

GEOPOLITICS AND DOMESTIC POLITICS: THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

GEOPOLÍTICA E POLÍTICA INTERNA: O PAPEL DA INTERVENÇÃO INTERNACIONAL NO SUDESTE ASIÁTICO

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze the impact of international policies on political transformation and regional stability in Southeast Asia

Methods: Using a qualitative approach, this research highlights case studies in four countries: the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Indonesia.

Results: The results show that the international policies of major powers such as the United States and China significantly influence domestic political dynamics and significantly affect domestic political dynamics and stability in developing countries. Foreign policy changes under President Duterte in the Philippines triggered domestic political uncertainty. Vietnam has managed to maintain stability with a two-pronged approach towards China and the United States. At the same time, Myanmar faces greater instability due to the United States, while Myanmar faces greater instability due to international sanctions after a military coup. International sanctions following a military coup. With its moderate foreign policy, active role in foreign policy, and active role in ASEAN, Indonesia managed to maintain its political stability. Political stability. These findings highlight the importance of diversifying international relations and strengthening ASEAN and the need for a more balanced policy in dealing with



foreign intervention to maintain political stability in Asia. Foreign intervention to maintain political stability in Southeast Asia.

Conclusions: This research shows that international policy dynamics and geopolitical competition significantly influence political stability in Southeast Asia. By international policy dynamics and geopolitical competition between major powers. Between major powers. Countries in the region must maintain a balance in their international relations, preserve domestic political sovereignty, and adopt flexible and strategic foreign policies in the face of external pressures. Flexible and strategic in the face of external pressures. ASEAN's role as a regional balancer remains vital, and strengthening domestic democracy and institutions is critical to maintaining long-term stability. Institutions are critical to maintaining long-term stability in this strategic region.

Keywords: International policy; Stability politics; Southeast Asia; ASEAN; Political transformation.

RESUMO

Objetivo: *Este estudo tem por objetivo analisar o impacto das políticas internacionais na transformação política e na estabilidade regional no Sudeste Asiático.*

Métodos: *Utilizando uma abordagem qualitativa, esta investigação destaca estudos de caso em quatro países: Filipinas, Vietname, Myanmar e Indonésia.*

Resultados: *Os resultados mostram que as políticas internacionais de grandes potências, como os Estados Unidos e a China, afetam significativamente a dinâmica política interna e a estabilidade nos países em desenvolvimento. Nas Filipinas, as mudanças na política externa do Presidente Duterte alimentaram a incerteza política interna. O Vietname conseguiu manter a estabilidade com uma abordagem dupla em relação à China e aos Estados Unidos, enquanto Myanmar enfrentou uma maior instabilidade devido às sanções internacionais após um golpe militar. A Indonésia, com a sua política externa moderada e o seu papel ativo na ASEAN, conseguiu manter a sua estabilidade política. Estas conclusões sublinham a importância da diversificação das relações internacionais, reforçar a ASEAN, bem como a necessidade de uma política mais equilibrada no que respeita à intervenção estrangeira para manter a estabilidade política na Ásia. A intervenção estrangeira para manter a estabilidade política no Sudeste Asiático.*

Conclusões: *Esta investigação Este estudo mostra que a estabilidade política no Sudeste Asiático é significativamente influenciada pela dinâmica da política internacional e pela concorrência geopolítica. pela dinâmica da política internacional e pela concorrência geopolítica entre as grandes potências. entre as grandes potências. Os países da região precisam de continuar a manter um equilíbrio nas suas relações internacionais, defender a soberania política interna e adotar políticas externas flexíveis e estratégicas face às pressões externas. A ASEAN tem um papel*



importante a desempenhar nas suas relações internacionais, defendendo a soberania política interna e adotando políticas externas flexíveis e estratégicas face às pressões externas. O papel da ASEAN como O papel da ASEAN como equilibrador regional continua a ser vital, e o reforço da democracia e das instituições nacionais é fundamental para manter a estabilidade a longo prazo na região. O reforço da democracia e das instituições nacionais é fundamental para manter a estabilidade a longo prazo nesta região estratégica.

Palavras-chave: Política internacional; estabilidade; política; Sudeste Asiático; ASEAN; transformação política.

1 INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia has complex political dynamics influenced by various domestic and international factors. The countries in the region have very diverse historical, political and cultural backgrounds, but one thing that unites them is the effort to maintain regional stability. This stability is often tested by changes in international policy, especially from significant powers such as the United States, China and the European Union, which often have strategic interests in the region (Kadich, 2024). In recent decades, political transformation in Southeast Asia has become a significant concern, especially in the context of globalization and increasing international intervention.

One of the critical factors in this political change is international policies that affect interstate relations and the internal dynamics of Southeast Asian countries (Hartwell & Zadorozhna, 2024). Foreign policies adopted by major powers towards Southeast Asia are often based on geopolitical, economic and security considerations. With the region's growing importance on the global political map, major powers are vying to strengthen their influence through trade agreements, military alliances or diplomatic interventions (Paličková & Černoch, 2024). In this context, an important question arises: To what extent do international policies impact political stability in Southeast Asia? This study aims to analyze the impact of international policies on political transformation in Southeast Asia and how these policies affect regional stability. It will examine the relationship between the foreign policies of major powers and internal political dynamics in Southeast Asia, focusing on how countries in the region respond to international intervention and influence. It also aims to explore the strategies used by Southeast Asian countries to maintain



stability amidst international pressures and how these policies may shape the region's political future (Barfar, 2022).

International policy interventions often trigger political transformations in Southeast Asia. For example, the pivot to Asia policy adopted by the United States under Barack Obama aims to counterbalance China's growing regional influence (Martinez, 2024). This policy significantly impacts Southeast Asian countries, caught up in the geopolitical competition between the two great powers. In addition, Chinese initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have also triggered mixed reactions from countries in the region, with some welcoming the promised infrastructure investments (Strangio et al., 2024). In contrast, others are concerned about potential economic and political dependency.

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On the other hand, domestic political changes, such as the transfer of power in Myanmar or political tensions in Thailand, are often influenced by responses to international policies (Benbourenane, 2024). For example, sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States on the military regime in Myanmar after the 2021 coup triggered different reactions domestically, from efforts to strengthen ties with China to an increase in resistance movements from pro-democracy groups (Hynek & Moravec, 2024). This shows how international policies can trigger broader political transformations in the region.

Research on political transformation in Southeast Asia and the impact of international policies has been widely discussed in the academic literature. According to a study conducted by (Mosteanu & Faccia, 2020), international policies, particularly those from major countries, directly impact political stability in the region. However, there is debate about the extent to which such impacts are positive or negative. While



some scholars argue that international policies can bring stability through democracy promotion and economic engagement, others point out that international interventions often fuel political instability, especially when they conflict with the domestic interests of countries in Southeast Asia. Another study by (Kapoor, 2024) highlights ASEAN's role in maintaining regional stability amidst international policy changes. As a regional organization, ASEAN is vital in reducing interstate tensions and facilitating dialogue between major powers and Southeast Asian countries. However, ASEAN also faces challenges in maintaining neutrality amid intensifying geopolitical competition (Pietrzak, 2024).

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach that analyses policy and political dynamics in Southeast Asia. The case study approach deeply analyses how international policies affect political transformation in critical Southeast Asian countries, such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Indonesia. With this approach, the research can delve further into how international policies are accepted and adopted by countries in the region and how they impact long-term political stability. The data used in this research is sourced from various policy documents, international reports, journal articles, and interviews with international relations experts and academics with in-depth knowledge of Southeast Asian politics. Secondary data was obtained from academic literature, policy reports from international institutions such as ASEAN, the World Bank, and other international research institutions, and publications from non-governmental organizations involved in issues related to international policy in Southeast Asia. These secondary data sources include previous studies on the influence of significant countries' foreign policies on political stability in the region.

The research model used in this study is the international policy and domestic response interaction model, which combines realism, neoliberalism and dependency theories in international relations analysis. This model is designed to analyze the interaction between major powers and Southeast Asian countries in the context of international policy changes. In this model, political stability is analyzed through three main variables: the foreign policies of major powers (such as the United States and China), the domestic responses of Southeast Asian countries, and ASEAN's role as a



regional mediator. This research modifies the traditional model of international policy interaction by adding the dimension of non-state actors, such as the role of civil society and the media in shaping public opinion and their influence on policy decisions. This modification is based on the fact that in recent years, non-state actors have increasingly played a role in determining how Southeast Asian countries respond to international intervention or influence, especially in controversial issues such as China's investment through the Belt and Road Initiative and US pressure on human rights.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL POLICIES ON POLITICAL STABILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In recent decades, the international policies of major powers such as the United States, China, and the European Union have significantly impacted political transformation and stability in Southeast Asia. The region has become a focal point in the geopolitical competition between these great powers, with Southeast Asian countries having to navigate complex relationships with all parties to maintain domestic political stability and regional security. The impact of these international policies is evident across countries in the region, each of which responds to external influences in different ways, depending on their domestic political, economic and security conditions (Bibi & Fazi, 2024).

One of the most striking examples is the response of Southeast Asian countries to China's expansion of influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project. The project offers great opportunities for infrastructure development in the region but also raises concerns about economic and political dependence on China (Mikheev & Lukonin, 2024). On the other hand, the United States' policy of maintaining a balance of power in the region, mainly through defence agreements and military cooperation, also significantly impacts the security and domestic politics of countries in the region. The two great powers are pursuing different policies to strengthen their influence in Southeast Asia, which affects domestic political



dynamics in the region (Liew, 2024).

Table 1: Impact Policy International Against Stability Politics in Southeast Asia

Country	Influence from China (BRI)	Influence from the United States (Defense & Military Cooperation)	Impact on Stability Political
Philippines	Improvement investment infrastructure , concerns dependence economy	Agreement strong defense , support military	Increase stability with support military from the US
Vietnamese	Skeptical of BRI, more focused on maintaining sovereignty	Close military cooperation , in particular related to the South China Sea	Strengthen security national through alliances with US
Indonesia	Get involved in BRI with project infrastructure big	More moderate defense cooperation	Maintaining balance of influence, focus on domestic stability
Malaysia	BRI projects as a source of development economy	Policy defense is not too good stand out	Balance between economy (BRI) and sovereignty national
Thailand	Support BRI project for increase economy	Strong military cooperation	Maintain stability politics and security national

Source: World Bank, 2023

The chart above compares China's economic influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project and the United States military influence through defence cooperation in several Southeast Asian countries. Each country shows different responses to these two major powers, with some countries having a stronger dependence on one another.



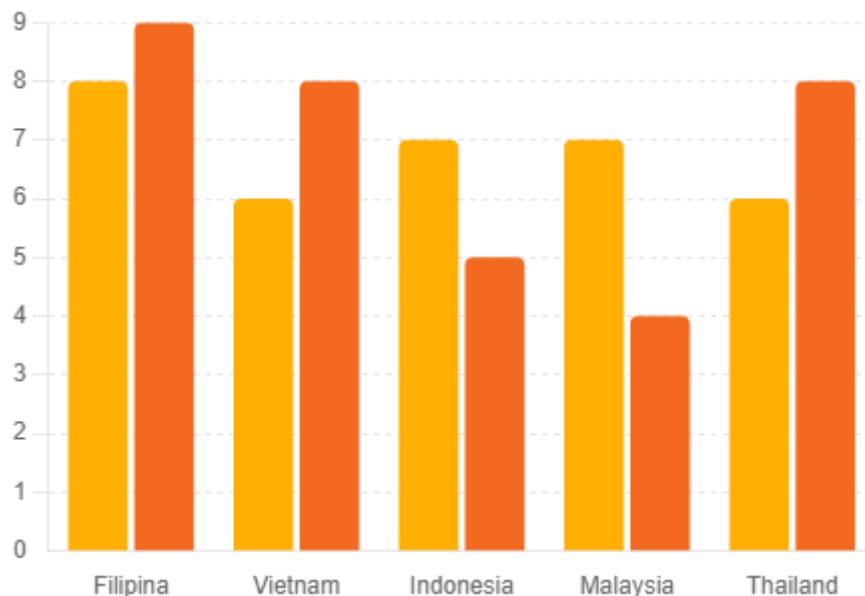


Chart 1 : compares China's economic influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project and the United States military

Philippines: Foreign Policy Pivot Under Rodrigo Duterte

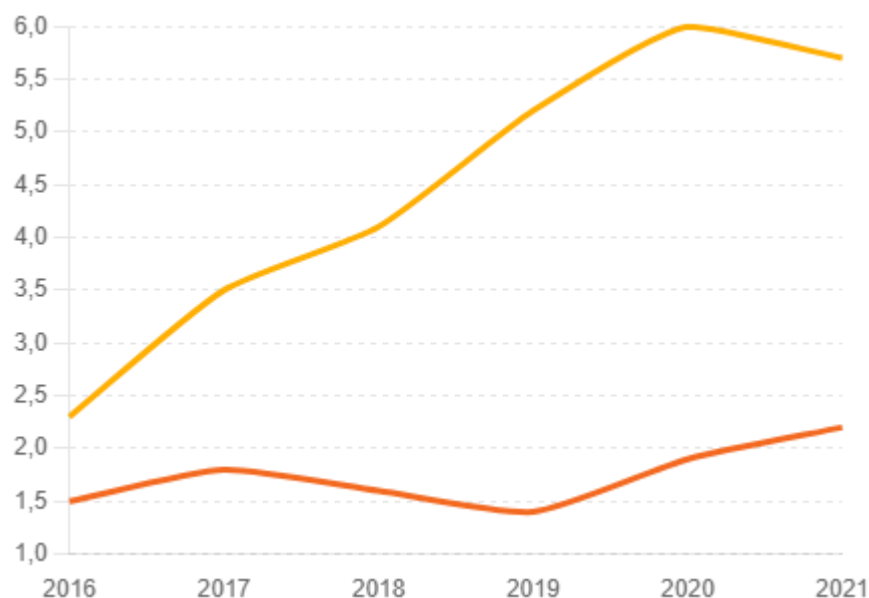
Under President Rodrigo Duterte (2016-2022), the Philippines provides an interesting case study of how international policy can affect domestic political stability. Early in his administration, Duterte drastically changed Philippine foreign policy by distancing himself from the United States, a traditional partner in defence, and drawing closer to China. This move was part of Duterte's strategy to reap the economic benefits of Chinese investment through the BRI while reducing dependence on the United States, which for years strongly influenced Philippine domestic politics (Haftel & Nadel, 2024).

While drawing closer to China has brought substantial investment and economic aid, this policy shift has also led to domestic instability. Many elements in the Philippine military and society that have traditionally had close ties with the United States oppose this change in direction (Tan, 2024). In addition, territorial disputes in the South China Sea remain a significant source of tension between the two countries, despite Duterte's attempts to defuse them through diplomacy (Loh & Loke, 2024). Ultimately, while Duterte's foreign policy reduces direct dependence on the United States, it creates uncertainty among domestic political actors and Filipinos, who see China as a long-term geopolitical threat (Li et al., 2024).

Table 2. Comparison Investment Infrastructure China and the United States in the Philippines (2016-2021)

Year	Chinese investment (billion USD)	US Investment (billion USD)
2016	2.3	1.5
2017	3.5	1.8
2018	4.1	1.6
2019	5.2	1.4
2020	6	1.9
2021	5.7	2.2

Source: Philippine Department of Investment data , 2022



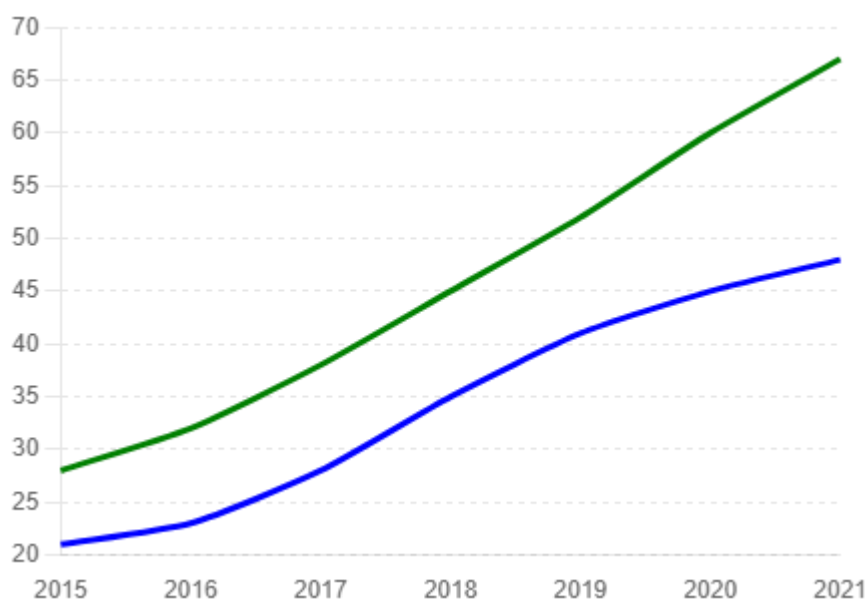
While investments from China significantly increased during the period, political tensions in the South China Sea continue to create friction between the two countries (Strangio et al., 2024). On the other hand, while the United States has a minor role in economic investment, the Philippines-United States military relationship remains strong through renewed security agreements (Moiseev et al., 2024).

Vietnam: Response to China's Maritime Expansion

Vietnam, which has a long history of complex relations with China, has adopted a strategy different from that of the Philippines. As a country directly involved in disputes in the South China Sea, Vietnam is trying to balance maintaining good

economic relations with China and strengthening alliances with Western countries, especially the United States and the European Union, to secure its position in the region (Gammon & Phan, 2024). Unlike the Philippines under Duterte, Vietnam has maintained a wary stance towards China, particularly regarding overlapping maritime territorial claims (Du et al., 2024). In the context of international policy, Vietnam has consistently resisted China's maritime expansion and sought to strengthen its military presence in the South China Sea. Vietnam has also leveraged the United States foreign policy focus on freedom of navigation in the region to strengthen its position in this dispute. Vietnam's economic relations with China remain close. However, Vietnam uses a "two-way" approach, which remains engaged in economic cooperation but is wary of China's regional political dominance (Lee et al., 2022).

Chart 2. Vietnam's exports to China and the United States (2015-2021)



Source: Vietnam Trade Data, 2022

As seen in the chart above, although Vietnam has significant economic ties with China, Vietnam's exports to the United States have also shown a substantial increase. This reflects Vietnam's diversification strategy in balancing the influence of these two great powers in the region.

Myanmar: Post-Coup International Policy Impact

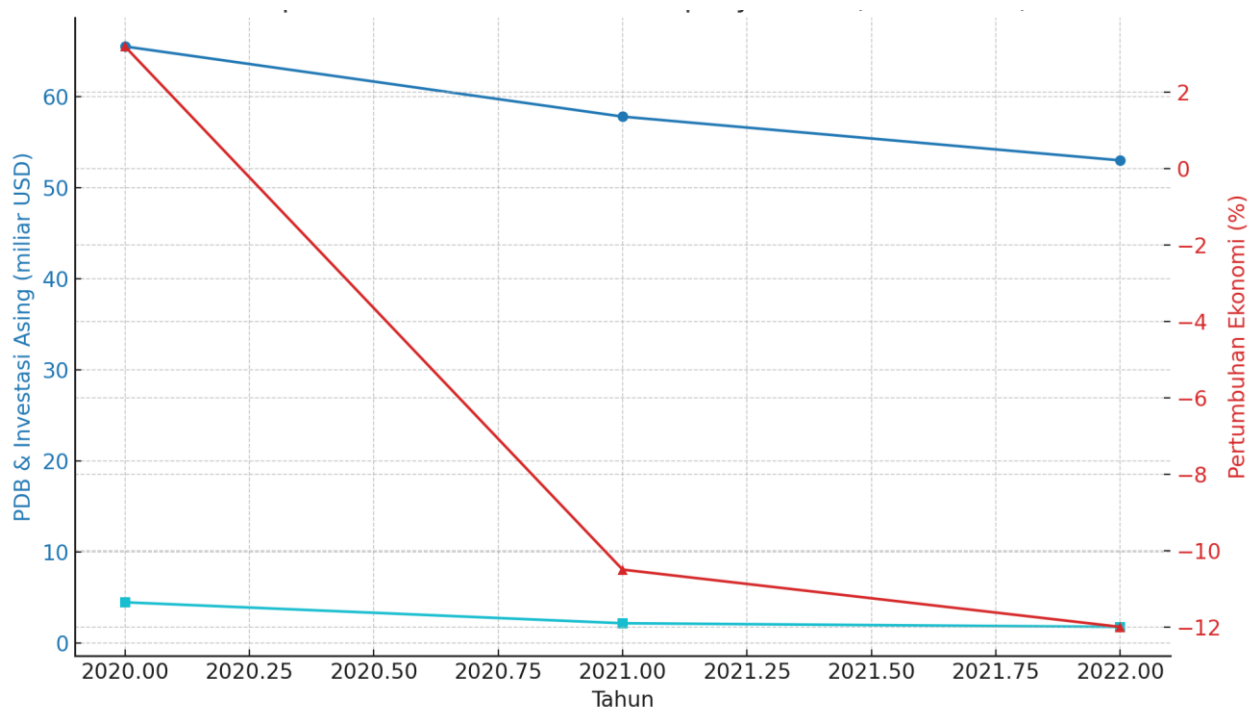
The case of Myanmar's post-military coup in 2021 provides another example of how international policies can affect domestic political stability in Southeast Asia.



After the coup, the United States, the European Union, and other Western countries imposed heavy economic sanctions on Myanmar's military regime, which worsened the country's economic conditions. On the other hand, China has maintained ties with the military regime, although it has not officially recognized the coup. China's role in Myanmar has become controversial as its continued support for the military regime is considered to be against the democratic aspirations of the Myanmar people ((SM Thein-Lemelson, 2021).

International policies implemented by the United States and the European Union aim to pressure the military regime to restore civilian rule. However, this response from the international community also created instability within the country, where the resistance movement from pro-democracy groups continued to strengthen. The international intervention, although aimed at supporting democracy, triggered increased tensions between the military and rebel groups, which in turn exacerbated the internal conflict in Myanmar (Easley & Chow, 2024)

Chart 3. The Impact of Economic Sanctions on Myanmar (2021-2022)



Source: World Bank, 2023

As seen in the table above, economic sanctions have significantly impacted Myanmar's economy, with significant GDP and foreign investment declines. While



these sanctions were designed to force Myanmar's military regime to make political changes, the result has been to create more significant economic hardship for the people of Myanmar. In contrast, the military has remained in place due to the impact of economic sanctions on Myanmar between 2020 and 2022 (Zarpli & Peksen, 2024). International sanctions have significantly declined GDP and foreign investment, while economic growth has dramatically decreased to -12% by 2022. While these sanctions aim to force the military regime to make political changes, the results have only worsened Myanmar's economic conditions (Easley & Chow, 2024).

Indonesia: Political Stability Amid International Competition

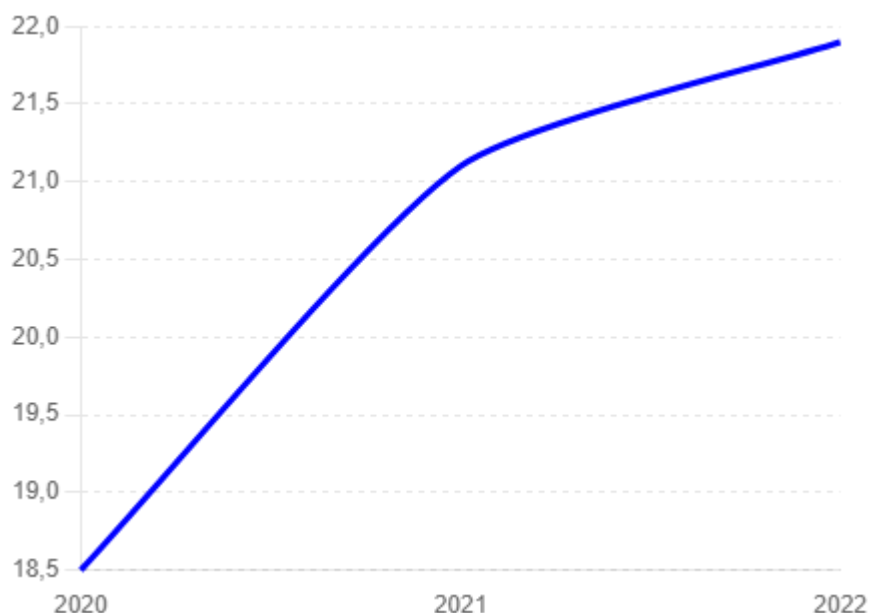
As the largest country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has a unique position in maintaining domestic stability while playing an active role in international relations. Indonesia's foreign policy centres on the principles of non-intervention and balance in relations with major powers. Over the past few years, Indonesia has managed to maintain its political stability despite facing pressure from international policies, both from the United States and China. For example, while Indonesia receives significant investments from China in infrastructure projects, the country also maintains close ties with Western countries through international forums and economic partnerships (Djalante et al., 2020).

Indonesia also plays a vital role in leading ASEAN, which serves as a counterweight between major regional powers. Indonesia remains neutral on regional issues, such as the South China Sea dispute, but supports resolving disputes through diplomacy. Indonesia's position

This moderate position allows the country to maintain its domestic political stability despite being caught up in the geopolitical competition between China and the United States (Suwarsono et al., 2024).



Chart 4 foreign direct investment (FDI) into Indonesia from 2020 to 2022



Source: Indonesian Bank, 2022

The chart above shows the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Indonesia from 2020 to 2022. It can be seen that FDI increased from USD 18.5 billion in 2020 to USD 21.9 billion in 2022, reflecting Indonesia's important role in attracting investment amid international competition between major powers such as the United States and China.

China's *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) has significantly impacted Indonesia, primarily through large-scale infrastructure investments and closer economic ties between the two countries. Here is a detailed overview of the BRI's impact in Indonesia: Infrastructure Development: The BRI has substantially invested in infrastructure projects across Indonesia. This country faces significant challenges due to its vast archipelagic geography. Key BRI-related projects in Indonesia include:

Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway: One of the most prominent BRI projects, this 142-kilometer railway aims to connect Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, with Bandung. Estimated to cost \$6 billion, this project is designed to reduce travel time and promote regional economic integration significantly (Huda & Risman, 2024). However, it has faced delays and cost overruns. **Ports and Maritime Infrastructure:**



Indonesia, with its maritime focus, has seen investments in port development under the BRI, such as the expansion of the Bitung Port in North Sulawesi and other maritime infrastructure projects designed to enhance Indonesia's connectivity within the ASEAN region and with global trade routes (Malawer, 2024). Energy Sector: China has invested heavily in Indonesia's energy infrastructure, particularly coal-fired and renewable energy plants. Chinese companies have helped build power plants to support Indonesia's energy needs, contributing to economic growth but raising environmental concerns (Firmansyah & Anwar, 2019).

Economic Growth and Investment Increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): The BRI has driven significant Chinese investment into Indonesia, helping fuel sectors like construction, energy, and manufacturing. According to data, China's investments in Indonesia have grown substantially, making China one of Indonesia's largest foreign investors, particularly in infrastructure (Zahidi & Othman, 2024). Geopolitical and Economic Dependence Geopolitical Influence: The influx of Chinese investment has raised concerns about Indonesia's potential over-reliance on China economically. The BRI's heavy infrastructure focus has created debates within Indonesia about sovereignty, particularly regarding the financial implications of large debts associated with BRI projects. Mindful of its independence in foreign policy, Indonesia balances its economic reliance on China with strong ties to other powers, including the United States and Japan.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Under the Duterte administration, the Philippines adopted a foreign policy focused on closer engagement with China, mainly to attract infrastructure investment from the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While this move brought economic benefits, the decision led to domestic political instability due to dissent among the government, military and the public regarding relations with the United States and China. Vietnam has chosen a cautious two-pronged approach in dealing with China's maritime expansion, maintaining good economic relations with China while strengthening alliances with the United States and Western countries. This approach has successfully maintained domestic stability while safeguarding Vietnam's sovereignty in



the South China Sea.

Myanmar shows how the international policy of sanctions from Western countries, although aimed at supporting democracy, can exacerbate domestic political instability. These sanctions added to the existing economic pressure but failed to change the behaviour of the military regime, even pushing Myanmar closer to China. As the largest country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has maintained its political stability through a balanced foreign policy. With the principle of non-intervention and active involvement in ASEAN, Indonesia can navigate pressure from significant powers while maintaining good relations with all parties. Political stability in Indonesia is also supported by the country's success in maintaining harmony between domestic policies and international relations. Overall, stability in Southeast Asia is greatly influenced by the ability of countries in the region to respond to international policies. The different responses of each country show that the political, economic, and historical conditions of international relations play an essential role in determining the impact of such policies. While international policies can bring economic and geopolitical benefits, they can lead to domestic political instability if not managed well.

For future research, several topics can be further explored regarding the impact of international policies on political transformation in Southeast Asia: Civil Society Influence: Further study on the role of civil society in shaping foreign and domestic policies in Southeast Asian countries. Civil society, including the media, non-governmental organizations, and pro-democracy movements, is increasingly important in shaping public opinion and monitoring government responses to international policies.

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