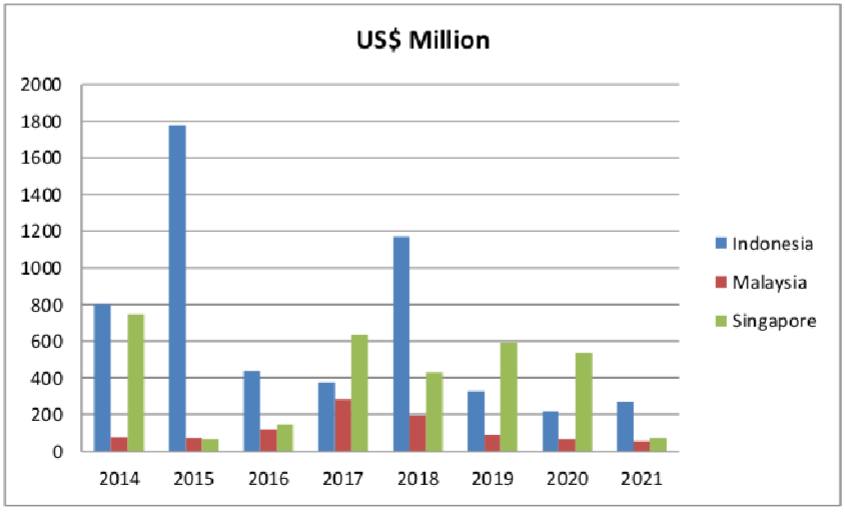

Figure 6 Arms imports of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (2014–2021)

Source: Authors

Figure 6 indicates the level of dependence of Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore on arms imports from other countries. In the inconsistent military spending phase in the 2014–2020 period, it is exposed that the net imports of Indonesian weapons tend to be higher than Singapore and Malaysia. Meanwhile, Indonesia's average arms imports were US$ 672.65 billion (rank 1). The second and third places are Singapore (403.89 billion US$) and Malaysia (119.43 billion US$). In 2014, Indonesia carried out massive arms imports amounting to US$ 801.09 billion. Also, 2017 was the period for the highest import of weapons from Malaysia, valued at US$ 283.08 billion. In line with that period, Singapore also made import transactions from weapons manufacturers, reaching US$633.6 billion.

Figure 7 shows the development of the economic freedom index in Malaysia and Indonesia, which are still far behind compared to Singapore. In fact, The Heritage Foundation (2021) puts Singapore in the first position as the country with the highest level of economic freedom in the world in 2021. During 2014-2021, Figure 7 also reports that the average economic freedom in Indonesia is 63.4 points. Following Singapore, the average index of economic freedom in Malaysia is quite high (72.9 points). Another detail explains that with the label of economic freedom as the most dominant at the Asian level, Singapore affirms that there are guarantees that are conducive to financial, investment, trade, monetary, labour, business, fiscal, health, public spending, tax burden, government integrity, judicial effectiveness. , and property rights. The freer the economy, the richer the population will be.

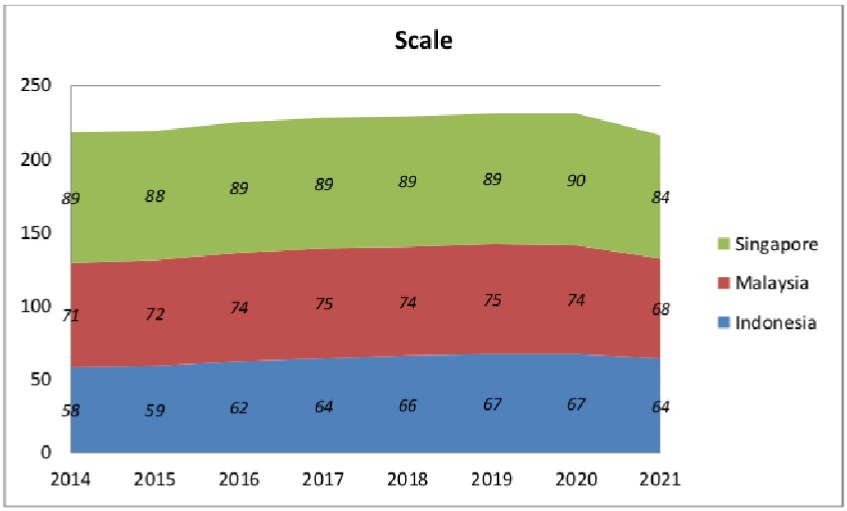

Figure 7 Economic freedom index in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (2014–2021)

Source: Authors

Causality between military spending and economic freedom in China was examined by Atesoglu (2013). Empirical experience shows that China has become the dominant regional power at the Asian level, although the Chinese government's military spending is largely determined by the military spending of Russia and India. Even so, China's military spending appears to be influenced by the US and Japan. In a meta-analysis introduced by Awaworyi Churchill & Yew (2018), we find evidence that the effect of slowing growth in military spending explains the heterogeneity of economic freedom in developed countries compared to less developed countries. Moreover, in 55 developing countries, the existence of

defense spending cannot generalize social structures, including freedom in the economy (Chowdhury, 1991). The abolition of defense spending by the government, of course, provides social and economic benefits for the public. Increased spending on military needs is seen as ineffective because it causes perpetual industrial fear (Sajid, 2021). In 70 developing countries, in the period 1990–2013, to be exact, Aziz & Asadullah (2016) reviewed the causality between military spending to economic freedom. Externally, military spending has a negative impact on the country's economy, while an increase in military spending actually creates new internal impacts, such as exposure to domestic conflicts that will affect economic freedom.

Military budget policies are not only meant to strengthen defense equipment, but also bring a multiplier effect on GDP (Kennedy, 2017). Given that the EU is surrounded by threats or conflicts, increasing security is essential. Dudzevičiūtė et al. (2016) studying regulations on defense spending must ensure external or internal security. For groups of countries whose economy is hindered, defense spending is not given much attention. However, countries in the EU with bright economic prospects always leave (set aside) prioritizing defense budgets to carry out their economic development.

CONCLUSION

This paper reaffirms the complexity of domestic security in realizing economic freedom. On topics relevant to 3 countries in Southeast Asia, the findings summarize many vital issues. Impressively, MS, GMS, and AI had no significant effect, but AFP and AE had a significant effect on EF in Indonesia, so that four hypotheses were accepted and one was rejected. Regarding Malaysia, three hypotheses were accepted, and the rest were rejected. According to the empirical output, MS, GMS, and AI have a significant effect on EF in Malaysia, but AFP and AE have no significant effect. In line with other statistical evidence, for the case study in Singapore, it is not much different from what happened in Malaysia. AE and AI have no significant effect on EF. The other three variables including MS, GMS, and AFP actually have a significant effect on EF.

Without integrity, the government is considered a failure. The implication is that it will damage and disrupt the progress of a nation. Like a machine, economic freedom will bring a higher quality of life and prosperity. Meanwhile, countries that are at the bottom are usually burdened with oppressive regimes, which result in restrictions on people's freedoms.

Criticism of policymakers, it is necessary to design appropriate macroeconomic policies. The government is required to increase economic freedom which is more accelerated, so that preventive interventions are carried out to cut the level of corruption. Too, stakeholders also need to modify the flexibility of the labour market, simplify investment regulations, and strengthen the justice system.

There are certain drawbacks to this paper. The benchmarks in economic freedom include respect for private property, law enforcement, access to markets, and individual freedom, so these four dimensions need to be examined and discussed as complex comparisons for future research.

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PAGE 16

PAGE 17

PAGE 18

PAGE 19

PAGE 20

PAGE 21

PAGE 22

PAGE 23

PAGE 24

PAGE 25

PAGE 26

PAGE 27

PAGE 28