

# WIMAYA

Interdisciplinary Journal of International Affairs

## Research Articles

Utilization of the Greater Mekong Subregion  
Cross-Border Transport Agreement (GMS-CBTA)

*Pittaya Suvakunta, Viralbajra Prasertsak,  
Theraphat Chaiphiphat, Sivarin Lertpusit, Weera Naruepatarawanon*

When Public Opinion is Left Behind:  
The Case Rejection of Visa on Arrival For Russian Tourists

*Hetri Pima Anggara*

Climate Change, Conflicts, and Forced Migration  
in the Middle East (2006-2022)

*Karim Zaouaq*

QRIS Cross-Border: Indonesia's Soft Power Diplomacy Instrument  
in Payment Digitalization in Southeast Asia  
*Julang Aryowiloto, Katong Ragawi Numadi, Thessalonicha N. Manggo*

The Failures of the United Nations Security Council's Resolutions  
in Addressing the Russia-Ukraine Conflict:  
Case Study of Resolution No. S/RES/2202 of 2015  
*Zulfikar Suardi, Ully Nuzulian, Laras Putri Olifiani*

## Book Reviews

China-US Competition Impact on Small and Middle Powers' Strategic Choices  
by Simona A. Grano and David Wei Feng Huang  
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with Russia and China by Jittipat Poonkham  
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WIMAYA is an international scholarly journal devoted to international affairs. Published twice a year by the International Relations Department, Pembangunan Nasional Veteran East Java, the journal aims to promote the importance of interdisciplinary approach to analyze various international issues. The journal welcomes empirical and theoretical research articles that seek to cut across disciplines in order to capture the complexity of a phenomenon. The editors also welcome discursive book reviews that contribute to the literature.

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## Contents

### Preliminary pages

(i-iv)

### Research Articles

Utilization of the Greater Mekong Subregion Cross-Border Transport Agreement (GMS-CBTA)  
*Pittaya Suvakunta, Viralbajra Prasertsak, Theraphat Chaiphiphat, Sivarin Lertpusit, Weera Naruepatarawanon*

(pp. 66-84)

When Public Opinion is Left Behind: The Case Rejection of Visa on Arrival For Russian Tourists  
*Hetri Pima Anggara*

(pp. 85-97)

Climate Change, Conflicts, and Forced Migration in the Middle East (2006-2022)  
*Karim Zaouaq*

(pp. 98-107)

QRIS Cross-Border: Indonesia's Soft Power Diplomacy Instrument in Payment Digitalization  
in Southeast Asia  
*Julang Aryowiloto, Katong Ragawi Numadi, Thessalonicha N. Manggo*

(pp. 108-121)

The Failures of the United Nations Security Council's Resolutions in Addressing the Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Case Study of Resolution No. S/RES/2202 of 2015  
*Zulfikar Suardi, Uly Nuzulian, Laras Putri Olifiani*

(pp. 122-133)

### Book Reviews

China-US Competition Impact on Small and Middle Powers' Strategic Choices by Simona A. Grano and David Wei Feng Huang  
*Reviewed by Diah Ayu Wulandari*

(pp. 134-135)

A Genealogy of Bamboo Diplomacy: The Politics of Thai Détente with Russia and China by Jittipat Poonkham  
*Reviewed by Dewi Fortuna Sari*

(pp. 136-137)

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Utilization of the Greater Mekong Subregion Cross-Border Transport Agreement (GMS-CBTA)

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#### Abstract

*The aim of this study was to analyze spatial data on the current status and progress in the implementation of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Cross-Border Transport Agreement (CBTA). Problems, obstacles, and opportunities related to the agreement during implementation were examined. This qualitative research was performed using field surveys, stakeholder interviews, and brainstorming in focus groups. The results revealed that there is a need to develop road and rail transportation systems that connect with the customs houses of Mae Sai, Chiang Saen, Chiang Khong, Nakhon Phanom, and Nong Khai in Thailand. Cross-border*

*transportation with neighboring countries needs to be improved as well because the transportation through customs houses is cheap and provides certain schedules. Cross-border regulations were found to be a major obstacle. In order to promote smooth cross-border transportation, negotiations at the state-to-state level and private-to-private level are needed. The connection of logistics networks under the GMS-CBTA framework will be flexible and can be adjusted according to the changing situations in the region and globally. Cooperation of the GMS in the transportation system could provide a mainland link that connects the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean. It could provide a short and fast alternative route that could promote the potential of GMS competition at a global level, enhance bargaining power, and maintain the balance of power in the region.*

**Keywords:** cross-border transportation, GMS-CBTA, logistics, Greater Mekong Subregion

#### I. Introduction

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Cross-Border Transport Agreement (CBTA) is a framework agreement that facilitates cross-border transportation within the sub-region. It has two main objectives: 1) to facilitate cross-border transportation and promote the logistics of road transportation for goods and passengers, as well as 2) to support the multimodal transport through the development of laws, regulations, procedures, and protocols of the cross-border transportation of people, vehicles, and goods, which are related to the responsibility of transport operators between member countries in a simple, consistent, and uniform way. The GMS-CBTA consists of 17 annexes



and three protocols. It covers cross-border transportation, immigration, customs, and quarantine. The cross-border facilitation includes 1) the operation of Single Window Inspection (SWI) for the cross-border transportation of goods; 2) joint operations of Single Stop Inspection (SSI) by inspecting and releasing goods in Common Control Areas (CCAs); 3) the implementation of harmonization /integration of the system; 4) the exchange of traffic rights and cross-border requirements of individuals; 5) the establishment of transit traffic regimes through the exemption of physical inspection of goods, collateral application, and transportation controls; 6) determine the qualifications of vehicles that travel across borders; and 7) determination of standards for infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, traffic signs, and signals.

All member countries signed the agreement in 2003 and ratified all annexes and protocols in 2015, which resulted in the full enforcement of the agreement. However, during this period, member countries were unable to effectively implement the agreement due to several obstacles, such as differences in domestic regulations, the insufficiency of facilities and infrastructure, and the lack of knowledge and understanding of border officers. The GMS-CBTA simplifies the process of transporting goods and people across borders in six member countries of the GMS, which includes Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, and South China (Yunnan Province). These countries share the same set of specific information: 1) the current condition and advancement of the project

under the GMS-CBTA; 2) the current condition and growth of the infrastructure; 3) statistics on travel, transportation, and the number of international routes in the GMS region; and 4) evaluation of the performance related to the CBTA within a specific country to gather necessary information, coordinate meetings, formulate inquiries, select participants, and analyze and process data.

The inception of economic cooperation in the GMS took place in January 1992. Its primary objective was to foster economic, social, cultural, and political collaboration with the subregion. This collaboration involved six member countries with the backing of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the governments of all six member nations. It originated from cooperation in the subregion and was legally established in 1999. The GMS-CBTA was established with the goal of enhancing cross-border communications for both travel and freight transport. This agreement seeks to streamline processes by minimizing bureaucratic requirements, simplifying import and export procedures, and reducing the time taken for logistics operations.

There have also been other developments in the economic corridor of the Mekong River. These developments can be categorized into different periods, beginning with the establishment of economic cooperation. The first ministerial-level meeting of the member states took place on January 1, 1992, and continued in 1994. The ADB started with the approval of a high-speed railway project in Yunnan and a power plant in Laos. In



1998, an economic stimulus was approved to promote growth. In 1999, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam signed a tripartite agreement that allowed for cross-border transportation known as the GMS-CBTA, and Cambodia also joined in 2001. The inaugural GMS Summit of Leaders took place in 2002, and in 2003, both Myanmar and China (specifically Yunnan Province) joined the GMS-CBTA, thus including all members. In 2011, the 4th Summit officially established the New Strategic Framework (2012–2022).

Meetings and discussions among the leaders and governments of the member countries of the GMS from 1992 to 1994 resulted in the establishment of a cooperation framework. This framework included plans and strategies for the development of the Mekong Subregion Economic Corridor with the aim of creating a suitable framework for cooperation in potential future development. The meetings and negotiations resulted in the implementation of economic development projects with collaboration between the countries in the GMS.

From 1994 to 1997, detailed studies were conducted in various sectors to identify projects that should be initiated. This included an assessment of the investment potential in the structural investment economy with a focus on constructing a bridge across the Mekong River to facilitate international border-area development. The bridge would reduce physical barriers to communication and logistics and stimulate further projects in other areas. However, the period after the Asian financial crisis in 1997 led to a slowdown in development. Although these issues have

hindered the group's attempts to collaborate effectively, they have led to a more solidified group integration.

In the early 21st century, the inaugural summit of the heads of member states in 2002, which involved a significant initiative focused on the Economic Corridor of the Mekong River and resulted in the implementation of many projects. These projects encompassed the establishment of road networks to enhance economic connectivity among member states, the implementation of measures for environmental management and biodiversity protection, the promotion of agricultural cooperation, and the pursuit of regional energy stability, among others. The summit of leaders has undergone a significant transformation as member countries have formulated a collective vision agreement to address the economic disparities and foster relationships, prosperity, and cooperation in the economic domain through a strategic plan known as the 3 Cs: Connectivity, Competitiveness, and Community.

In 2004, Guangzhou Province, China, joined the collaborative initiative, contributing abundant natural resources as well as its growing economy and population. The 4th GMS Summit in 2011 resulted in the advancement of economic development through various means, enhanced cross-sector investment assistance, the dissemination of affluence from urban to rural regions, and increased solidarity for economic advancement. These changes have resulted in alterations or enhancements in policy,





collaboration, and methods for economic development.

Multiple literature reviews have examined the GMS-CBTA, but they are obsolete and solely concentrate on policy at the state level. For example, Umezaki's indicates that the agreement has faced numerous challenges and barriers within the context of international collaboration. Upon examination of the agreements, it is evident that the GMS-CBTA is experiencing significant delays in its implementation.

Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos (the three founding member nations) signed the GMS-CBTA in 1999, and subsequently, all six countries engaged in negotiations to finalize the agreement and held a ceremony to sign it in 2007. However, the agreement has not been put into effect as of now and is not mandatory in any way. The CBTA came into effect in August 2015 after the six countries signed a comprehensive document and held a ceremony. However, the process required a considerable amount of time, resulting in delays and a lack of modernity, and as a result, revisions were necessary for both the terms in the agreement and the ceremonial procedures (Umezaki, 2017).

While the CBTA has been put into effect, the complete execution is still pending for the involved parties. For instance, the CCA at the border crossing point is not fully prepared. Construction and settlement have finished in Thailand, but the necessary arrangements have not yet been made in Laos to carry out various ceremonies in the jointly controlled area. This delay is due to the

Ministry of Communications of the country party, which is responsible for overseeing operations under the CBTA. In 2016, the CBTA remedied the problem by endorsing the implementation of an agreement that simplifies cross-border transportation facilities. This agreement is known as the CBTA Early Harvest and was introduced in 2018 specifically for the River Basin Area.

The initial agreement was based on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which documented an agreement to allow each country to issue a GMS Road Transport Permit and a temporary Motor Vehicle Temporary Admission Document (TAD) for non-traffic vehicles and a maximum of 500 passengers. This facilitated the implementation of the CBTA. Member States' rights to block the passage of such vehicles through the border by officials is subject to certain limitations (Umezaki, 2017). The Neighboring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) has undertaken an extensive research project that focuses on the supply chain in the Mekong subregion and particularly on infrastructure development in 2021. It has been discovered that there are ongoing technological hurdles, legislative obstacles, institutional challenges, limitations in physical capability, and coordination problems. The advancement of the CBTA has not met the anticipated level.

Multiple MoUs were made before the 2015 convention at both bilateral and tripartite levels, which included the utilization of some CBTAs. The SSI was introduced in the Bay-Sunbridge and Marmara-Broad Universe





regions. The Swedish Subregion has established an SWI system that allows for the completion of customs procedures for harvests at a single spot. During the initial shipment transit, the authorities had not provided information regarding the quantity of shipments on the river. However, the CBTA reached an agreement that allows each shipment to be transported over the course of one month.

Laos initially specified that transportation to and from the nation is restricted to border crossing stations located along National Route No. 3, No. 9, and No. 13. Maximum stays of 30 days are permitted in the member state for a duration. During each journey, a TAD serves as a valid "passport" and is issued by the relevant authorities in the vehicle's country of origin (i.e., the country where the vehicle is registered). This document allows the vehicle to stay in the host country for a maximum of 30 days. The customs authorities of the host country need to inspect the vehicle upon entry and exit. To establish the presence in a member state, a maximum of 30 additional days is necessary. It is unnecessary to indicate the frequency of cross-border arrangement establishment or the maximum duration for implementing the CBTA (NEDA, 2021).

Regarding strategy, the GMS Transport Sector Vision (TSS) 2030 has recommended a strategic impetus to serve as the foundation for strategic assistance. The CBTA point is located in chapter 2, where it serves as a strategic support base. It encompasses the following plans: enabling the movement of

goods and people across international borders, promoting the liberalization of communication services, and referring to the context of the European Union as an example. It is a key goal of TSS 2015. This goal remains pertinent and suitable. Particularly with the establishment of the Asian Economic Community in 2015, there has been development of a market vision and integration foundation that allows for enhancements in the areas of commodities, services, investments, money, and skilled labor.

The GMS member countries lack collaborative endeavors to achieve the desired objective. Therefore, there is a minimal amount of work required to synchronize the targets. Principally, the authorities in borderland have implemented measures to decrease the flow of commodities across the border. The GMS agreement has streamlined the transportation of all goods throughout the GMS to any border (NEDA, 2021).

There have been suggestions to enhance and modernize the incomplete cross-border facilities. This includes implementing information technology (IT) systems to support various processes, such as a CCA or SSI. These systems would be jointly operated by border officials to ensure a unified inspection process with a specific focus on entry inspections. Under this arrangement, officials from an outgoing country would travel to a country of entry within the CCA and undergo observation. The relevant border units of a country, such as customs, immigration, and plant and animal protection, would handle the release process within the same area (NEDA, 2021).



The literature does not reflect the drastically changing circumstances that have occurred following the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the domestic policies of member nations have been continuously changing, which has had an impact on the progress of the CBTA. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to achieve two specific goals related to the advancement of CBTA. Firstly, the spatial data pertaining to the member states and development of GMS-CBTA implementation were examined and evaluated. Secondly, the challenges, barriers, and recommendations for the successful implementation of GMS-CBTA were assessed.

The GMS-CBTA is an enforceable agreement among the six member countries of the GMS, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, and southern China (Yunnan Province). (Asian Development Bank, 2011) The agreement aims to accelerate international transport in GMS by evaluating the outcomes of the CBTA implementation in each member country.

The CBTA agreement began with the three GMS member countries, namely Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, agreeing in November 1999 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Later in 2001, Cambodia joined the agreement and in 2003, Myanmar and Yunnan Province of China signed a joint agreement. Member countries prepared 20 annexes and protocols to the agreement to set out the details of joint implementation and all 20 versions have been signed. The agreement will come into effect when all member countries ratify the agreement, annexes, and protocols. In

particular, in 2011, the fourth GMS Summit endorsed the new strategic framework from 2012 to 2022 to ensure its effectiveness.

The main goal of GMS-CBTA is to optimize cross-border transportation, including travel and cargo movement across the GMS region, encompassing streamlining the logistical operations within the subregion, accelerating import-export protocols, and minimizing paperwork intricacy. This agreement aligns with the Asian Development Bank, Strategy 2030, which aims to promote sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region comprehensively. It emphasizes the importance of adaptability and the continuous effort to eradicate poverty.

The CBTA is a flagship initiative under the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program to promote transport and trade facilitation. When fully implemented, the CBTA will improve the efficiency of transport services by facilitating cross-border transport, complementing economic corridors and physical infrastructure and investment, and creating a more favorable environment for cross-border trade, investment, and tourism.

The program is helping to expand transport and traffic rights along the GMS-CBTA. route network; simplify and modernize customs procedures and border management and strengthen the capacity of sanitary and phytosanitary agencies in the subregion. (Asian Development Bank, 2011) The CBTA is a single comprehensive legal instrument that includes all of the non-physical measures for cross-border land transport. Under the CBTA,



vehicles, drivers, goods, and passengers will be allowed to cross national borders through the GMS road transport system.

The Agreement promotes the elimination of intermediary stops or transshipment, as well as promoting the reduction in the amount of time spent crossing borders (link to the CBTA Main Agreement). Increasing the number of border checkpoints that are implementing the CBTA will help maximize the effectiveness of the GMS transport networks. The CBTA complements the existing physical infrastructure of the GMS countries.

## II. Methodology

This study utilized qualitative research methodologies to gather and analyze data from primary and secondary sources, such as official state documents and academic literature. This research has pursued the crucial collection of data and implementation of field studies, discussions with focus groups, the creation of vital agendas, and data analysis and integration. For data collection, besides examining documents, in-depth interviews were conducted with 60 stakeholders, who consisted of representatives from the public and private sectors, such as government officials from custom houses and the Ministry of Commerce, scholars from local universities, and delegates from trade groups and industrial councils in Chiang Rai, Nakhon Phanom, Nong Khai, and Laos. (International Institute for Trade and Development. (2024) Moreover, field research was done at the key customs checkpoints: Mae Sai Customs House, Chiang Saen Customs House, Chiang Khong Customs

House, Nakhon Phanom Customs House, and others.

The study also investigated the current conditions and progress of operations in the GMS-CBTA to comprehensively address the difficulties, obstacles, and prospects associated with implementing operations under the agreement. To obtain progressive information, this research has collected data through field studies, discussions with focus groups, the creation of vital agendas, and data analysis and integration. The main goal of GMS-CBTA encompasses streamlines the logistical operations within the subregion, along with accelerating import-export protocols and minimizing the complexity of paperwork. This agreement aligns with the ADB Strategy 2030, which aims to comprehensively promote sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. It emphasizes the importance of adaptability and the continuous effort to eradicate poverty.

## III. Discussions

The investigation of the GMS-CBTA implementation progress was structured into two parts. The first part provides geographic data to demonstrate the current condition and operational progress within the framework. The following section provides a more comprehensive analysis of the difficulties, obstacles, and prospects.

### *a. Current Status and Progress*

Meetings between the GMS member countries' leaders and working groups between 1992 and 1994 established various blueprints and strategies for the advancement



of the Mekong Subregional Economic Corridor. Moreover, from 1995 to 1997, they thoroughly examined the specifics of projects launched in the Economic Corridor with a particular focus on investments in infrastructure and the Mekong River bridge construction project, but the economic crisis in 1997 hindered the development. However, at the first GMS summit in 2002, member nations crafted the strategic plan known as the 3 Cs. This milestone event led to the initiation of several notable endeavors within the region. These initiatives encompassed the development of crucial road infrastructure to connect member nations along the Economic Corridor, the implementation of environmental management strategies, and concerted efforts towards biodiversity conservation.

Furthermore, member countries committed their cooperation in the realm of agriculture and energy stability. In 2004, China (notably Guangxi Province) became a participant in this cooperative venture. This inclusion facilitated the Economic Corridor's access to abundant natural resources and subsequently catalyzed substantial advancements in both its economic landscape and demographic aspects. Later, the fourth GMS Summit in 2011 brought about the enhancement of Economic Corridor development in various fields, including the promotion of multiple sectors of investment, distributing prosperity from urban to rural areas, and promoting unity. These constructive objectives have resulted in modifications and additions to the Economic Corridor's policies and strategies, such as supporting and facilitating trade, transportation, and sustainable environmental management;

promoting the sub-region as a unified tourism destination; and human resource development.

The three specific objectives of the CBTA pertain to cross-border transportation via roads, encompassing both commercial and non-commercial vehicles operated by public or private entities, as they enter, exit, or transit through the territories of the member countries. They also include instances of crossing rivers or utilizing ferries when bridges are not available. However, they do not have direct authority over trade and immigration matters. This agreement does not affect the member states' domestic laws to authorize the entry of goods and people into their territory in compliance with local regulations about the cross-border goods' export and import as well as the entry and exit of people (NEDA, 2021).

The GMS-CBTA's difficulties and obstacles stem from the substantial delay in its enforcement. Although the initial signing was in 1999, followed by completion of detailed annexes and procedures with full signatures in 2007, the agreement has yet to be implemented. However, in August 2015, after all six member countries had ratified the annexes and procedures, the CBTA gained enforceability. As a result, the collective agreement's lengthy completion period has led to the development of outdated and delayed regulations, necessitating revisions to various provisions in the Annexes and Protocols (Umezaki, 2021; NEDA, 2021).

Despite the GMS-CBTA having been enforced, its complete implementation is still pending for member countries. For instance, the CCA located at Mukdahan-Savannakhet,



Thailand, has finished site preparation and construction, while Laos is still in the process of carrying out different protocols within the CCA, as previously specified by the CBTA Early Harvest Agreement of 2018. This situation aligns with the conditions outlined in the MoU, which grants member countries the authority to issue GMS Road Transport Permits and TADs for the temporary entry of goods and non-resident passengers (up to a maximum of 500 copies). As a result, the implementation of the CBTA has been limited.

Other obstacles were issues with the facilitation of border control officers due to inaccuracies in the transport license and temporary import documents provided by the country of origin. These documents did not match the vehicles that were waiting to cross the border at the transit point, so their passage was prohibited. Additionally, there have been challenges in terms of technical, legal, institutional, and physical capabilities, as well as coordination. For example, the implementation of SSI customs procedures at the Lao Bao-Dan Savan international border checkpoint and Mukdahan-Savannakhet, as well as the one-stop customs SWI procedures at the Hekou-Laokai checkpoint, did not meet the expected outcomes. According to the Early Harvest Facilitation Agreement, permits and temporary import documents can be issued for cargo vehicles specified under Protocol 1 of the CBTA. On the other hand, transportation regulations in Laos are restricted to the border crossing points of Bo Ten, Huai Xai, Dan Savan, and Savannakhet and only adhere to national routes No. 3, No. 9, and No. 13.

Myanmar ratified the CBTA Early Harvest in 2020 and has implemented a requirement that vehicles be accompanied by a valid transport permit and TAD issued by the authorized organization of the vehicle's home country. They may not exceed 30 days of stay in the member country on each trip with a TAD. Moreover, visa acquisition is mandatory for both import and export from the customs department of the receiving country to ensure that the stay in the country does not exceed 30 days, but crossing borders an unlimited number of times is permissible. To successfully create a CBTA and have significant implications for border opening, it is necessary to expedite additional actions because border crossings are the weakest link in the economic chain, both in terms of time and cost, as well as physical infrastructure improvements (NEDA, 2021).

Subsequent strategic drivers that serve as fundamental pillars are required to achieve the overall vision of TSS 2030. The foundation of CBTA the strategy includes plans to promote cross-border transport, expand markets, and liberalize transportation services, similar to the European Union strategy. This goal was previously included in the TSS 2015 strategy, particularly in response to the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. The vision was to establish a unified market and production base to facilitate the flow of goods, services, investment, capital, and skilled labor. The GMS-CBTA aims to enable the free movement of commodities, automobiles, and people throughout the GMS region, including trucks, drivers, cargo, and goods. Improved border management and coordination have resulted





in shorter border crossings, and improving cooperation between border areas and post-border agencies has resulted in significant progress in the implementation of the CBTA (NEDA, 2021).

There are proposals to improve and enhance the incomplete cross-border facilities to provide convenience for border crossings. This includes installing an IT system to support mutual work processes in both the internal and the external CCA. The process involves conducting a comprehensive inspection at a single service checkpoint, where officials from neighboring countries with a shared border work together to carry out the inspection. The aim is to streamline the inspection process by focusing on the entry point, with officials stationed in the country of exit conducting inspections in the country of entry. This is known as observation at the country of entry in the CCA or SSI.

Despite the simultaneous efforts of various units at a country's border checkpoint, such as customs, immigration, and quarantine for plant and animal diseases, their duties primarily involve inspecting travelers. The areas of improvement under the GMS-CBTA include passports/visas, driving licenses, foreign exchange, customs, health/epidemiology, vehicles (registration, roadworthiness, insurance), and goods (customs, quality, phytosanitary/plant protection, veterinary), as well as SWI. However, there are still problems and obstructions with the readiness of neighboring countries' IT infrastructure systems and cooperation in pushing for the GMS-CBTA,

which is still not yet able to be implemented concretely (NEDA, 2021).

The different regulatory frameworks lead to differences in the technical standards of vehicles. These are different transportation regulations for each country. Both type and size of car Cargo weight rating create obstacles for cross-border transport and transit between member countries. Vehicles that do not meet the country of origin requirements require a transshipment at the border to vehicles of the country of origin, which results in higher transport costs and time. (International Institute for Trade and Development, 2019) Moreover, each member country has different logistics capabilities. Whether it is the performance of different facilities and infrastructure systems This directly affects the level of logistics capabilities. including the level of expertise of logistics operators in each country This remains an obstacle in linking cross-border/transit freight between member countries.



**Fig. 1.** Thailand's Cross-Border Key Position Under the GMS-CBTA.

**Source:** ADB

The current implementation of the GMS-CBTA is also hindered by legal issues within member countries and other constraints. For instance, Thai law prohibits





foreign customs officers from carrying out duties at Thai customs checkpoints, and Chinese law prohibits the transportation of foreign cars within the country, while Vietnamese law imposes speed limits of 40–50 kilometers per hour on vehicles. Furthermore, the opening and closing times of customs facilities vary across countries, local officials have a deficiency in knowledge and understanding of operations, the pertinent documents have not yet been translated into an international language, and the bus routes vary across different countries. It may take time to fully implement the agreement, but entrepreneurs should be attentive to the significance of the GMS-CBTA as it presents an opportunity to enter new markets and decrease transport expenses (Exim Bank of Thailand, 2021).

*b. Mae Sai Customs House, Chiang Rai Province*

The results showed that the implementation of the GMS-CBTA still has three obstacles. First, due to the duty officers' lack of knowledge and understanding of the agreement, it is necessary to create a GMS-CBTA implementation guideline as a manual for operations to establish efficient and standardized working practices for implementing the agreement in Thailand, Myanmar, and Southern China. This will facilitate cross-border transport and establish operational standards internationally accepted.

Second, due to member countries' lack of sharing and coordinating platform, it is highly recommended to establish a group of

committees that will facilitate border transportation in Mae Sai-Tachileik District. In this case, Thailand has the potential to play a leading role in establishing and being a model for Myanmar by being a driving force through trilateral negotiations with Myanmar and Southern China. One example is the case study of the permanent border crossing point of the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge across the Mekong River at 2 Mae Sai District, Chiang Rai Province.

The third obstacle is the changing internal political and border security of member countries. Thai-Myanmar border security cooperation entails regulatory refinement to facilitate the extension of the GMS-CBTA. However, domestic political complexities within Myanmar have impeded progress, and consequently, trade volumes between Thailand, Myanmar, and Southern China have come to a halt.

Nevertheless, Thailand holds significant importance as a trading partner for China. China has implemented a policy to advance its interests by utilizing the R3B route, which is a key component of the GMS-CBTA policy. Hence, it is imperative for the governments of Thailand, Myanmar, and Southern China to actively advocate and facilitate the utilization of the R3B route as the primary means of transporting goods between these countries.

*c. Chiang Saen Customs House, Chiang Rai Province*

The Chiang Saen Customs House plays an important role in facilitating the Mekong



River route, which connects Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and China. Problems and obstacles are outlined in the GMS-CBTA and can be categorized into two primary issues. The first issue is the development of the Mekong River for energy and navigation, which includes dam construction in China and exploding rapids. To control water levels, China has built 7 large dams, with another 20 dams under construction, resulting in insufficient water volume for large-scale navigation in the Mekong River during the dry season. This effect has enabled China to control and regulate the shipping of goods in the Mekong River. Furthermore, Chinese sea captains are the most experienced on the Mekong River, followed by those from Laos and Myanmar. Thailand lacks personnel capable of navigating the Mekong River, forcing Thai entrepreneurs to rely on China for transportation along the river. This has an impact on shipping schedules because Chinese cargo ships are large and can carry goods weighing 250 to 500 tons.

The second concern pertains to the potential hindrance in port management. The port faces higher transportation expenses and limited equipment for loading and unloading goods, including rubber-tired gantry cranes, reach stackers, and forklift trucks, which forces operators to procure their own tools. This inconvenient situation further escalates expenses and hinders the efficiency of utilizing ship transport.

The post-COVID-19 outbreak has led to a substantial decrease in trade and the volume of trade at border crossings. The regulations for cross-border transportation between adjacent countries along the routes that

currently lack transportation infrastructure are outlined in the GMS-CBTA. However, when analyzing the data on imports and exports, it becomes apparent that the majority of these transactions involve goods that fall under the categories of "sensitive" and "highly sensitive." Unlike other customs points, these goods are not exempt from taxes.

The current issue is the insufficient preparedness to offer comprehensive customs clearance services in compliance with the GMS-CBTA. This pertains specifically to the execution of SWI, SSI, and a CCA process. If these issues are resolved, Mae Sai Customs House and Chiang Saen Commercial Port will emerge as significant alternatives for transporting goods across borders, particularly those of importance to Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and Southern China.

#### *d. Chiang Khong Customs House, Chiang Rai Province*

The Chiang Khong Customs House serves as a cross-border checkpoint within the framework of land transport negotiations between Thailand, Laos, and China at the Chiang Khong-Huai Sai checkpoint (Thailand-Laos). Boten-Bohan serves as a border crossing point between Laos and China. This checkpoint is responsible for facilitating and overseeing the movement of cross-border passengers and goods, streamlining cross-border procedures, vehicle approval, and establishing transportation service fees. It is also responsible for overseeing and enforcing adherence to agreements between GMS member countries to optimize the utilization of the R3 route from Bangkok to Laos and



Kunming, which will result in reduced travel time, minimized transportation expenses, and enhanced travel convenience, Thailand-Laos-China, Office of the Secretariat of the House of Representatives, (World Bank (2021). Despite the member countries' mutual commitment to implement the CBTA, there are still significant challenges at both the domestic and international levels, as outlined below.

The first obstacle is simplifying cross-border procedures by implementing concurrent inspections conducted by relevant organizations in each country. Challenges were encountered due to the existence of varying preparation measures across member countries, and the lack of alignment between national policy and operational situations in member nations hinders the effective implementation of cross-border processes. The second concern pertains to the possibility of granting special rights in the cross-border release of perishable goods and exemption from customs duty for containers bearing customs stamps that are utilized in cross-border transport for hazardous materials. The exemptions will be authorized on a case-by-case basis.

Particularly, since the COVID-19 pandemic, member countries have implemented new trade regulations and procedures, such as a significant increase in the import tax in Laos. For instance, imports of goods from Thailand or China into Laos undergo inspections and are subject to taxation by customs agencies. Trade agencies also conduct inspections and impose taxes on these imports. Consequently, imported goods into Laos will be subject to double taxation.

The third issue applies to the admission of automobiles entering the country. The member country is required to acknowledge and approve certificates of registration, license plates, and certificates of joint inspection from other member states. However, neighboring countries have made alterations to their transportation legislation and logistical systems due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, trucks of Thai goods driven by Thai drivers were able to cross the border and deliver goods at the Laos-China border checkpoint (Boten-Bohan).

However, Laos has recently implemented new regulations that restrict Thai trucks to drive only in a specific area at Huay Xai City, Bo Kaeo subdistrict. After reaching this point, Lao drivers take over and continue delivering the goods to their final destinations at the Chinese border. Furthermore, Laos has established a Logistics Transport Association to autonomously facilitate the transportation of commodities across the border within the Laos (Interview, Probkran Awatchanakarn, January 18, 2024).

These changes significantly affect Thailand's transportation industry. Although Thai transport entrepreneurs propose the establishment of car-sharing associations, similar to China's approach, with the aim of distributing income among different groups. However, a problem arises from the collection of both specified and unspecified fees by Laos as shipping costs, leading to significant expenses for entrepreneurs. Consequently, rising transportation expenses and declining actual income burden Thai entrepreneurs with overall increased costs.



It is recommended that the private sector in the Chiang Khong area, particularly entrepreneurs involved in border trade and exports, consistently adjust and monitor the situation. This is because border trade necessitates not only knowledge, comprehension, and adherence to Thai laws, but also an understanding of the regulations and practices of neighboring countries and local areas. Furthermore, it is common for various countries to make annual modifications to their measures and enact new rules and regulations, including Thailand.

Additionally, the government should form a committee consisting of experts from both the public and private sectors who possess expertise on matters concerning the Thai border and the Laos-China region. To negotiate with neighboring countries at the associate level, it is important to prioritize a “bottom-up to top-down” process. This means promptly addressing the concerns of local practitioners and the local private sector at the Chiang Khong border, who can provide valuable information about practical issues, obstacles, and solutions. By considering these inputs, the government can issue rules and regulations that are relevant to the actual problems being faced. This approach is preferable to starting negotiations at the policy level and then imposing them on the local government as it may lead to inconsistencies, outdated policies, or difficulties in implementation, which would not effectively align with the GMS-CBTA.

#### *e. Nakhon Phanom Customs*

Nakhon Phanom Customs serves a logistical corridor known as R12 or the East-West Economic Corridor, which connects Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and China. The R12 route is composed of two segments. The first segment runs from Nakhon Phanom in Thailand to Thakhek in Laos, passing through Nam Phao and Cha Lo in Vietnam, while the second segment goes from Hu Nghi to Youyiguan in China. The route starts in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, and then passes through Tha Khaek in Laos, Nam Phao and Cha Lo in Vietnam, and finally ends in Maung Cai and Dongxin in China. These two routes converge at the Youyiguan checkpoint, which is the Chinese customs checkpoint.

The road route holds significant importance due to its linkages with other crucial routes, including Highway AH1, the primary route leading to Hanoi, and the Ho Chi Minh Highway, the main route connecting Northern and Southern Vietnam. This route also passes important economic zones in Central Vietnam, including the Vung Ang economic zone. Hence, the R12 route is a crucial hub for the distribution of diverse products and facilitates the integration of economic, cultural, and tourism activities, particularly for the provinces located in the northeastern border region of Thailand. (Pittaya Suvakunta, (2024) This route plays a significant role in boosting the economy and facilitating tourism by providing convenient travel options for travelers from Laos and Vietnam to visit Thailand, and it is also regarded the most direct link to Vietnam. (DITP, Trade Logistics)



In terms of statistics, the transportation of Thai fruits to China, particularly durian in both fresh and frozen forms, has consistently increased each year due to rising demand among Chinese customers. The export value to China in 2020 amounted to 53,459 million baht, with a growth rate of 52 percent per annum, particularly during the first four months of the year. Exporting to China has significant economic value, resulting in an influx of 25,086 million baht into the country. This in turn leads to employment and income generation for Thai farmers, while also benefiting transport operators involved in the product supply chain. However, there are still hazards and challenges involved in transporting goods to China via land routes, including treacherous mountainous terrain and curvy highways (Logistic Magazine,2021).

The R12 route remains a two-lane road, and the lack of lighting and presence of numerous uneven and gravelly areas are generating significant traffic delays. There is a high occurrence of traffic collisions due to poor vision caused by dust. Thailand and Laos have collaborated to enhance the route in order to facilitate more freight transportation and tourism. The R12 route offers the most efficient connection between Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Southern China. (Pittaya Suvakunta, (2024)

The R12 route also provides an alternative for private companies to ship commodities and establish production facilities in order to meet the demand in the Mekong sub-region. Thailand and Laos have collaborated to enhance the infrastructure in

order to facilitate transit and promote tourism. Furthermore, Laos is suggesting a significant expansion of infrastructure in line with the land-locked to land-linked strategy. This strategy aims to establish connecting routes and designate the Vung Ang port in Vietnam as the official conduit for importing and exporting goods from the Laos. Expanding transit choices and sea access in the Mekong Subregion is seen to have positive implications for the business sector across all countries involved.

The Thai government has been compelled to provide support for various projects in Nakhon Phanom Province, including the customs checkpoint at the 3rd Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, the development of the Nakhon Phanom Special Economic Zone, the construction of a border transportation center, and a road construction project connecting the airport to Mittraphap 3. These projects are crucial for facilitating exports and imports and promoting economic growth in the region. The initiatives include of a one-stop service center, paperless trade, the agreement on cross-border transport in the GMS-CBTA and Vung Ang Port. The objective of these initiatives is to elevate Nakhon Phanom Province from its current status as a prominent secondary city to that of a significant metropolis.

#### *f. Nong Khai Customs*

Beginning with a visit to the Nong Khai region and the capital city of Vientiane on February 21, 2024, discussions and exchanges were held with the Nong Khai Customs Checkpoint prior to crossing to meet with



professors from the Faculty of Economics at Lao National University and the Mekong River Committee. On March 5, 2024, an online meeting was held with members of the Nong Khai Chamber of Commerce. During this session, challenges and obstacles encountered during the border crossing between Thailand and Laos were presented as follows.

(1) The expansion of trade routes to China remains restricted. Although the Laos-bound railway line has been inaugurated, the restriction persists due to impediments caused by inadequate infrastructure, particularly bridge congestion, which hinders the transport of products. Conversely, on the Laotian side, action has been taken to regulate the crossing of transport vehicles across the border and mandate the replacement of tractors at the Thanaleng land port in Laos.

(2) Customs has assisted railway authorities by allowing officials to be sent to oversee the discharge of goods, enabling the clearance of containers at the Nong Khai Railway Border Checkpoint. Furthermore, the authorities have procured a portable X-ray device to enhance the efficiency of inspections at the railway crossing. Nevertheless, the project remains unfinished due to a disagreement between the two organizations regarding the placement of the X-ray machine. Currently, when items are released, a human inspection is still necessary instead of utilizing X-ray scanning.

(3) Entrepreneurs face a challenge of dealing with unpredictable transportation expenses that have significantly increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, merchandise could be conveyed from Thailand

to the Lao market via the river port. Following the COVID-19 scenario, the closure of river ports necessitated the transfer of all products via road and rail, which evidently increased transportation expenses. Business operators are urging authorities to reopen port controls. Thailand has eased restrictions on the transportation of products via boat, but Laos has not yet granted authorization.

(4) Regarding the Vientian logistics park Co.Ltd (VLP) and Tha Na Laeng land port, investment is being made in infrastructure development, which includes the acquisition of modern equipment for the purpose of loading and unloading. The Thanaleng Dry Port is fully operational and has sufficient space to accommodate a significant volume of transportation. Entrepreneurs perceive that due Laos' significant investment in logistics infrastructure, the cost of logistic operations in VLP is comparatively high.

Several parties are impacted by the excessive expenses, such as Chinese businesspeople from the Chaichettha Special Economic Zone, who intend to invest in logistics on the Nong Khai side. Nevertheless, there persist issues concerning investment laws and uncertainty surrounding the Nong Khai Special Economic Zone. Meanwhile, Vietnamese entrepreneurs are also discussing the necessity of transporting goods from Central Vietnam through Thailand to use the train system in Nong Khai through Mukdahan.

An entrepreneur proposed that Thailand engage in government-to-government dialogue regarding the transparent border crossings and associated expenses. Furthermore, there is a proposal to





enhance the Thanatha railway and transform it into a transit hub to rival the Lao VLP. This would effectively destroy the monopoly currently present in business activities. The preliminary design of the new railway bridge over the river incorporates a dual-track system. The format consists of a one-meter rail and a standard rail. Prices will be more manageable if the Chinese rail system at Tha Na Laeng is linked with the normal rail system and then the containers are moved to Tha Na Tha on the Thai side.

There is an issue of railway development to link the Thai rail system with the Chinese rail system at Thanaleng land port in the inability to transfer containers from Thai tracks to Chinese lines. Despite the tools being prepared, goods being transported from Thailand to the Chinese rail system must make a mandatory stop at Tha Na Laeng. Subsequently, the tractor is replaced with a Lao tractor and travels to Vientiane South Station, where it is then detached from the tractor and transferred to a rail system.

A fresh issue regarding cross-border transit has been identified at the Nong Khai crossing. Transportation expenses have experienced a substantial and unpredictable increase, which is compounded by the uncertainty surrounding legislative changes. One reason for this is that Laos has successfully created and introduced a VLP and a physical land port at Tha Na Laeng. Laos has also assigned different cargo carriers to be transferred utilizing Lao vehicles at the Thanaleng land port.

Another significant issue is the lack of accessibility to Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge No.

1, which has been operational since 1994. The bridge serves as both a means of transportation for cars and trains, resulting in significant congestion. The availability of train journeys restricts transportation by rail from Thailand. Thailand, China, and Laos have mutually agreed to enhance their infrastructure by constructing parallel bridges specifically designed for railway transportation. The railway will establish a connection between a station on the Thai side and Thanaleng station. Nevertheless, the progress of the new bridge development project is contingent upon approval of the budget and the subsequent commencement of construction, which will require more time. It is anticipated that this will require a minimum of three more years to finish.

#### **IV. Conclusion and Recommendation**

The GMS-CBTA will only come into effect if all member nations adhere to their ratifications and protocol. The ADB has commenced the execution of the CBTA at selected border crossings between contracting countries that share borders, specifically Laos-Vietnam, Thailand-Laos, and Thailand-Cambodia, in compliance with the agreement. The construction of the 4th Friendship Bridge, Chiang Khong - Huai Sai, is a part of the R3 route (Bangkok-Kunming) project, which falls under the framework of cooperation in the GMS. This bridge will enable member countries of the GMS to effectively reduce travel time by utilizing the R3 route (Bangkok-Laos-Kunming). It will also minimize transportation expenses and enhance interconnectivity among individuals residing in the sub-region.



Preparations are underway to commence the transit of products and persons between Thailand, Laos, and China. Along the Bangkok-Laos-Kunming route, which is continuing with the process of creating a formal agreement between Thailand, Laos, and China. Thailand has drafted a memorandum of agreement called the Initial Implementation of a Cross-border Transport Agreement (IICBTA) between Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, similar to the way it has been done in Thailand.

Border crossing procedures are being streamlined. The objective is to achieve acceptance of simultaneous inspections by the appropriate authorities and to streamline the inspection process for cross-border transportation of individuals, ensuring that products are inspected only once. The recommendations of the World Health Organization are being implemented for the transportation of individuals across borders. International shipment and exemption from tariffs on merchandise containers bearing customs stamps that are utilized for cross-border transportation of hazardous materials will be granted permission on an individual basis. Furthermore, priority will be given to the cross-border clearance of perishable commodities. Recognition of automobiles, recognition of registration/license plate certificates, and recognition of vehicle inspection certifications from third parties are also necessary, along with the mutual acceptance of domestic driver's licenses and the establishment of transportation service charges based on market mechanisms. A collaborative task force comprising Thailand,

Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, and China should also be formed to oversee and enforce adherence to the GMS-CBTA.

By conducting in-depth interviews in five specific areas, this study on the GMS-CBTA has revealed the emergence of new forms and methods of development that have a significant impact on improving logistics efficiency. These developments aim to address structural issues in a systematic and tangible manner. The objective is to establish a seamless and sustainable direction for cross-border mobility in the Mekong Subregion, which requires government and private sector cooperation.

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## Research Article

### When Public Opinion is Left Behind: The Case Rejection of Visa on Arrival For Russian Tourists

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#### Abstract

*The Visa on Arrival is Indonesia's foreign policy instrument to boost tourism. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 had an impact on the increasing arrival of Russian tourists to Indonesia. The increasing number of Russians was also directly proportional to the violative and negative sentiments about Russian tourists on social media, public demands to revoke their visa. Despite negative public opinion, the Indonesian government still maintained visa on arrival for Russians. This paper analysed the case study by using Doesser's (2013) model on circumstances when democratic governments neglected public opinion in foreign policy, with its indicators: issue salience, elite debate, and elite perceptions of international gains. This qualitative research used social media analysis to deconstruct the public opinion on issue salience and causal process tracing was used to analyse the context and development of the case. Interviews were conducted to obtain information and confirm the findings. This study found that the neglected of public opinion was carried out because the case categorized as non-critical issue happened episodically thus had low salience. Low media coverage and asymmetrical elite debates resulted in elite consensus. Then, Indonesia avoided economic and political losses and maintained bilateral relations with Russia.*

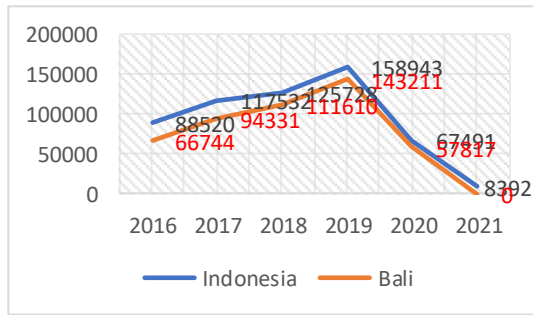
**Keywords:** Visa on Arrival; Public Opinion; Issue Salience; Elite Debate; International Gains.

## I. Introduction

Foreign policy has various instruments to achieve a country's national interests. The fact that Indonesia is an archipelago with a warm tropical climate throughout the year makes Indonesia have great tourism potential. Immigration policy as an instrument of foreign policy is used to achieve national interests and state influence (Duncan, 2020). Indonesia's immigration policy has a function as a facilitator of public welfare with policy derivatives, namely visa and residence permit policies that encourage the growth of the tourism sector. Tourists can come to Indonesia using a Visa Exemption and Visa on Arrival (VoA). One of the countries that got VoA facility was Russia.

To increase Russian tourist arrivals, since 2016 Indonesia has issued Presidential Regulation No. 21/2016 on Visa Exemption and held an Indonesian Festival in Moscow. Festival Indonesia 2016 themed Wonderful Indonesia: Bali and Beyond which was part of Indonesia's diplomatic activities promoting trade, investment, tourism, arts and culture in Russia (Ismail et al., 2022). The implementation of the policy has increased 33% the number of Russian tourists from 88,520 in 2016 to 117,532 in 2017 (Fig. 1). More than 75% of Russian tourists who come to Indonesia visit Bali as a top tourism destination. From 2016 to 2019 the number of Russian tourists continued to increase but decreased in 2020 to 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The arrival of Russian tourists which was previously suspended due to the Covid-19 receive VoA after a decline in pandemic cases.





**Fig. 1.** Russian Arrivals to Indonesia and Bali 2016—2021

**Source:** Reprocessed from Central Statistics Agency (BPS), (2024).

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 also had an impact on tourist visits to Indonesia. Data from the Central Statistics Agency showed an increase in Russian tourists to Indonesia after Putin announced partial mobilization on September 21, 2022 (Barker, 2023). With the increase in Russian tourist arrivals, social problems also increased, such as the violation of visa and local rules in Bali as an impact of the massive presence of Russian tourists there. The Ngurah Rai Immigration Office shows that in 2023, 230 foreigners were deported with 26% (60) of them Russian citizens. Although Russian tourists are known for their long duration of stay and high money spending, the increase in viral negative behavior has led to negative public sentiment.



**Fig. 2.** Public Concerns on X/Twitter

**Source:** Reprocessed from X/Twitter, (2024).

The accumulation of negative behaviors by Russian tourists in Bali went viral on social media such as X/Twitter and Instagram. Russian tourists violated Balinese local rules such as being naked on a sacred tree, taking off their pants on Mount Agung, and dressing inappropriately in temples. They also contributed to traffic violations. In addition to avoiding military service in Russia, they also misused tourist visas to work illegally as photographers, comedian, models, yoga trainers, surfing coaches, and even to sell drugs (Barker, 2023; BBC News Indonesia, 2023; Kadafi, 2023; Rachman, 2023). Thus, these are not just about the illegal use of their visa, but also about illegal activities that are detrimental to the local community. The public requested the central government to take decisive action and revoke the VoA of problematic Russian tourist in Bali. This phenomenon is interesting because it shows negative public sentiment towards the implementation of the VoA policy. Analysis of public sentiment from X/Twitter in the time span of May 2022 to July 2023 shows that there is a negative sentiment of 46.02% while the positive sentiment is 32.76.

Despite public demands to revoke the VoA for Russian tourists, the Indonesian government continues to maintain the policy. In a democratic country public opinion and participation are guaranteed in the constitution, they also have an electoral impact on the elites. The neglect of public opinion usually happens in security issues. However, this case shows something different regarding the issue and policy outcomes. This paper analyzes the dynamics of policy in this case VoA when dealing with public opinion input. This paper aims to analyze the factors of





ignoring public opinion input in the context of policy implementation and evaluation.

## II. Framework and Methodology

In general foreign policy literature shows policy formulation as the result of the interaction between internal and external variables. Under this view, foreign policy is a reaction to an external stimulus. Doerer (2013) studied the case of why the Poland government participated on Iraq invasion when the public was opposed it. The context and circumstances are classified as the relationship between public opinion and policy, namely: issue salience, elite debate, and elite perceptions of international outcomes.

Issue salience refers to the significance, importance, urgency, and priority of an issue over other issues on the political agenda by the public (Oppermann & Viehrig 2009). Knecht & Weatherford (2006) divide the dichotomy of an issue's salience or not based on the duration and intensity of public interest, namely crisis and non-crisis conditions. Crisis issues relate to threats to basic values with the possibility of military involvement and require a rapid policy response. Meanwhile, non-crisis issues relate to issues that may or may not require military force options and the policy decision period is relatively longer. As issue grown to the public spheres, the more the media coverage, the more prominent the policy is the general public. Oppermann & Viehrig (2009) use the characteristics of news factors which consist of: sense of urgency, threat to basic values, and novelty of news that directly impacts the visibility of the foreign policy events in the media. The frequency of relevant media coverage integrated with Knecht & Weatherford (2006) illustration on the relationship between public attention and

policy stages which used to analyze the salience of the issue (Fig. 5).

These issues are then responded differently among political elites, which then serves as a driver for media to cover issues that are relevant to the public. The use of framing by these elites can also be interpreted as competition in influencing and gaining public support for their performance. For example, the Governor of Bali as a political elite, shows his support to the public by proposing the revocation of VoA for Russian tourists. The public will respond more to policies that have a real impact on their daily lives (Oppermann & Viehrig 2009) which this case was the negative behavior of Russians. When elites do not debate, what happens is elite consensus (Doerer 2013). Elite consensus refers to the absence of coherent opposition to foreign policy, so that political elites avoid electoral punishment (Kreps 2010). A unified elite perception of the international environment is more advantageous over not having elite consensus.

Elite debate also contains the perception of gains or in other terms, are pursuing of national interests. This served as background of policy decision. When formulating foreign policy, governments seek dual political advantages - both international and domestic - because states want to avoid a decline in their position of power in the international order, while maintaining their position (Alons 2007). Two indicators are used to predict a country's foreign policy preference between domestic or international incentives, namely internal polarity in the form of the degree of concentration of power in the hands of the government towards society. This polarity assesses domestic structure or the relationship between state and society in





Indonesia. External polarity refers to the degree of centralization of power in the international system (Alons 2007). By internal and external polarity, we can evaluate the context of policy preferences.

The author identifies the factors of public opinion neglect as intervening variables that explained the gap between policy input (public opinion) and output (maintains the visa on arrival for Russians). Data collection and analysis took place from 1 May 2022, based on the viral case on social media, until two months after the issuance of Bali Governor's Circular Letter No. 04 of 2023 on New Order for Foreign Tourists while in Bali, which was until 31 July 2023. The data set consisted of 671 tweets, while the online media analysis included 253 news articles to further explore the case trends.

The structure of public opinion in this research analyzed in social media analysis which determined the issue salience. Previous research on public opinion often uses polling results to determine issue salience. However, polling methods require significant resources, funds and time. To overcome these limitations, this research uses social media analysis as an alternative in analysing public opinion. The public opinion analysed in this research came from X/Twitter in social media, which allows for a more in-depth deconstruction of the structure of public opinion by analysing frequency, interaction, sentiment and social networks. The results of these analyses can also be integrated longitudinally with news analysis to track the development of public discussion. X/Twitter was chosen to overcome the discontinuity and availability of data which the Instagram account that first viralized *@moscow\_cabang\_bali* is no longer active.

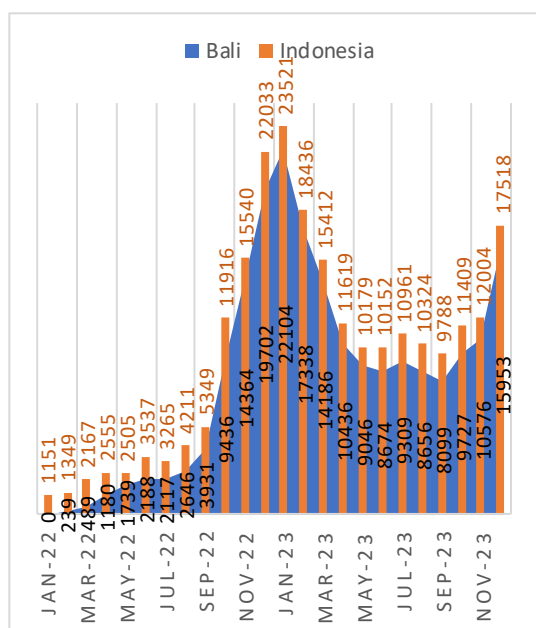
The case study context and development analyzed by causal process tracing. Process-tracing focuses on identifying processes, chains, and causal mechanisms that link independent variables to dependent variables. Elite debate which media quoted and perception of international gains assessed by this analyse. The author also conducted interviews with stakeholders to obtain additional information, reveal the background of the events, and confirm the research results. The interviews to ensure correspondence between public opinion on social media and on the ground.

### III. Discussions

#### *a. Issue Salience: Russian Tourist Behavior in Bali*

In 2023, Russian tourists ranked sixth among non-Asian countries visiting Bali. More than 90% per cent of tour packages to Indonesia sold are to Bali. High interest of Russian tourists to travel to Indonesia for long periods of time to avoid winter or as remote workers (Russian Travel Digest 2024). Statistics for 2022 show Russian tourist arrivals to Bali have doubled from 3,931 in September to 9,436 in October 2022. The increase occurred after President Putin announced partial mobilisation on 21 September 2022. Russian tourist arrivals gradually increased from October until early 2023 and decreased in the second quarter after many deportations of Russian from Bali (Fig. 3).





**Fig. 3.** Monthly Russian Arrivals to Indonesia and Bali 2022—2023

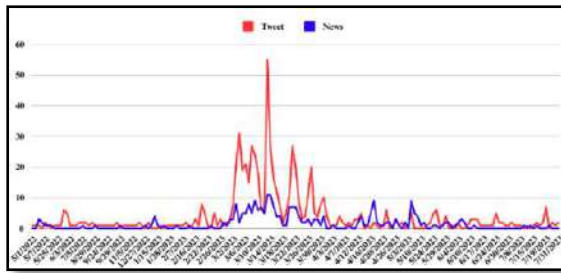
**Source:** Reprocessed from Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and Bali Tourism Authority (2024).

Public attention on the behaviour of Russian tourists emerged in early May 2022. When Alina Fazleeva, Russian tourist took a nude photo of a sacred tree at Tabanan, Bali. Her photo went viral on social media and the public condemned for disrespecting a sacred place. After Alina's case several other cases of violations followed later such as: Russian tourists who opened a motorcycle rental business and misused their visas for work. The social media factor caused these behaviours to gain public attention. In 2023, Ngurah Rai Immigration Office deported 60 Russian tourists, followed by 16 Americans and 15 Australians. Growing negative sentiment towards Russian tourists on social media indicates growing public attention. Although tourists from other countries also committed violations, the public paid more attention to the behaviour of Russian tourists. And yet despite high public attention, the issue of

Russian tourists in Bali has a lower salience. The low salience can be seen from the type of issues involved in these cases.

Tourism issues are categorised as non-crisis issues because the duration of the issue is protracted and public interest in the issue takes place episodically. Non-crisis issues only attract the attention of the attentive public who feel threatened by it or have an interest in the issue. It showing that the threat reaches a limited attentive public, which its confirmed by interviews with several parties in Bali show that the community's concerns about the behaviour of Russian tourists are specific to those who misuse VoA for tourism purposes but work illegally. An interesting finding from the interview with the Head of the Bali Indonesian Tour Guide Association classified the public into three, namely: tourism communities, non-tourism communities, and a mixture of both. Those who anger are predominantly from the non-tourism community because they perceive Russian tourists as violators of laws and customs, while the tourism community is concerned with potential revenue (HPI, *personal communication*, May 21, 2024). The public sentiment captured from social media is negative while the actual public is still open to tourists. This is also acknowledged by the Bali Motorbike Rental Association, that they are not concerned about Russian tourists as a whole. Their demand is for the government to take action against Russian tourists who open motorbike rentals illegally (PRM Bali, *personal communication*, May 16, 2024).

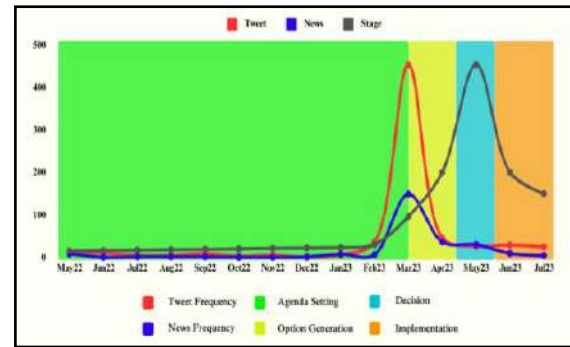




**Fig. 4.** Detail Public Conversation and Media Coverage

**Source:** Reprocessed from various sources (2024).

An analysis of X/Twitter conversation trends in the period May 2022 to July 2023 was conducted to get a real picture of the salience of public attention. The result is that throughout this period, public conversation did not occur continuously and consistently. In Fig. 4, from the beginning of May 2022, there is little public engagement in conversations but it increased in late May to June 2022. From July 2022 to February 2023 the frequency of the conversations tended to stabilise. The frequency of the conversations was highest from February to April 2023 with a peak in March 2023. The frequency of the conversations sloped in May 2023 to July 2023 but the intensity of conversations tended to be more than July 2022 to February 2023. This phenomenon means that although this issue was salience, the public does not always discuss it.



**Fig. 5.** Policy Stages, Public Attention, and Media Coverage

**Source:** Policy Stages reprocessed from Knecht & Weatherford (2006), Tweet and news from various sources (2024).

The issue was salient, but the public's exposure to it was low due to the minor nature of the life threat. Low salience occurred because public opinion is not constant and is divided among various priorities of social issues among the general public. The highest frequency of media coverage occurred in the period March - April 2023. This pattern shows that public attention and media coverage are centred on the formation of issues as agenda setting for elite discussions. The slow agenda-setting process of ten months from May 2022 to March 2023. While April to May 2023 in the elite discussion period, both public discussion and media coverage experienced a gradual decline (Fig. 5). The public provided input in agenda-setting in the policy stages, but the public did not monitor the process to produce the desired output.

Media coverage raise public awareness and information about the issue. Local, national, and international media coverage raised this issue to the public. The narrative about Russian tourist behavior were framed in two ways. The first was that they were avoiding military service to fight the Russian war with Ukraine. This was a context



that made their large numbers in Bali more accepted by the public. The second one was that they were making money illegally in Bali. The highest frequency of media coverage occurred in the period March - April 2023. This pattern shows that public attention and media coverage are centred on the formation of issues as agenda setting for elite discussions. The slow agenda-setting process of ten months from May 2022 to March 2023. While April to May 2023 in the elite discussion period, both public discussion and media coverage experienced a gradual decline (Fig. 5). The public provided input in agenda-setting in the policy stages, but the public did not monitor the process to produce the desired output.

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#### *b. Elite Debate and Consensus*

Before going viral, the behaviour of tourists breaking the rules in Bali had not received significant attention from the government. Attention only emerged after media coverage of the incident. In addition to the media, the role of public figures such as Ni Luh Djelantik is also influential in public opinion. Ni Luh Djelantik often expressed her concerns about the behaviour of Russian tourists in Bali on her social media. In this case, public opinion was activated and successfully triggered a dialogue with the political elite. The

Bali Rental Motor Association (PRM) revealed that they utilised the media and community leaders to get the attention of the government. After the issue went viral PRM Bali sent a petition and got an opportunity for hearing session with the Governor of Bali (PRM, *personal interview*, 16 May 2024).

Media analysis revealed three elite attitudes in response to public demands regarding Russian tourists in Bali. Public attitudes, in this case of interest groups, are also noticeable in observed the dynamics of the discussion. The three group classifications are pro, accommodative and contra groups. The development of the case also shows that elite attitudes are not always linear based on the above groupings. The change in elite attitudes shows a discussion that produces consensus as an outcome. The pro group is the one that encouraged the revocation of VoA, namely Bali Governor I Wayan Koster. The proposal to revoke the visa was first put forward by the Governor of Bali on 12 March 2023. The Governor of Bali also proposed that tourists only be allowed to use vehicles from travel agencies. From an electoral point of view, the Bali Governor's stance in line with public demands on social media will affect electability in the future. So the rationalisation for the Bali Governor to follow public opinion input is to avoid the negative impact of electoral punishment if he ignores public opinion.

The accommodative group is for those who show cautious attitude in responding to public demands. President Joko Widodo and the the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy (Menparekraf) and several figures. President Joko Widodo on 13 March 2023 responded briefly to the case stating that tourists are here for tourism and not to



evacuate. This brief response did not indicate what should be done. The Minister stated that it will conduct a comprehensive review because VoA is cross-ministerial/institutional. The Minister's stance is related to the continuity and stability of tourism in Indonesia. The Ministry estimates that the tourism sector is expected to contribute foreign exchange worth USD 0.47-1.7 billion, with a contribution to GDP of 4.3% (Kemparekraf RI, 2022, p. 8). The cautious attitude shown by the Menparekraf is in line with the National Strategic Priority of 2020-2024 (RPJMN) to revitalise Bali's as tourism destinations. Both the president and the minister gave cautious responses.

The contra groups were those who opposed the VoA revocation, the Russian Ambassador, and Rental Motor Association. The Ambassador said that VoA is a tourist facility, so they do not want it to be revoked for Russian tourists (Fajri, 2023). The Russian Ambassador defended by saying that his party always encourages Russian tourists to comply with applicable regulations and that most Russian tourists are law-abiding. This defense reflects his duty to protect every citizen in the accredited country. Meanwhile, Motor Rental Association objected because it would interfere with revenue. They argued for prioritizing a strict law enforcement approach over visa revocation.

A more accommodating attitude change was shown by the Governor of Bali on 16 April 2023 by stating that Bali needs tourists and that the deportation can be a lesson for tourists to respect the Balinese local wisdom. This acknowledgment shows that his softened attitude reflects internal dynamics such as the rejection from motorbike rental business interest groups and the prudence of the

central government which prioritizes long-term interests. The discourse on the revocation of VoA for Russian tourists ended by accommodating national interests and public demands with the issuance of the Bali Governor's Circular Letter number 4 of 2023 on 31 May 2023. The circular regulates the obligations and restrictions (do's and don'ts) for foreign tourists while in Bali. The results of elite debates and discussions resulted in an elite consensus to continue to facilitate the VoA for Russian tourists. The elite consensus strengthened with the decreasing intensity of public attention and sentiment towards the development of the case (Fig. 5).

The central government's position is to maintain the status quo on the proposal. The central government certainly does not want to cause controversy and needs to comprehensively examine the current policy and available improvement options. The tendency for elite consensus can be examined from the Indonesian political system as a determinant factor. As a unitary state, Indonesia has high internal polarity. Foreign policy decisions are centralised in Jakarta. The parliament was dominated by a coalition of political parties supporting the executive so that the supervisory function of the parliament regarding visa policies did not run effectively. Indonesia's decision-making system was known for *musyawarah mufakat* (consensus) as preferably method (DPR RI, n.d.), which is a win-win solution that prevented the executive and legislative branches from electoral punishment due to policies that are not in line with public demands. Even in a statement by the Chairman of MPR RI Bambang Soesatyo stated that not all Russian tourists who came to Bali were problematic. Russia was one of the most important partners for Indonesia (MPR





RI, 2023). The statement emphasised that Indonesia's priority was to establish good relations with Russia regardless of public sentiment.

c. *International Gains in Indonesia-Russia Relations*

The tendency to maintain VoA for Russian tourists was not only caused by internal factors such as low salience issues and elite consensus. External considerations such as the economic potential of tourism were also quite influential. Bali had long been developed as a leading destination with infrastructure and tourism services that were superior to other tourist destinations. This condition makes Bali very dependent on tourism compared to other sectors. The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2022 paralysed tourism in Bali. International borders were closed and human mobility was restricted in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Communities that depended on tourism lost their income due to the mobility restrictions in place.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Indonesia provided Visa Exemption for 169 countries and political entities. After the pandemic, the latest policy was replace the Visa Exemption policy with VoA. The provision of VoA as part of the National Economic Recovery strategy following the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2023 the number of Russian tourists visiting Bali reached 144,104 people. Placing Russia at number eleven for overall tourists visiting Bali. The interview with Ngurah Rai Immigration officer also revealed similar considerations of economic acceleration by opening the border through VoA. The consideration of maintaining VoA was that the calculation of violations was smaller than the economic contribution provided. Of the 223

immigration administrative actions given to foreign nationals, the percentage was only 0.0005% of the 5.6 million foreign tourists entering Bali. The financial benefits generated were far greater than the losses by problematic tourists (Ngurah Rai Immigration, *personal communication*, May 22, 2024).

The tourism sector was one of the contributors to Indonesia's GDP. In 2023 the tourism sector contributed 3.9% to Indonesia's GDP with a foreign exchange value of USD 14 billion at an exchange rate of IDR 15,600. (Arini, 2024). However, the Secretariat General of the DPR RI considers that the tourism sector still has many shortcomings, especially in achieving performance targets. Tourism did contribute to the national economy, but this achievement was still far below the National Strategic Priority 2020-2024 target, while the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index in 2021 was ranked 32nd, which did not meet to the target ranking of number 29th (Setjen DPR RI, 2023).

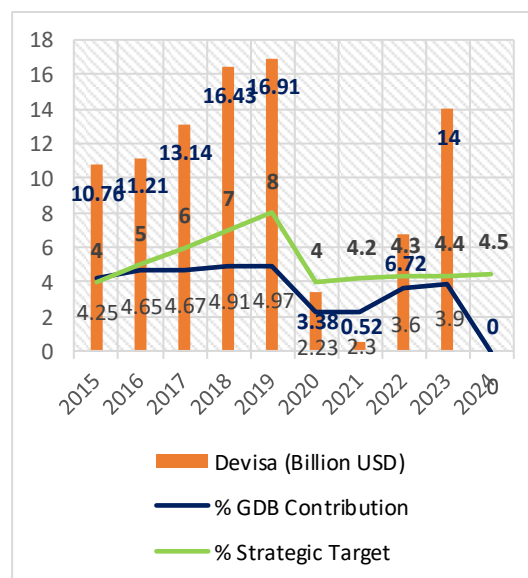


Fig. 6. Tourism Devisa, GDP Contribution, and National Strategic Target





**Source:** reprocessed from The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, (2024).

The National Strategic Priority 2015-2019 targets an increase in contribution to GDP of 1% per year, but in reality this was very difficult to achieve. In Fig. 6, the trend of percentage from 2015 to 2019 gradually increased from 4.25% to 4.97% with a foreign exchange value of USD 16.91 billion but dropped drastically in 2020 to 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Considering the realisation of the contribution in GDP during the previous period which was a target that was difficult to achieve (1% per year), the National Strategic Priority 2020-2024 provided a more realistic target with the hope of an increase in contribution of 0.1% per year. However, this target was also difficult to achieve because the realisation of contributions were far below the National Strategic Priority 2020-2024 target, especially the economic slowdown during and after Covid-19. Based on these considerations and plans, rather than eliminating or reducing the contribution of the tourism sector, the government tends to maintain this growth even though the contribution value is below the performance target.

On the other hand, Indonesia has aspirations to expand its economy to non-traditional markets, namely the Eurasian Economic Area (EAEU). At the 33rd ASEAN Summit in Singapore in 2018 President Joko Widodo conveyed to President Putin Indonesia's intention to increase trade with the EAEU. With Russia's support, Indonesia hopes to capitalize the potential of new non-traditional markets in the Eurasian Zone, which consists of Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan (Manurung, 2018). Indonesia's leading export commodities to the

Eurasian Zone in 2023 consist of copra, palm oil, electrical machinery and equipment, and television sets. Meanwhile, Indonesia's import products from the Eurasian Zone are: fertilisers, coal, wheat, and non-alloy steel semi-finished products (Sayekti 2024). Although the ex-Soviet states were independent of their governments, Moscow always tried to secure its sphere of influence over them and prevent them from outside influence (Götz, 2022). Therefore, to gain access to the Eurasian Zone, Indonesia must gain Russia's support in the Eurasian region, which is Russia's post-Soviet zone of influence. Indonesia, a regional power in the Asia Pacific, especially the ASEAN, has geographical advantages for Russia in international trade routes (Manurung, 2016, 2018).

In the international system, Russia is still seen as a great power that is the legitimate heir to the Soviet Union. International sanctions after the 2014 annexation of Crimea have caused Russia to experience an economic slowdown, so it is looking for alternative solutions to new trading partners. Russia's pivot to Asia were also due to economic factors showing the dynamics of rapid geopolitical competition in the East. Russia's pivot to Asia is observing the competition between China and the United States. Russia seeks to be present as a balancing power in the Asia-Pacific (Korolev, 2016; Nguyen, 2023; Rangsimaporn, 2009). The key to Russia's presence in the Asia Pacific is its good relations with Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Viet Nam.

The external polarity shows the expectations of the political elite in maintaining good relations with Russia. The revocation of the VoA that has been given to Russian tourists will put Indonesia in a difficult



position. Double losses are avoided in the implementation of foreign policy so that policy preferences are directed towards the fulfilment of long-term goals rather than episodic fluctuations from negative sentiments of public opinion. The first loss is economic in the form of losses in foreign exchange contribution from tourism, while the second loss is political in the form of a disruption in Indonesia-Russia bilateral relations. So far, Russia is an alternative strategic partner within Indonesia's policy orbit. Another consideration is that the revocation of visas for Russian tourists will cause friction in relations between the two countries. On the other hand, Indonesia would have to change all existing visa granting regulations, as visa granting regulations in Indonesia are given inclusively and not exclusively per country.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This case provides a context for understanding when public opinion input is ignored in foreign policy. Firstly, because it is a non-crisis case, it has low salience than a crisis case. In the analysis above, it can be seen that the structure of public opinion is episodic and emotional. The intensity of public attention declines rapidly even before elite consensus occurs. Public sentiment towards an issue can occur due to spontaneity and lack of information about the issue, thus the government tends to ignore the sentiment. Furthermore, spontaneous public opinion is episodic and does not last long. Noisy social media doesn't reflect actual the general attitudes, confirmed by interviews.

Second, the framing of the media coverage did not generate public opinion sustainably. The trend of media coverage congruent with public opinion causes both

were only became a policy context and did not a driving force for policy change. Even the elite debate showed that higher internal polarity and asymmetrical elite discussion resulted consensus.

The third is the rationalisation of neglect due to the stakes of bilateral relations. External polarities are difficult to understand by a spontaneously acting public. The government has expectations in establishing and maintaining bilateral relations. Observing the dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region, Indonesia seeks to maintain good relations with all countries, especially great powers such as Russia. Rational consideration to Indonesia is not to act unilaterally, which has the potential to cause friction with Russia. So that with this neglect, domestic interests, namely economic growth and international interests in maintaining good relations with all countries can be achieved. In the interviews, there were discrepancies between public opinion on X/Twitter and field searches. This discrepancy can be an opportunity for further study of actual public opinion and public opinion on social media.

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Zaouaq, K. Climate Change, Conflicts and Forced Migration in the Middle East (2006-2022)

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#### Abstract

*In the Middle East region, the repercussions of climate change on migration and conflicts are increasingly perceived as a security issue as long as it's so far among the world's most impacted regions by water scarcity, rising temperatures, desertification, aridity, and food insecurity. Based on a literature review of articles published from 2006 to 2022, this research aims to understand and to examine the relationship between climate change, conflicts and forced migration in the Middle East. The connection from climate change to conflicts and forced migration, which we analyze in this paper, is debated in regard to some well-known causal models, which suppose that climate change results in resources scarcity, which in turn leads to forced migration as well as conflicts. Among these models are the pull and push theory of migration, alongside with the Homer-Dixon's scarcity theory. The research findings show that climate change increases people's vulnerability in the Middle East and drive them*

*to migration which represents then an adaptation strategy. This review finds also that the literature has not established a strong connection between climate change and conflicts, neither between these two drivers and forced migration. However, there's a consensus among literature that the links between climate change, conflicts and forced migration in the Middle East region should not be omitted or neglected.*

**Keywords:** climate change; conflicts; forced migration; adaptation; Middle East.

## I. Introduction

Since the dawn of civilization, the Middle East<sup>1</sup>, particularly the 'fertile crescent' region<sup>2</sup>, has relied heavily on agriculture, which remains a major source of employment.

However, in recent decades, countries in this region have faced severe climate change impacts, notably droughts and water scarcity. These impacts are expected to intensify, raising doubts towards the capacity of local agriculture to support the population, which is projected to double by 2070 (Waha, 2017). As a result, migration has become an alternative for those forced to move due to climate change impacts, such as extreme weather events or conflicts arising from these changes<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Middle East is, generally speaking, the region from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf, usually encompassing Egypt, Sudan, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain.

<sup>2</sup> Called for its rich soils, the Fertile Crescent area is situated in the Middle East. Due to its "abundant access to water, the earliest civilizations were established in the Fertile Crescent, including the

Sumerians". Now, this region includes southern Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, and parts of Turkey and Iran. See *Fertile crescent*. (n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> The definition of forced migration is in line with the nexus "climate change, forced migration and conflict" as it refers to the involuntary movements of people that are caused by conflicts, along with climate and environmental issues. The European Migration Network (EMN) defined, in this regard, forced migration as "a migratory movement in





In the Middle East, the consequences of climate change on migration flows differ from one country to another according to the levels of income and the levels of dependency on agriculture. Gulf Cooperation Council members (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman) are less impacted by these impacts due to their high-income levels and their economic dependency on oil production rather than agricultural production. Conversely, the other countries such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, which represent low- and middle-income countries and whose agriculture is mostly rainfed are more vulnerable to climate change impacts. Consequently, they are at high risk of environmentally related conflicts and migratory displacements.

The Middle East suffers from severe climate effects, especially drought, water scarcity, limited rainfall, and desertification. Due to the combination of all these factors, this region is considered “the most water-stressed area in the world” and is going to become a climate change hotspot with “the region warming up almost twice as fast compared to the global average” (Borghesi & Ticci, 2019, p. 290; Zittis, 2022, p.10). Intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) reports pointed out that global warming will lead to more drought and is going to affect the agriculture of the Middle East countries, which is rainfed agriculture (Gleditsch, 2021). In this region, climate change is likely to diminish water discharge by “an additional 15-

45% by the end of the century” (Waha et al., 2017).

Extreme climate change events were also observed in Iran which is vulnerable to floods and drought. In this country, the lack of precipitations and droughts caused the drying of rivers and lakes, such as Lake Hamun and Lake Urmia which have lost over 90 percent of their amount of water in the last decades (Weiss, 2018). In addition, Iran was devastated between March and April 2019 by the worst climate disaster of the past decade, notably extreme floods, which caused the destruction of thousands of houses and damages amounted to \$4.7 billion (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021).

Syria experienced so far severe waves of drought. In 2006, the drought ruined agricultural lands and crops in eastern Syria, affecting “at least 85 percent deaths of livestock” (Waterbury, 2013), and “more than 50 percent reduction in barley and wheat production” (Erian; Katlan, and Babah, 2011). All this led to food insecurity, and more importations of wheat, rice, and other livestock.

Other countries, such as Yemen and Iraq, often faced devastating floods. For example, flooding hit Ninewa and Salah al Din governorates in Iraq in November 2018, whereas the Marib Governorate in Yemen was affected on 31 July 2020 by a widespread flood which caused the displacement of thousands

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which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes (e.g. movements of refugees and internally displaced persons as well

as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine or development projects)” *Fertile crescent*. (n.d.).





of people and serious damages (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021).

From Syria to Iraq and from Yemen to Iran, the same climate disasters occurred, notably floods, earthquakes, desertification, water scarcity and droughts. But floods and droughts remain the common worst issues that affect the Middle East countries, which worsened conflicts and engendered massive displacements especially internal ones from rural to urban areas.

Studies that examine climate change-induced migration and conflicts, differ widely in the way they point out this relationship. While most literature reviews agree that the Middle East is one of the most affected areas by climate change impacts, notably water scarcity and drought (Borghesi and Ticci, 2019 ; Waha et al., 2017 ; Weiss, 2018 ; Waterbury, 2013), many other studies are skeptical about the contribution of climate change to conflicts and political instability in this region, but don't neglect the potential that climate change has in leading to increased risk of conflicts (Scheffran, 2020; Smith, and Krampe, 2019 ; Kelley, 2015 ; Kerksenbrock, 2019).

Finally, studies don't differ regarding the impacts of climate change on migration, as they consider that the displacements that occur in the region are merely induced by severe climate conditions (Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, 2015 ; Wennersten, and Robbins, 2017 ; Balsari & Dresser & Leaning, 2020 ; Jäger, and al., 2009). However, whether or not climate change induced migration leads to conflicts, remains an important area for future researches,

inasmuch as the existing literature refer to social, political and intergroup acts of violence or conflicts, to which climate induced migration contribute indirectly or is likely to contribute (Ergin, 2017 ; Sanderson, Kayden, and Leis, 2016 ; Gleick, 2014 ; Erdoğan, and Cantürk, 2022).

## II. Methodology

This article uses a qualitative approach, or results framed in the existing literature that addresses climate-conflict-migration nexus. It considers secondary data sources that devotes particular attention to theoretical and empirical links between climate change, conflicts, and migration. The basic assumption of this article represents a systematization of the pull and push theory which considers migration as the result of how push factors compel a person to migrate and how pull factors attract the migrant to a new place. In the context of climate change, push factors include famine drought, land degradation, water scarcity, while pull factors comprise political stability, better climate conditions and more professional opportunities.

The article also reflects the Homer-Dixon's scarcity theory, insofar as it emphasizes the impacts of climate change on resources scarcity, and therefore on migration and conflicts exacerbation. The main findings of this article turn around the fact that environmental, economic, and social impacts of climate change are leading to migration in the Middle East, as well as conflicts and risk of destabilization.



### III. Discussions

#### *a. Climate change as a catalyst of conflicts in the Middle East*

During the last decades, the Middle East has been often the theater of conflicts, including conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, as well as terrorist acts committed by al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and other terrorist actors.

Among these conflicts, many were affected by climate change which played an important role in exacerbating them and multiplying related security risks. Droughts, degradation of soil, extreme weather events, and the scarcity of water result in the loss of crops and livelihoods, which can mainly trigger conflicts (Waha et al., 2017 ; Feitelson, and Tubi, 2017).

However, the impact of climate change on conflicts varies and depends on whether the conflict questioned is international or non-international. In fact, climate change remains a stressor that contributes to conflict escalation in case of international conflicts, while it's a dominant factor concerning non-international conflicts.

In the Middle East, most of the conflicts that have erupted in recent decades are intra-state, except the case of the Nile dispute. Regarding that, it's worth noting that

Egypt whose water resources come in large part from the Nile was often on the verge of conflict with other Nile Basin countries, especially Ethiopia. The disproportion between water demand and supply makes this confrontation between these two countries more to occur<sup>4</sup>, especially given the fact that Egypt relies on the Nile River for 95% of its water consumption (Scheffran, 2020). Egyptian dependency on the Nile River water resources will continue to grow over the coming years with the increasing frequency of climate hazards.

Given the dominance of intra-state conflicts in the Middle East, our analysis focuses on these conflicts, including local or communal disputes. For instance, some researchers (Smith & Krampe, 2019) argue that droughts have increased political instability in Syria. Colin P. Kelley et al. stated that the 2007–2010 drought in Syria is partly responsible for the conflict in this country (Kelley, 2015).

The mismanagement of shared water resources around other transboundary water sources, namely the Euphrates, Tigris, and Jordan rivers increases political destabilization and the potential violence or conflicts in this region. The Jordan River Basin is already subject to intense conflicts concerning water access and supply due to the unfair share of water, as seen with Israel which depletes

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<sup>4</sup> Since the announcement of the Ethiopian plan to construct the "Grand Renaissance Dam" in 2011, Ethiopia was threatened once by the former Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi in 2013 and then warned in 2021 by the actual President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi.

Egyptian threats over dam construction projects in Ethiopia aren't recent. They were expressed decades before by the former Egyptian presidents Housni Mubarak and Anouar Sadate.



“more water per person than the Palestine population and holds veto rights over their water development” (Scheffran, 2020). Transboundary water resources are at the core of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, in which “both states have accused the other of monopolizing and mismanaging water sources” (Augsten; Gagné, and Su, 2022).

The Euphrates and Tigris rivers are also the scene of political disputes between riparian countries over water resources use. Syria which depends most on the Euphrates River and Iraq which relies mostly on the Tigris for its water supplies, expressed often their concerns about “Turkish control over their respective vital waterways” (Scheffran, 2020).

In all these cases, climate change could make “water sharing more complicated and disputes more difficult to resolve” (Kerssenbrock, 2019). The situation can be worsened by low capita income, knowledge, technology, and unequal distribution, which make the Middle East countries “more vulnerable compared to Europe and are less able to adapt and mitigate conflict” (Schilling, and al., 2020; Scheffran, 2020).

At the local scale, conflicts are most likely to occur because of climate change. Scarcity and water shortage are dominant factors in conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. Likewise, some cities in the Middle East, such as Cairo in Egypt are more vulnerable to climate change impacts, especially water scarcity, production losses,

and land degradation, added to population growth and urbanization. This is particularly relevant in the case of Egypt because the Nile is a vital source of water and food for the country. However, the Nile flow decreased significantly due to climate change and repeated droughts (De Guglielmo Weber, and al., 2023). All these factors can trigger competition between people and lead to violence and urban conflicts.

Floods, droughts, and storms which are worsened by climate change may intensify conflicts, as shown in a study that established a “correlation between temporal frequencies of armed conflicts and severe natural disasters in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)” (Kerssenbrock, 2019). This study set out “an approximate 50% probability that a conflict outbreak was preceded by a natural disaster, especially within three years” (Kerssenbrock, 2019).

#### *b. Linking climate change to migration-conflict nexus in the Middle East*

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, there were millions of people who migrated from Syria, Yemen, and Iraq to neighboring countries<sup>5</sup> and even Europe not only because of the conflicts that emerged in these areas but also due to climate severe conditions and water scarcity. These migratory flows lead to “the formation of refugee camps, causing tensions between bordering states, landowners, and migrants” (Ergin, 2017). Drought and desertification caused also mass

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<sup>5</sup> In October 2016, the number of Syrian refugees located in neighboring countries and registered by the UNHCR was estimated to be 2,733,655 in

Turkey, 1,033,513 in Lebanon, 656,400 in Jordan, 225,455 in Irak and 117,350 in Egypt (Doraï, 2018, p.114).



migration from rural to urban areas in these countries of the Middle East. Urbanization growth that derives from these internal migratory movements leads, in turn, to urban environmental degradation, stress on remaining resources, food price increases, unemployment, social tensions, and the increase of urban disaster risks, including floods, engendering “significant losses of livelihood while simultaneously increasing the risk of conflict” (Sanderson, Kayden, and Leis, 2016).

In 2015, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research stated in a report that:

“The agriculture in the Middle East and North Africa is severely affected by climate change showing the immense challenge of these regions about feeding its population, in the longer-term increased outmigration might be necessary as part of the solution.” (Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, 2015)

Wennersten and Robbins highlighted the links between climate change and forced displacements of people during the civil war in Syria by asserting that:

“Syria is driving the refugee crisis, and climate change has driven the refugee crisis; it is the clearest scientifically established link yet between climate change and refugees who are fleeing political unrest.” (Wennersten, and Robbins, 2017)

These findings are in line with most of the literature published on the climate change-conflict-migration nexus in Syria. They

suggested that the prolonged drought that occurred in the East and Northwest of Syria from 2006 to 2010 linked to climate change constrained pastoralists and farmers to “abandon their land, sell their animals, and trek to the cities in the western region of Syria” (Balsari & Dresser & Leaning, 2020). In 2010, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimated that drought has forced nearly “1.5 million people to leave their villages and move to the suburbs of Damascus and other cities like Aleppo and Daa’ra” (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 2010). This wave of mass migration added to the 1.5 million Iraqi refugees who moved to Syria during previous years fleeing war in Iraq, puts pressure on existing resources and exacerbates the socio-economic conditions of the population in Syria, which contributes to the transformation of the street protests that erupted in the aftermath of the Arab Spring into a civil or strife war (Gleick, 2014).

In Egypt, sea level rise affects the Nile Delta (Jäger, and al., 2009), which is the most productive region in the country, and some urban areas such as Alexandria will be rudely impacted by this phenomenon in the future, driving millions of people to migrate internally to more densely urban cities, such as Cairo, which could be a trigger of future conflicts among the population and between the population and the government.

Climate effects may also represent factors of forced migration and conflicts in Iran. As stated in a report published by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), an estimated a half million people were displaced in Iran because of the extreme



floods that the country experienced between March and April 2019 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021). Climate effects can result in instability and potential conflicts in Iran, as it was the case with the recent protests in Iran, triggered by “the country’s drought and water shortage, which has been ongoing since 2020” (Erdoğan, and Cantürk, 2022).

In addition, Iraq has been affected by droughts since 2007, with intense levels observed in 2015 and 2016, resulting in an increasing number of farmers who “have stopped working their land, livestock owners have sold their animals, and significant numbers of people have moved away in search of alternative sources of income” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021). The number of drought-related displacements was estimated to be more than “20,000 displacements in 2018 and 2019, with the governorates of Basra, Missan and Thi-Qar being the most affected” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021). These displacement flows are likely to make Iraq’s stability more vulnerable, with the probability of re-emergence of conflicts in some parts of the country, where terrorist groups were very active.

Among all extreme climate events that affected the Middle East, floods cause, in particular, the most climate displacements in this region. They’re responsible for “making displacement chronic, cyclical, and protracted in the region” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021), especially in countries that are often confronted to conflicts, such as Syria, Iraq and Yemen. For instance, in November 2018, “widespread flooding hit Ninewa and Salah al Din

governorates in Iraq, provoking the displacement of more than 35,000 people” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021). Likewise, flooding occurred in the Marib Governorate in Yemen on 31 July 2020 caused the displacement of thousands for a second or even third time (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021).

Reducing the risks of climate-related conflicts and migration requires adaptive and sustainable management measures, such as the deployment of modern irrigation technologies, the construction of new more dams, inter-basin water transfers, and desalination. Those actions are good examples of efficient policy measures. However, there’s a need for cooperative policies, institutional mechanisms, as well as inter-state and multilateral cooperation. Countries with better economic capabilities and resources like Saudi Arabia should make the most vulnerable countries of the region (such as Irak, Egypt and Syria) benefit from their technical capacity and financial assistance to mitigate climate impacts and their associated migration risks and conflicts. More important, there is indeed a need for an agreement between the riparian countries around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers about the allocation of transboundary water resources, water quality standards, responses for floods and droughts, and dispute settlement mechanisms.

#### **IV. Conclusion and Recommendation**

Even if it was outlined by the literature as the main driver of conflicts and forced migration, climate change is not the only factor. There are some other important factors



that caused conflicts in the middle east (such as the mismanagement of natural resources, lack of democracy, and political instability, etc). The same could be said about forced migration whose causes don't consist only of climate change and conflicts, but are also turning around poverty, inequalities, corruption, and lack of governance, etc.

According to some authors, the drought was not a direct trigger of Syria's civil war, but it was the government's failure to respond to drought impacts (Friedman, 2013). They pointed out the fact that "the Assad regime corrupted the agricultural sector in Syria and exploited the resource by over-extraction of groundwater" (Akther, and Mahbulul Alam, 2020), and that was the reason why the small farmers could not survive and were forced to migrate to urban areas for work when the drought occurred.

While climate change is not considered as the only driver of forced migration, there's no consensus on whether or not climate change contributes to conflict exacerbation. However, this link should not be omitted, nor dismissed.

In some countries of the Middle East such as Yemen, the lack of data does not help to determine clearly if climate change is a trigger of forced migration and conflicts. The interlinkage between climate change, forced migration and conflicts in the Middle East remains subject to different interpretations, assumptions, which are sometimes contradictory and other times convergent. However, this link should not be omitted, nor dismissed.

The research findings may serve as a base to explore suitable policies, measures and actions to be taken in the Middle East and North Africa area, in order to overcome climate-related migration and conflicts risks.

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### QRIS Cross-Border: Indonesia's Soft Power Diplomacy Instrument in Payment Digitalization in Southeast Asia

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#### Abstract

*The use of the Quick Response Code Indonesian Standard (QRIS) as a digital payment method has become widespread among the Indonesian population. This success can be attributed to the innovation and convenience offered by QRIS. Beyond Indonesia, QRIS can also be utilized as a digital payment method in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, and Brunei Darussalam through the QRIS Cross-Border initiative. This paper explores the trajectory of QRIS Cross-Border as a digital payment system applicable in most Southeast Asian countries despite similar payment systems already in use within these nations. From the perspective of soft power diplomacy, this paper argues that Indonesia has effectively influenced the digital payment policy preferences of Southeast Asian countries by positioning QRIS Cross-Border as a tool of soft power. By leveraging the competitive advantages of QRIS Cross-Border, Indonesia has successfully attracted these nations to adopt it as their digital payment system.*

*Nevertheless, the implementation of QRIS Cross-Border has not yet fully reached all Southeast Asian countries.*

**Keywords:** QRIS, QRIS Cross-Border, soft power, soft power diplomacy, Southeast Asia

#### I. Introduction

Since it was introduced to the public and became an effective legal digital payment method in 2020, QRIS immediately became a catalyst for increasing digital transactions in Indonesia. In 2022, there was an increase in digital transactions of 117.59%, reaching 130.01% in 2023 (Rahadi et al., 2023). In addition, QRIS has dramatically influenced the growth of MSMEs in Indonesia. In their research, Permana and Aryowiloto (2024) stated that implementing QRIS as a digital payment method successfully increased MSME transactions in Bali Province, ultimately improving the welfare of MSMEs. QRIS as a digital payment method must be recognized as positively impacting domestic economic growth. Reflecting on the success of the QRIS application domestically, the Indonesian government and Bank Indonesia planned to expand QRIS abroad so that both Indonesian tourists and people from other countries could use it. As part of internationalization, QRIS changed its name to QRIS Cross-Border to be introduced in foreign markets (Rachmad & Raharjo, 2023). Southeast Asia is the target market for QRIS Cross-Border, with Thailand as the first target country. Furthermore, QRIS Cross-Border expanded to other countries, namely Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, and Brunei Darussalam. This means that only two countries, Cambodia and Myanmar, have yet been unable to use QRIS Cross-Border.



Following the implementation of QRIS Cross-Border in the three countries, public enthusiasm, both Indonesian citizens going abroad and foreign nationals visiting Indonesia, has slowly increased. Bank Indonesia (BI) noted that the number of transactions by Indonesian tourists using QRIS Cross-Border in Thailand until early 2023 had reached 14,555, equivalent to IDR 8.54 billion (ASEAN2023.id, 2023). Meanwhile, as reported, Thai tourists who used QRIS Cross-Border in Indonesia reached 492 transactions, comparable to IDR 114 million (kumparan.com, 2023). This indicates that QRIS Cross-Border is beginning to play an essential role in the trade transactions in the Southeast Asia Region. In addition, using QRIS Cross-Border can automatically adjust to each country's currency, which can impact reducing dependence on the US Dollar. From a regional perspective, in the view of Ong et al. (2023), the use of QRIS Cross-Border possibly strengthens the region's digital economy, which is also listed in the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025 with a primary orientation on the digital economy and digital society (ASEAN, 2021). Fundamentally, the implementation of QRIS Cross-Border cannot be separated from Indonesia's success in reaching agreements through negotiation and diplomacy with ASEAN countries.

QRIS as a digital payment method is relatively new, which is in line with research on QRIS Cross-Border that has not been widely conducted. Several studies on QRIS Cross-Border can be seen in Rachmad and Raharjo (2023), Maharani (2023), and Aisyarani (2023). Those three studies have different focuses. QRIS Cross-Border becomes a 'game changer' because it can increase efficiency and make

cross-border payments more inclusive (Rachmad & Raharjo, 2023). Meanwhile, in her research, Maharani (2023) focuses more on international legal provisions regarding cooperation between Indonesia and Thailand in implementing QRIS Cross-Border in Thailand. Finally, Aisyarani (2023) discusses consumer protection in transactions using QRIS Cross-Border in her study. Meanwhile, if the scope of the literature is expanded only to discuss QRIS or even QR code-based payment methods, several studies can be used as references for this research. For example, Yulius et al. (2023) researched the QR code-based payment ecosystem in ASEAN, Rafferty et al. (2022) researched how QRIS becomes a non-cash payment solution from the seller's perspective, and Gotami and Umanto (2023) researched QRIS as a public sector innovation offered by BI.

Based on various previous studies on QRIS and QRIS Cross-Border, this study attempts to provide additional contributions by offering an analysis from a diplomatic perspective so that QRIS Cross-Border is accepted and applied in most Southeast Asian countries. By using the concept of soft power diplomacy, this study places QRIS Cross-Border in a unique position, not only as a goal but also as a primary instrument. As a goal, QRIS Cross-Border is the endpoint that Indonesia wants to achieve in the sense that QRIS applies across national borders. Meanwhile, as the primary instrument, QRIS Cross-Border is a tool in Indonesia's soft power diplomacy activities. Thus, the main argument in this study is regarding the optimization of QRIS Cross-Border as a soft power that has excellent leverage over Indonesia's bargaining position regarding payment digitalization so that it can



be accepted in most Southeast Asian countries for implementation.

## II. Soft Power Diplomacy

Goldsmith et al. (2021) stated that soft power diplomacy refers to diplomatic activities or activities carried out using soft power as the main instrument. Therefore, to understand soft power diplomacy holistically, it is necessary first to understand what soft power means.

Joseph Nye introduced the concept of soft power at the end of the Cold War. In his writing, Nye (2008) stated that the end of the feud between the United States and the Soviet Union also resulted in a shift in the pattern of the use of state power in achieving its national interests. Countries, including great powers, no longer saw the elements of hard power, including military power and other coercive devices, as efficient instruments for achieving international superiority. Instead, countries emphasized soft power, including economic, cultural, educational, technological, and socio-economic capabilities to attain their international goals. The trend of using state power in the global realm tends to be less transferable, less coercive, and less tangible. In soft power, countries are assumed to increasingly set aside military power and switch to using elements of culture, economy, and ideology in influencing other countries. Nisbett (2016) added that substantially soft power is a form of renewal, refreshment, and replication of previously existing power structures.

In simple terms, soft power is a resource owned by a country and can attract interest from other countries without involving coercive elements (Saaida, 2023). To attract interest from different countries, Nye (2016) argues that a country will try to create advantages in certain areas so that it can freely dictate the behaviors and policies of other countries. This is because soft power is more than just an act of persuasion and influence; it is also a source and part of efforts to influence other parties.

Solomon (2014) said that a country can be prosperous in projecting soft power if it can make other countries want or do what it wants. By projecting soft power, the country can control the policies of different countries. There are four crucial soft power resources: culture, values, policies, and personality (Ohnesorge, 2020). The more a country can cultivate its attractiveness, the more it can attract interest and have a position that can ultimately influence the preferences of other countries. In addition to attractiveness, affection is a key variable in soft power. By utilizing intangible elements of power, a country seeks to establish an emotional bond with another country's public. Forming this kind of emotional attachment becomes the foundation for a country to expand its political influence significantly in the international realm (Solomon, 2014).

The use of soft power by countries as a diplomatic and foreign policy strategy is commonplace. At some point, even soft power is seen as a manipulative tool, as the nature of soft power itself is abstract (Fedorova & Khlyzova, 2022). Burnay et al. (2014) stated that in its implementation, soft power





diplomacy involves at least five main components, including: (1) strengthening the soft power of diplomatic actors; (2) exchange based on mutual agreement; (3) exchange of meaning, learning, and self-reflection; (4) accommodating the involvement of non-state actors; and (5) considering the low politics aspect.

Jayanti (2019) stated that soft power diplomacy is a subtle way to build a good image. This is consistent with the argument that soft power diplomacy occurs when a country appears attractive in the global political space by consistently making positive contributions. However, the concept of soft power diplomacy has been interpreted further, namely, not only to achieve national interests but also to help other countries deal with trouble due to economic or political problems both domestically and abroad (Srivastava, 2013).

### **III. QRIS Cross-Border as Indonesia's Soft Power**

Based on the theoretical description in the previous section, this section presents the realization of QRIS Cross-Border as an Indonesian soft power. Referring to several references regarding soft power above, QRIS Cross-Border can be categorized as soft power using the following description.

First, QRIS Cross-Border as a digital payment system is not new because digital payment systems in other forms have existed. For example, online credit or debit cards, digital wallets, VISA and Mastercard are global payment networks, mobile banking, internet

banking, virtual accounts, point-of-sale terminals, and ATMs. Especially in the Southeast Asia region, Indonesia's bargaining position is quite strategic. Thus, Indonesia's presence with QRIS Cross-Border is a renewal, refreshment, and replication of Indonesia's soft power in the Southeast Asia region. QRIS Cross-Border might further strengthen Indonesia's bargaining position against other countries.

Secondly, although the digital payment system is not entirely new, QRIS is still considered a banking, finance, and transaction innovation breakthrough. It offers a convenient transaction that has never happened before, including real-time transaction speed, availability and integration, security, minimal transaction costs, flexibility, and extra integration. It makes sense that the expansion of QRIS implementation to various Southeast Asian countries is well received. QRIS Cross-Border can be Indonesia's innovative financial tool, attracting interest from Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and other Southeast Asian countries. This positions QRIS Cross-Border as a soft power.

Thirdly, QRIS Cross-Border as a soft power can also be observed from its various advantages. Compared to other digital payment systems owned by other countries, such as Thailand's Thai QR, Malaysia's DuitNow QR, and Singapore's SGQR, QRIS Cross-Border has a competitive advantage regarding the features offered. Bank Indonesia, which carries the theme 'SUPERIOR' to market QRIS, prioritizes the following values: (1) Universal, can be used by all levels of society, both local and international, with a variety of transaction amounts; (2) Easy, transactions can be carried





out very quickly and safely without going through intermediaries, thus minimizing transaction costs; (3) Profitable, offers efficiency through its use which can reach various payment channels with just one QR code; and (4) Direct, transactions take place quickly and their status can be confirmed immediately. The impact, which also emphasizes the status of QRIS Cross-Border as a soft power, is that other Southeast Asian countries are interested and keen to be able to implement QRIS Cross-Border in their countries.

Fourth, the increasing number of QRIS users illustrates Indonesia's capability to promote the application of QRIS both domestically and internationally. According to the Indonesian Information Portal, in the first semester of 2024, the nominal QRIS transactions grew by 226.54% annually, with the number of users reaching 50.5 million and the number of merchants reaching 32.71 million. Meanwhile, Thailand, which is the first market for QRIS Cross-Border, recorded inbound transactions (use of QRIS Cross-Border by Thai tourists in Indonesia) increasing by 13% monthly and 9% in outbound transactions (use of QRIS Cross-Border by Indonesian tourists in Thailand) (Indonesia.go.id, 2024). The impact is that QRIS Cross-Border has succeeded in attracting interest and influencing the preferences of other countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, and Brunei Darussalam to implement QRIS Cross-Border.

Finally, as a soft power, QRIS Cross-Border, with various convenience features offered, makes its users abroad, both Indonesian citizens and citizens of other

countries, feel comfortable so that an emotional bond or affection is formed. This affection is a crucial aspect that influences the volume of QRIS Cross-Border usage in various countries and strengthens its position as Indonesia's soft power in the context of economy, business, trade, and finance.

#### *a. Competitive value of QRIS Cross-Border*

As an innovation welcomed positively by many parties, QRIS is a technological breakthrough in the form of a QR code that facilitates easy economic transactions between sellers of goods and services and their consumers. In addition, unlike other technological products, QRIS is the result of technological innovation developed directly on the initiative of Bank Indonesia (BI) as the central financial institution in Indonesia, together with the Indonesian Payment System Association (ASPI) (QRIS, 2024). The initial idea for developing QRIS emerged often with the boom in digital transactions in Indonesia entering the mid-2010s. The many digital payment platforms that offered transaction models using their respective QR codes at that time complicated the transaction process. Consumers had to download many applications to make transactions, precisely according to the digital payment platform owned by the seller. The complexity of the situation then urged the government and the central bank to develop QRIS technology that was able to integrate payment systems so that sellers and buyers ultimately no longer needed to download many digital payment platforms to be able to make buying and selling transactions. Integrating the payment system through QRIS is expected to produce a more efficient transaction model that automatically



triggers national economic and business growth.

Since 2020, the Indonesian government has required all payment service providers, both banks and non-banks, to provide the QRIS payment feature with the lowest transaction amount of 1-1000 rupiah (QRIS, 2024). Bank Indonesia claims that QRIS technology is superior to other QR code-based digital transaction platforms. The four superior aspects include: (1) QRIS can accept payments from all existing bank and non-bank payment applications; (2) Integration of the payment system on QRIS simplifies the transaction process; (3) Ease of transactions through QRIS will increase profits for business actors; (4) QRIS payments are processed immediately so that sellers and buyers do not have to wait. The presence of QRIS, with all the easy transactions offered, clearly provides instant benefits from both the seller's and buyer's perspectives. From the buyer's perspective, purchasing can now be done quickly, safely, and conveniently. Meanwhile, from the seller or business actor's perspective, QRIS can potentially increase sales revenue while helping to manage revenue.

The invention of QRIS has significantly revolutionized digital transactions while also triggering the growth of national economic and business activities. In recent years, the Indonesian government has been aggressively trying to expand the integration of digital payment systems by promoting QRIS, especially in Southeast Asian countries. Implementing QRIS in the regional scope will not only aim to make it easier for Indonesian people to make purchase transactions in other ASEAN countries. However, this is expected to

bring more significant benefits by increasing cross-border economic and business activity growth between Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries. In addition, the implementation of QRIS also aims to promote the use of local currencies of ASEAN countries, where the QRIS system will directly convert currency rates in the cross-border transaction process.

Indonesia's vision of integrating digital payments in the ASEAN region through QRIS Cross-Border is strengthened by the cooperation of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines regarding cross-border payments based on QR codes and e-wallets in early 2023. The agreement was then followed by cooperation between Bank Indonesia and the central bank authorities of Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand in realizing more efficient, transparent, and inclusive cross-border payments. This series of collaborations is the foundation for implementing and integrating QRIS Cross-Border into the QR code-based digital payment system in ASEAN countries (ASEAN, 2023). From 2022 until now, the QRIS payment system can be used in Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia. Indonesian people who shop in these three countries can make payments by direct conversion via QRIS on their respective payment applications. Likewise, citizens of Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand can make direct transactions in Indonesia by scanning the QRIS code using various digital payment applications.



#### IV. QRIS Cross-Border in the context of digitalization of payment in Southeast Asia

##### *a. The implementation of QRIS Cross-Border in Thailand*

The expansion of QRIS implementation in ASEAN was first carried out in Thailand. The Indonesian government views the increase in the number of Indonesians visiting Thailand as tourists and workers in recent years to be facilitated with an easy and efficient digital transaction mode. Likewise, from the Thai government's perspective, an integrated digital transaction mode is expected to optimize economic income from many Indonesians visiting Thailand. Based on mutual benefit, the two countries, through Bank Indonesia and Bank of Thailand, agreed to establish cooperation on integrating payment systems using QR Codes by the end of 2021. This cooperation was also built by involving ASPI, Bank Appointed Cross currency dealers, switching institutions and payment service providers in both countries. The two parties then carried out standardization between QRIS as the Indonesian payment QR Code and Thai QR Payment (Yogatama, 2021). With the integration of the payment system, sellers and buyers from both countries can conduct digital transactions using the QR system without conventionally converting currencies. The implementation of the QR Code system integration began with a trial phase from the end of 2021 to the beginning of 2022 before being fully implemented in August 2022.

The integration of the QRIS-based digital payment system with Thai QR Payment

is claimed to bring significant benefits to the growth of economic and business activities between Indonesia and Thailand. The integrated QR code will facilitate the buying and selling process between the two countries. Indonesian people visiting Thailand no longer need to exchange conventional money. Purchase transactions can be made simply by opening QRIS on each of the online banking and e-wallet applications they have and then scanning the available Thai QR codes. The application then automatically converts the price in rupiah to Bhat according to the applicable exchange rate in real time, and the transaction is successful. This also applies vice versa, where Thai people who come to Indonesia can make transactions simply by scanning the QRIS code provided by the seller (Bank Indonesia, 2024). From the seller's point of view, the integrated digital payment system through QRIS will increase product marketing, which also has the potential to generate greater profits. Implementing cross-border QRIS will also make it easier for business actors in Indonesia and Thailand to manage income and financial bookkeeping and minimize fraudulent cross-border transactions (QRIS, 2024).

Since the trial period until the end of 2022, Bank Indonesia data recorded that the number of Indonesian transactions in Thailand using QRIS had reached a quantity of 14.55 thousand times with a total transaction value of around 8.5 billion Rupiah. Most transactions were carried out using online banking applications provided by Bank BCA, Bank CIMB, Bank Mega, Bank Sinarmas, Permatatabank, and Dana. Meanwhile, it was recorded that the number of Thai people who transacted in Indonesia using QRIS simultaneously was only



six thousand, with a transaction quantity of 492 times and a total transaction value of around 114 million Rupiah. The minimal transactions of Thai people in Indonesia using QR codes can be caused by two factors: the number of Thai people visiting Indonesia is still limited. Second, it is possible that Thai people visiting Indonesia still do not know much information about QRIS and the integration of QR Code payments between the two countries (Katadata, 2023). However, through the government's intensive promotion, Indonesia and Bank Indonesia are optimistic that QRIS will be increasingly known and used in Thailand and other partner countries in the ASEAN region. This optimism is validated by the increasing trend of transactions using QRIS across borders between Thailand and Indonesia by 1% per month until 2024. This data applies to Indonesian tourists who transact in Thailand and Thai tourists who purchase in Indonesia (Hutauruk, 2022).

Based on the potential benefits of QR Code-based digital transactions between Indonesia and Thailand, the Indonesian government is committed to increasing the use of QRIS across borders. Strategic steps are needed to foster an understanding of the value, benefits, and advantages of cross-border QRIS transactions among the Indonesian and Thai public. According to the official website of Bank Indonesia (2024), the government can pursue at least five main strategies, including promotion, collaboration, inclusion, evaluation, and synergy. Promotion refers to efforts made by the government and Indonesia by disseminating information about cross-border QRIS to the broader public using social media and influencers in Indonesia, Thailand, and other ASEAN countries. In this

case, the collaboration aspect concerns strengthening cooperation in the economic and financial sectors involving government, banking, and business actors in Indonesia and Thailand, explicitly aiming to expand the implementation of QR Code-based digital transactions between the two countries. Third, the principle of inclusivity prioritizes openness to the involvement of all public components from both countries so that the government and central bank, as the main parties responsible, can continue to improve the quality and quantity of cross-border QRIS use. The ambition to increase the implementation of QRIS also requires awareness and evaluation of the shortcomings and weaknesses that must receive attention and improvement. Furthermore, the last principle is synergy, which refers to creating harmony between the desires and aspirations of the Indonesian and Thai public, with the government and financial service provider authorities as the parties responsible for developing the cross-border QRIS system.

#### *b. QRIS Cross-Border implementation in Malaysia*

After being successfully implemented in Thailand, the expansion of QRIS payment interconnection continued in Malaysia. The initiative to integrate the payment system was realized in early 2022 when Bank Indonesia succeeded in expanding cooperation in implementing QRIS across borders with Bank Negara Malaysia (BMN). The realization of this payment system interconnection also involved stakeholders consisting of business actors, payment associations, and banking elements from both parties (QRIS, 2024). Through this agreement, the two countries integrated the



QR Code-based payment system between QRIS, which applies in Indonesia, and DuitNow, the QR payment standard that applies nationally in Malaysia. So Indonesian people who make purchases in Malaysia can easily make payments by directly scanning the DuitNow QR Code provided by the sellers. The realization of integrating payment systems between the two countries through QRIS is expected to maximize economic and business activities further, considering that people no longer need to convert Rupiah and Ringgit currencies conventionally before making purchase and sale transactions.

The integration of QRIS into the Malaysian QR Code payment system was carried out in two stages. The trial phase was carried out from early 2022 to early 2023, during which many Indonesians used QRIS across borders to make transactions in Malaysia and vice versa (Jaringan Prima, 2023). Following the great enthusiasm in the trial phase, Bank Indonesia and Bank Negara Malaysia inaugurated the interconnection of QRIS payments with the Malaysian QR Code in May 2023. At this stage, the digital payment system has been fully integrated with the involvement of more financial and banking institutions, both from Indonesia and Malaysia. It is noted that the financial institutions that participated in this project included all state-owned banks from Indonesia and Malaysia. To realize QR-based digital payment integration between the two states, some large private banks are also involved, such as Bank Mega, Permatapbank, Bank Mega, Hong Kong Leong Bank, CIMB Bank Berhad, and many other private financial institutions from both sides. Along with high enthusiasm from the public and private sectors, BI and

BNM are optimistic that integrating QR-based payments will increase transaction volume and promote significant economic growth for Indonesia and Malaysia (Bank Indonesia Communication Department, 2023).

Since its implementation during the trial period and after the inauguration, Bank Indonesia claims that Indonesia-Malaysia transactions using QRIS have continued to increase. In January 2024, Bank Indonesia revealed that there had been an increase in Indonesia-Malaysia transactions using QRIS of up to 10% compared to the previous year. More detail, it was stated that the inbound volume of transactions made by Malaysians in Indonesia using QRIS was around 73.3 thousand transactions with a nominal value of 20 billion Rupiah. The large outbound volume, or transactions by Indonesians using QRIS in Malaysia, also increased by 11.5 thousand times with a transaction value of 3 billion Rupiah (Kahfi, 2024). This number is still minimal, considering the large number of Indonesians who travel and work in Malaysia. This encouraged the government and Bank Indonesia to aggressively promote information on the ease of QRIS transactions among Indonesians in Malaysia. As a result, entering mid-2024, there was an increasing trend in cross-border QRIS usage between Indonesia and Malaysia, reaching 18% per month until September 2024. Referring to the significance of the intensity of population movement between the two countries, the volume of QRIS transactions can be maximized again. Therefore, the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia are trying to increase public understanding of each other about the great value of the benefits of transacting using QRIS. In addition, what is no less critical is





encouraging business actors in Indonesia and Malaysia to provide digital transaction options with QRIS for their customers (Tradingview, 2024).

*c. Expansion of QRIS-Cross Border to Singapore*

Soon after Thailand and Malaysia, the implementation of QRIS Cross-Border expanded to Singapore through cooperation between BI and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS). Both parties agreed that implementing QRIS Cross-Border in Singapore is part of a larger cooperation framework for promoting digital economic integration, financial ecosystems, and economic connectivity between the two countries. The position of QRIS Cross-Border was initially intended to facilitate micro and small-scale retail transactions between the two countries. This is inseparable from the increasing tourist data from both countries after the pandemic. In the first half of 2023, no less than 600,000 Singaporean tourists visited Indonesia, and vice versa, 1.1 million Indonesian tourists visited Singapore (mas.gov.sg, 2023).

Along with its development, as reported by The Paypers (2023), QRIS Cross-Border applicable in Singapore, which is based on the Letter of Intent (LoI), leads to a larger and broader goal, namely building a local currency settlement framework, facilitating the settlement of cross-border transactions, accommodating trade and investment activities between the two countries using their respective local currencies so that there is no need to convert currencies first which can reduce the risks and costs related to exchange rates. On a larger scale, QRIS Cross-Border between the two countries aligns with ASEAN

financial integration efforts to facilitate broader use of local currencies in transactions within the ASEAN region through faster, cheaper, transparent, inclusive, convenient, and efficient cross-border payments for users. Ultimately, the expansion of QRIS Cross-Border to Singapore also serves as a foundation for collaboration between industries in both countries under the command of BI and MAS, which also involves close partnerships with related parties in both countries, including the Indonesian Payment System Association (ASPI), RAJA (Rintis, Artajasa, Jalin, and Alto), Network for Electronic Transfers (Singapore) Pte: Ltd (NETS), and various participating financial institutions.

*d. Integration of QRIS Cross-Border in other Southeast Asian countries' QR-based digital payment system*

After successfully integrating QR code-based digital payment systems in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, the Indonesian government has grand ambitions to expand the implementation of QRIS in the Philippines, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries. The main goal is to realize the integration of digital payment systems at the ASEAN regional level. Like other countries, the exploration of digital payment system interconnection cooperation with the Philippines began in 2022. The Central Bank of Indonesia held a special meeting regarding integrating QR code payments with the leaders of five Central Banks in ASEAN, one of which is Bangko Sentral Pilipinas (BSP). Then, at a meeting in July 2023, BSP and five other ASEAN central banks agreed on Bank Indonesia's vision to integrate digital payments using QRIS technology. However, when the implementation of QRIS in Thailand



and Malaysia was fully underway, and the implementation in Singapore entered the trial phase, QRIS still could not be implemented in the Philippines by the end of 2023. Bank Indonesia stated that the realization of integrating QRIS digital payments in the Philippines was still waiting for the readiness of banking and financial institutions in the Philippines (Kinanti, 2023). Various sources have stated that QRIS payments can be made in the Philippines in early 2024. There is still no adequate data on Indonesians' use of QRIS in the Philippines and vice versa. One thing is clear: the digital transaction revolution offered by QRIS will undoubtedly simplify and optimize cross-border buying and selling transactions between Indonesia and the Philippines.

Apart from the five initiating countries, Vietnam is the only ASEAN country that signed a memorandum of understanding on regional payment interconnection in August 2023. Through this agreement, the State Bank of Vietnam (SBV) is willing to integrate the QR code-based digital payment system applicable in its country with QRIS and the QR code payment platform applicable in the other five ASEAN countries (Elena 2023). With an integrated digital payment system, people from Indonesia and ASEAN countries who visit Vietnam no longer need to exchange conventional money to make purchase transactions. Purchases can be created simply by opening their respective online banking and digital wallet applications and then scanning the QR code provided. The application will automatically convert the local currency of each country to the local currency of Vietnam, and transactions can be made immediately. This also applies to Vietnamese visiting and making transactions in Indonesia and the other

four ASEAN countries. Although it is still not widespread, BI and SBV are confident that future payment integration through QRIS will increase regional economic growth and create fast, efficient, and safe transaction methods (Praditya, 2023).

Laos and Brunei Darussalam are the latest countries to express interest in adopting QRIS Cross-Border as a digital payment system. BI and Brunei Darussalam Central Bank (BDCB) and BI and Bank of Laos have agreed to implement QRIS Cross-Border in their respective countries. The interest of both countries is inseparable from the desire to participate in the Regional Payment Connectivity (RPC) or regional payment connectivity initiated by Indonesia through QRIS Cross-Border (Hasran and Karima). By implementing QRIS Cross-Border, Laos and Brunei Darussalam's transaction activities will be easier with Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The statement of Hajah Rokiah, President Director of BDCB, stated that the implementation of QRIS Cross-Border with Indonesia not only strengthens collaboration between the Central Banks of the two countries but also greatly helps in facilitating trade, investment, and business cooperation activities of Brunei Darussalam in the Southeast Asia region. For Laos itself, which is the host of the meeting of the ASEAN Central Bank Governors and Finance Ministers on April 3, 2024, through the Governor of the Bank of Laos, Bounleua Xinxayvoravong stated that Laos' involvement in QRIS Cross-Border will help accelerate Laos' economic growth because of the advantages offered by QRIS Cross-Border, namely faster and cheaper payments, thus creating efficiency for cross-border transactions.



## V. Conclusion

The transformation of QRIS into QRIS Cross-Border to penetrate the international market has been successfully carried out. The main argument in this study states that Indonesia has succeeded in optimizing QRIS Cross-Border as an instrument of soft power diplomacy in the context of digitalization of payments in Southeast Asia. The proof can be seen from QRIS Cross-Border, which has reached seven Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, and Brunei Darussalam. This is inseparable from the attractive features presented by QRIS Cross-Border so that it attracts the interest of these countries. Furthermore, the bilateral agreements established between Indonesia and each country in implementing QRIS Cross-Border as a digital payment system culminate in the regional payment connectivity agenda in the Southeast Asian region. Indonesia has succeeded in directing the preferences of digital payment policies of seven Southeast Asian countries to use QRIS Cross-Border not only as a digital payment system but more broadly than that, including supporting trade and investment activities and collaboration between industries. Ultimately, QRIS Cross-Border, as a goal, provides a domino effect from one country to another and, as an instrument of soft power diplomacy, provides a spillover effect on the growth of the region itself. However, there are still challenges faced, namely that QRIS Cross-Border has not been implemented in Myanmar and Cambodia. Apart from that, QRIS Cross-Border has also begun to reach areas such as East Asia and the Middle East. It is interesting to study this further from various perspectives.

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### The Failures of the United Nations Security Council's Resolutions in Addressing the Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Case Study of Resolution No. S/RES/2202 of 2015

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#### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the failure of Resolution No. S/RES/2202 of 2015, issued by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), to address the conflict between Russia and Ukraine during 2014-2015. This research falls within the realm of qualitative research, utilizing a descriptive-analytical method and data collection through a literature review including books, journals, official documents, and relevant research. Johan Galtung's Conflict Transformation theory supports the research to analyze the failure of this resolution from the perspective of its inability to transform the conflict from internal to multi-dimension based on the variable of conflict transformation. The findings indicate that the resolution failed to build peace of the Russia-Ukraine conflict due to the non-implementation of the resolution's points. The UNSC should prepare legal enforcement measures through the UN*

*General Assembly to restrict Russia's decision-making concerning the Ukrainian crisis.*

**Keywords:** conflict resolution, conflict transformation, United Nations Security Council, Russia, Ukraine

#### I. Introduction

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine stems from an unstable political situation, where the Ukrainian population was divided into pro-Russia and pro-Europe factions. This conflict was also influenced by the clash of interests between Russia and Ukraine, particularly following the ousting of President Yanukovich. The situation was further exacerbated by Russia's military intervention as the Putin's military doctrine towards the situation.

During Yanukovich's presidency of Ukraine (2010-2014), tensions between Russia and Ukraine grew as Yanukovich fostered close relations with the European Union and signed an association agreement aimed at establishing political ties aligned with European values and principles. This threatened Russia's national security, leading Russia to exert political and economic pressure on Ukraine by cutting off energy supplies and blocking Ukrainian imports, which plunged Ukraine's economy into crisis (Febriansyah, 2019). As a result, Yanukovich decided to cancel the agreement between Ukraine and the European Union in November 2013 and accepted a debt loan from Russia amounting to 198 trillion rupiah.

This decision led to protests from the people of Western Ukraine, who preferred that Ukraine establish cooperation with the



European Union. Consequently, demonstrations against Yanukovich's decision, known as the Euromaidan events, erupted, leading to internal unrest between Ukrainian police and protesters.

One of Ukraine's internal crises was the Crimea Referendum held on March 16, 2014, in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol after Russian forces occupied Crimea. The referendum asked the people of Crimea whether they wished to rejoin Russia or remain part of Ukraine. The result of the referendum showed that the people of Crimea and Sevastopol wanted to join Russia (Kamasa and Fransisca, 2017). Ukraine could not accept the referendum as it violated the Ukrainian constitution, leading to a new phase of conflict between the two countries. The pro-Russian protesters eventually took control of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and established the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR). This exacerbated Ukraine's internal conflict. The crisis in Ukraine was one of the reasons Russia had to change its military policy after the signing of the 2014 Military Doctrine and implemented the doctrine as of April 21st, 2014 (Febriansyah, 2019).

The crisis was further exacerbated following the election of Petro Poroshenko as President of Ukraine in the March 25, 2014, general elections. Poroshenko expressed his support for Ukraine's efforts to join the European Union, marked by the signing of an association agreement on economic cooperation on June 27, 2014, followed by the ratification of political and economic agreements with the EU on September 16,

2014 (Huachen Fu, 2022). As a result of this decision, the Ukraine crisis expanded further and drew responses from the international community.

To address the conflict, the UNSC issued Resolution No. S/RES/2202 of 2015, which called on the parties involved to fully implement the 'Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements', including a comprehensive ceasefire as outlined in the resolution. It also emphasized the importance of the full implementation of the Minsk Protocol of September 5, 2014, and the Minsk Memorandum of September 19, 2014.

After the resolution was implemented, both parties agreed to a ceasefire, the withdrawal of weapons, and full control by the Ukrainian government over the conflict areas (Susetio, 2022). However, peace-building efforts lasted for about seven years until the leadership of Volodymyr Zelensky (2019-2024), when Russia launched a large-scale invasion in February 2022, leading to the outbreak of war between Russia and Ukraine.

The conflict resolution that has been created certainly considers how the conflict can be transformed from internal conflict (only highlighting Ukrainian political problems) to multi-dimension conflict (covered the resolution that solving internal, bilateral and geopolitical conflict) so that neither party reignites the conflict. The researcher aims to analyze the implementation of Resolution No. S/RES/2202 of 2015 in addressing the Russia-Ukraine conflict from the post-conflict period of 2014-2015 up to 2022, before the war



between the two countries erupted. To achieve this, the researcher examines how the resolution implemented transformed the conflict and achieved positive peace.

## II. Theoretical Framework: Conflict Transformation

Conflicts are cyclical, they emerge, reach a peak of highly emotional and violent conflict, then subside, fade away and sometimes reappear. Conflicts are often related to the goals of nations and states. When these goals do not align, a contradiction is born that leads to problems (Galtung and Dietrich, 2013). The actors involved will feel frustrated when their goals are not realized and leading to an attitude of hatred that leads to aggression towards the other party, especially those who hinder these goals. Normally, conflicts have many actors, goals and problems that are not easy to map.

violence. By considering the three aspects of violent cultures, violent structures and violent actors, the conflict can be transformed. It should be noted that before-violence to during-violence, there is a lag time to trigger division. Likewise, the phases during-violence and after-violence also have a pause to trigger a ceasefire. These pauses are important events to pay attention to.

The before-violence phase is also known as the prevention phase to avoid violence. A conflict will trigger suffering for the people and parties involved and is enough to warrant serious attention from the rest of the world. In this phase, what should be done is to find the positive goals of the parties involved and find imaginative ways to combine these goals without using violence (Galtung and Dietrich, 2013). During the before-violence phase, there are two indicators of resolution, namely: 1) Sustainable peace initiative efforts, where the conflicting parties are sought to conduct peace dialogues to resolve conflicts without the use of violence.; 2) Conflict mapping, where it is necessary to find out the root causes of the ongoing conflict based on violent cultures, violent structures, and violent actors.

The during-violence phase, where the main task that needs to be done is to stop the violence so that the conflict does not deepen and is difficult to resolve (Galtung and Dietrich, 2013). During the during-violence phase, peace-keeping efforts need to be carried out which include: 1) Compliance with Chapter 6 of the UN Charter to resolve conflicts peacefully; 2) Use of military force; 3) Use of police capabilities; 4) Focus on non-violent efforts; 5)

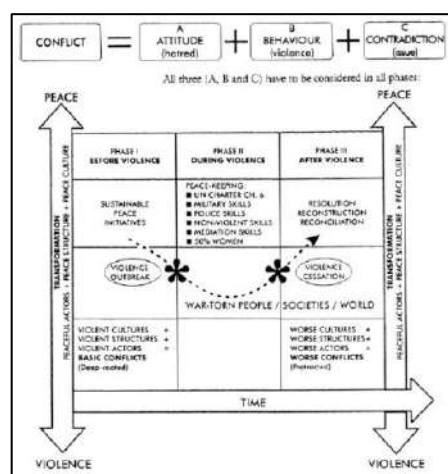


Fig.1. The Life Cycle of Conflict According to Johan Galtung

Source: Galtung and Dietrich (2013)

A conflict is divided into three phases: before-violence, during-violence and after-



Mediation; 6) Women's participation in war casualty management.

The after-violence phase is the most difficult and complex stage compared to the previous stages because many heavy tasks need to be completed (Galtung and Dietrich, 2013). The indicators for completing the after-violence phase are as follows: 1) A resolution is produced that can resolve the root of the conflict; 2) Post-conflict reconstruction efforts; 3) Reconciliation efforts or improved relations between conflicting parties.

The failure of the conflict transformation (acknowledge the conflict as multi-dimension conflict) is caused by the failure of conflict resolution in resolving the root of the conflict which results in worse culture, worse structure, and worse actors so that a conflict becomes a prolonged conflict. And the after-violence phase easily becomes before-violence.

### III. Methodology and Data

The research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. That way, this research is expected to provide a pattern that discusses the failure of conflict resolution produced by the UN Security Council to handle the conflict between Russia and Ukraine clearly and later become aligned to answer questions from the formulation of predetermined problems.

The data obtained comes from journals, books, and websites related to the situation of the Russian and Ukrainian conflicts in 2014-2015 and the draft resolutions that have been made. The data will go through a

process of categorizing the data, sorting the data into manageable units, summarizing and looking for and finding patterns and finding important things that can be told to others.

### IV. Findings and Discussions

#### *a. Root Conflict Identification in the Before-violence Phase*

The before-violence stage is also called the prevention stage to avoid violence. What must be done is to find the positive goals of the parties involved and find imaginative ways to combine these goals without using violence (Galtung and Dietrich, 2013). In the case of Russia and Ukraine, violence occurred after the enactment of the Military Doctrine on April 21, 2014, so that the period before that was the before-violence stage where the UN Security Council identified and mapped conflicts and conflict resolution.

To map the conflict, there are three main focuses that must be considered to handle the conflict that occurred. These focuses are changing the culture of violence, reconstructing the structure of violence and considering the actors of violence (Galtung and Fischer 2013, 63). Therefore, the UNSC must include these three things in making a resolution. Through several meetings, the UNSC finally produced a resolution even though it was ultimately rejected by Russia and failed to be implemented.



No.	Topic	Meeting Code	Date
1.		S/PV.7123	February 28th
2.	Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)	S/PV.7124	March 1st
3.		S/PV.7125	March 3rd
4.		S/PV.7131	March 10th
5.		S/PV.7134	March 13th
6.		S/PV.7138	March 15th
7.		S/PV.7144	March 19th
8.		Letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/264)	S.PV.7154
9.	S.PV.7157		April 16th

**Tab. 1.** List of UNSC Meetings (28 February – 16 April 2014)

**Source:** UN Security Council Meetings and Outcomes (2014)

The UNSC first met to discuss the crisis between Russia and Ukraine after Ukraine sent a letter No. S/2014/136 on February 28, 2014. In the letter, the Ukrainian representative urged the UNSC to hold a meeting regarding the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine, which threatens Ukraine's territorial integrity and has the potential to cause disturbances to international peace and security following articles 34 and 35 of the UN Charter. In addition, the Ukrainian representatives also proposed their participation in the meeting to make a statement as stipulated in article 37 of the UN Charter.

The UNSC considers that Russia is pressuring Ukraine under fabricated pretexts and says that Russia's concerns can be addressed by sending monitoring missions instead of military intervention. The facts also show that Russia has taken over almost all military bases and emphasized that there is no evidence that ethnic Russians are in a threatened position (UN Security Council Meeting Outcomes S/PV.7125, 2014).

In addition, Russia's interests can be obtained through diplomacy without the use

of force through some action steps. First, Russia should directly engage the Government of Ukraine. Secondly, international monitors and observers, including from the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), should be sent to Ukraine. That is the best way to get the facts, monitor conduct and prevent any abuses. Russia is a leading member of both institutions and can participate actively to ensure that its interests are upheld. The immediate deployment of international observers from either the OSCE or the United Nations to Crimea would also provide transparency about the movements and activities of military and paramilitary forces in the region, and defuse the tensions between different groups. We are also working to stand up an international mediation mission to the Crimea to begin to de-escalate the situation and facilitate productive and peaceful political dialogue among all Ukrainian parties (UN Security Council Meeting Outcomes S/PV.7124, 2014).

At this meeting, it appears that the UNSC has realized the motives or interests that Russia wants to obtain through this military intervention. However, the UNSC has not been able to establish a dispute resolution mechanism due to the lack of transparency from both parties.

Ukraine is fighting for open dialogue and negotiations to resolve the conflict. Meanwhile, Russia made a statement that it did not want the situation to get worse or even start a war. Russia asked to look at the facts objectively in order to understand the source of the situation (UN Security Council Meeting





Outcomes S/PV.7134, 2014). Through this meeting, the UNSC interpreted the motives between the two parties where basically both countries did not want the conflict situation to get worse and called for a peaceful settlement.

The UN Security Council produced a draft resolution with the number S/2014/189. The resolution states unequivocally that Russia's actions interfering with Ukraine's territorial integrity and interfering with Ukraine's sovereignty violate Article 2 of the UN Charter, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (1975), and the Budapest Memorandum (1994). However, the draft resolution passed with 13 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention. Russia used its veto right to reject the enactment of the resolution. In the resolution, the UNSC explicitly stated that Russia violated Ukraine's sovereignty by intervening. Russia's use of its veto right caused the discussion on the conflict between Ukraine and Russia to continue (UN Security Council Meeting Outcomes S/PV.7138, 2014).

**Source:** Data processed by researchers based on UN Security Council Meetings and Outcomes (2014)

In terms of the culture of violence, the resolution of the conflict directs both parties to conduct dialogue and decide on an agreement that satisfies both parties, rather than trying to win the existing conflict. Then in terms of the structure of violence, in the meetings that have been held by the UNSC that have been discussed previously, it is clear that Ukraine as a country that depends on Russia makes Russia have greater power and authority. Therefore, in the draft resolution, the UNSC emphasized that Russia respects Ukraine's sovereignty as stated in the UN Charter where every country is obliged to comply with the principle of sovereignty.

Furthermore, regarding the actors of violence, in the UNSC meetings that have been discussed previously, it is clear that Russia is the main actor of violence and it would be fatal to ignore the actors of violence along with the goals they want to achieve. In this regard, the UNSC is aware that Russia will become more aggressive if its goals are not achieved and Russia cannot be stopped only by the courts or sanctions. This situation made the UNSC emphasize in the draft resolution that was made that both parties try to refrain from using actions that could increase tensions and encourage both parties to take a peaceful path in resolving the conflict through direct dialogue or international media without using violence. Efforts to transform the conflict carried out by the UNSC through conflict mapping by considering each other's interests based on aspects of the culture of violence, the

Variables	Findings	Solution Offered by UNSC
Actor	The Ukrainian government is a violent actor in the sphere of domestic conflict by exerting force and power to suppress the DPR and LPR and their aspirations. Russia became a violent actor that used all its power and strength to justify its actions.	Mapped by UNSC
Culture	The Ukrainian government deployed military forces to suppress the separatist groups (DPR and LPR) and force a unilateral end to the internal conflict. Russia intervened militarily and violated Ukraine's borders under the pretext of protecting ethnic Russian or Russian-speaking citizens in Ukraine.	Urge all parties to resolve disputes through peaceful means.
Structure	The Ukrainian government did not listen to the demands of the separatist groups (DPR and LPR) and used military force to suppress the DPR and LPR. Russia intervened in Ukraine's sovereignty by violating its borders due to Ukraine's desire to join the European Union.	Call on Ukraine to protect and listen to the rights of all its citizens. Affirmation of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

**Tab. 2.** Conflict Mapping of Russia and Ukraine by UNSC



structure of violence and the actors of violence have failed. This failure did not come from the UNSC's inability to map the conflict, but from Russia's unwillingness to engage in dialogue or mediation. Supporting factors for the failure of the UNSC in the before violence stage were also influenced by Russia's power as a permanent member of the UNSC which has the privilege to reject resolutions through veto rights.

Conflict transformation efforts carried out by the UN Security Council through conflict mapping have considered the interests of each based on aspects of the culture of violence, the structure of violence and violent actors, but violence still occurs. The failure does not come from the inability of the UNSC to map the conflict, but the failure comes from the unwillingness of all parties to conduct dialogue or mediation. There are at least three main points that are the roots of the conflict in Ukraine, namely domestic factors in Ukraine, Russian military intervention and the impact of Western policies (Kovalov in Ramadhan, 2020). These points have been found by the UNSC and then formulated into a draft resolution number S/2014/189. But, Ukraine government doesn't want to listen and rejected the proposal of DPR and LPR regarding their interest to be separated and using forces to suppress them while Russian rejected the proposal of Ukraine to have bilateral meeting. Also, no response or action step that Europe Union and NATO could do because the limitation of its influence.

#### *b. Peace-keeping Efforts in the During-violence Phase*

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, particularly in Eastern Ukraine, has raised issues that are at the core of international law. This conflict contains several elements, namely the focus on secession, the right to self-determination, and respect for the sovereignty of a country in terms of territorial integrity (Zavoli, 2017). To overcome these problems, the UN Security Council seeks to find a legal solution to the conflict, stop violence between the parties to the conflict and resolve the problem through peaceful means. These goals are implemented by the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces.

The acting President of Ukraine, Aleksander Turchynov, asked then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to send peacekeeping forces to coordinate with Ukrainian forces in anti-terrorist operations but the request was cancelled due to Russia's use of veto rights, thus not fulfilling the requirement that there is no opposition (Alter, 2014).

The demand for peacekeeping in Ukraine has gone beyond what the UNSC can do and therefore, President Petro Poroshenko signed a new law allowing access for foreign troops to conduct peacekeeping operations in place of the UN with the restriction that countries that have launched armed aggression against Ukraine are prohibited from participating (Ciorici, 2017). Thus, Russia and some regional organizations or ad hoc coalitions cannot carry out such missions such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), OSCE, European Union or NATO.



Although the OSCE cannot send military troops to carry out peacekeeping missions, it is still taking action to maintain peace in Ukraine by running an OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and an OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoint in Gukovo. These missions involve police forces tasked with policing the border area to prevent Russian arms supplies from entering for use by militants from pro-Russian separatist groups. In addition, the OSCE also joined the Trilateral Contact Group as a forum for diplomatic talks between Russia and Ukraine and the separatist groups (Filipchuck, 2016).

To defuse the conflict, the UN can only send the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) to carry out a humanitarian mission through the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU). The purpose of this mission is to ensure that human rights are not violated as well as to assist in meeting technical, legal, and other needs that can contribute to addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. UNHCR's involvement helped to calm psycho-social aspects and encouraged peacebuilding activities such as ceasefires, demobilization, and negotiations (Ciorici, 2017).

On June 6, 2014, diplomatic discussions were held involving the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia under the auspices of the President of France, François Hollande and the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel in the Normandy Format or N4. The meeting was considered by the European Union to be a step towards achieving peace between Russia and Ukraine. Another round of negotiations took place on June 23, 2014, in a Trilateral Contact

Group (TCG) of Ukrainian and Russian representatives mediated by the OSCE and involving representatives of the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) and Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) (Ramadhan, 2020). The meeting contained several important items: granting partial amnesty to the rebels, plans for joint police patrols in the conflict zone after the ceasefire, decentralization efforts (including the election of an executive committee, the defence of the Russian language and draft constitutional changes), local and parliamentary elections before the term of office, the appointment of a joint governor, an agreement on a ten-kilometre buffer zone from the Russian-Ukrainian border to stop the supply of weapons to the rebels, and the dissolution of the LPR and DPR (Arbatova, 2022).

As the UNSC wanted, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia needed to be resolved through peaceful means. With the N4 and TCG, Russia and Ukraine finally found a platform for negotiations that led to the formulation and signing of the Minsk Agreements. The first Minsk negotiations were held in September 2014 and resulted in the Minsk Agreements which were signed on September 5, 2014. The Minsk Agreement was the result of a compromise that had been attempted to end the conflict through a ceasefire. The implementation of the agreement had many obstacles due to conflicting legal bases that led to ceasefire violations and in November 2014 the rebel-held regions held local elections that further complicated the issue until the armed conflict reached its peak at the end of 2014 (Wittke, 2019). Given this situation, the N4 and TCG



met again in February 2015 and produced the Minsk II Agreement.

This agreement included demands that all parties withdraw their troops; that local elections be held in accordance with Ukrainian law; and that the Ukrainian parliament determine the regions that would be under the special regime within thirty days. It also included the organization of elections in line with international standards that were discussed and agreed upon with representatives of the LPR and DPR as well as demands for reform of the Ukrainian constitution (Wittke, 2019). The Minsk II agreement focused on resolving Ukraine's internal conflicts with the LPR and DPR and tightened demands for troop withdrawal from all parties including Russia. The Minsk II Agreement was finally agreed and signed on February 12, 2015. With the Minsk Agreement, Russia and Ukraine entered a ceasefire period and ended the during-violence stage.

### *c. The Failure of Conflict Transformation Efforts in the After-violence Phase*

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, particularly in Eastern Ukraine, has raised issues that are at the core of international law. This conflict contains several elements, namely the focus on secession, the right to self-determination, and respect for the sovereignty of a country in terms of territorial integrity (Zavoli, 2017). To overcome these problems, the UN Security Council seeks to find a legal solution to the conflict, stop violence between the parties to the conflict and resolve the problem through peaceful means. These goals are implemented by the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces.

The demand for peacekeeping in Ukraine has exceeded what the UNSC can do and therefore, President Petro Poroshenko signed a new law allowing access for foreign troops to conduct peacekeeping operations in place of the UN with the restriction that countries that have launched armed aggression against Ukraine are prohibited from participating (Ciorici 2017, 189). This means that Russia and some regional organizations or ad hoc coalitions cannot carry out the mission such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), OSCE, the European Union or NATO.

On February 17, 2015 a meeting was held to discuss resolving the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. During this meeting, Russia pushed for the adoption of a resolution based on the Minsk II Agreement on the basis of its commitment to maintaining peace while the conflict was instigated by Russia itself. The Russian representative responded by questioning the triggering factor for the conflict, which was the unapproved reunification of Crimea with Russia. On the other hand, Ukrainian representatives emphasized that the Crimean reunification mentioned by Russia was a form of occupation by annexation and aggression (UN Security Council Meeting Outcomes S/PV.73844, 2015). The meeting still contains debate between Russia and Ukraine where Ukraine stated that Russia has violated international law by interfering in Ukraine's internal affairs. While Russia considers that the conflict was triggered because Ukraine violated the principle of self-determination for the Crimean people who want to reunite with Russia.



At this meeting, the UN Security Council finally adopted resolution number S/RES/2202 (2015) with the main point of the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements which contains thirteen actions that must be taken by the parties involved.

Resolution No. S/RES/2202 of 2015 adopting the Minsk II Agreement was enacted with the hope of resolving the conflict. However, in reality, the Minsk II Agreement failed in its implementation. The failure of the Minsk II Agreement means that Resolution Number S/RES/2202/2015 also failed.

No.	Package of Measures	Implementation
1.	A full and immediate cease-fire	Not implemented. As of 2021, there were at least 3,404 civilians killed as a result of ceasefire violations.
2.	Withdrawal of all heavy weapons and establishment of security zones	Not fully implemented. As of 2021, Russian military forces still occupy Ukrainian border areas.
3.	Monitoring of the ceasefire by the OSCE	Not fully implemented. Due to ceasefire violations, the OSCE had access difficulties.
4.	Local election modalities based on Ukrainian law regarding the special status of Donbas	Not fully implemented. Until 2021, Donbas remains divided into Ukrainian Government-controlled and separatist-controlled areas.
5.	Pardon and amnesty of figures involved in the conflict	Not implemented. The law regulating this has never been signed by the Government of Ukraine.
6.	Release and exchange of all hostages and illegally detained persons	Not fully implemented. The last exchange took place in December 2019 and there are still detainees who have not been released due to Ukraine constantly reorganizing the list of detainees.
7.	Safe delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need based on international mechanisms	Not implemented. As of 2021, there are 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance who are blocked by Russian military formations.
8.	Full restoration of social and economic relations with conflict-affected areas	Not fully implemented. Recovery is not being carried out on the territory of the DPR and LPR.
9.	Ukraine's full control of its border with Russia throughout the conflict zone	Not implemented. As of 2021, there are still 104,000 Russian military personnel on the Ukrainian border.
10.	Withdrawal of foreign armed groups, weapons and mercenaries on the territory of Ukraine	Not implemented. Until 2021, conflicts continue to occur in border areas and separatist-held territories.
11.	Constitutional reforms including decentralization, special status for separatist regions	Not fully implemented. Draft constitutional and decentralization laws not fully adopted.
12.	Local elections in Donetsk and Luhansk regions based on OSCE standards	Not implemented. Elections were never held even during the simultaneous elections in Ukraine in 2020. In addition, until 2021, as many as 600,00 citizens moved to Russia.
13.	Intensification of TCG work	Limited. TCG's influence slowly weakened until the end of 2021.

**Tab. 3.** Failure of Resolution No. S/RES/2202 of 2015 (2015-2021)

**Source:** Data processed by researchers based on (Golanski, 2016), (Atland, 2020), (European Commission, 2022), and (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023).

There is a divergence of views between Russia and Ukraine with Ukraine prioritizing security

restoration by insisting on full control of the Russian border so as to contain the supply of weapons and mercenaries to separatist groups. Political recovery including local elections for the Donetsk and Luhansk regions can follow to ensure security. Meanwhile, Russia demands that Ukraine decentralize through local elections first (in order to legitimize its proxies in Donbas) and then give Ukraine full control over the border region.

According to Wolfgang Sporrer, one of the diplomats involved in drafting the Minsk II Agreement, the failure of the Minsk II Agreement occurred because (Brentler, 2023):

1. The Minsk II Agreement failed to address the root causes of the conflict. The core of the conflict is Russia's desire to influence the domestic and foreign policy orientation of the government in Kyiv. However, the Minsk II Agreement addressed a very different issue.

2. The low technical quality of the Minsk II Agreement was due to too many provisions for its verification, and the sequence of actions remained controversial until the end, as the agreement itself did not specify anything.

3. Russia's position on the Minsk II Agreement is unclear. Russia is actually not interested in this issue.

This ambiguity was utilized by Russia to put the conflict with Ukraine into a frozen conflict without achieving any peace at all, which made it the biggest weakness of the Minsk II Agreement and also the main failure of this resolution.





## V. Conclusion

The formulation of the Minsk II Agreement did not cover all of the dimensions of the conflict. It should be remembered that the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is a geopolitical, bilateral and internal conflict that occurs at the same time so that if only focus on one conflict, the causes of the conflict will never be resolved.

The implementation of resolution number S/RES/2202 of 2015 did not go as planned due to ambiguity regarding the order of implementation of the action points of the Minsk II Agreement and Russia's unclear position in the resolution. This led to a de-escalation of the conflict in Ukraine but did not bring the situation to peace. What happened was the freezing of the conflict, which only stopped the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine. Thus, resolution number S/RES/2022 of 2015 failed to realize positive peace between Russia and Ukraine due to its system.

The UNSC should prepare an enforcement action through a UN General Assembly resolution to prohibit Russia from taking any decision in the Ukraine crisis and designate Russia as an aggressor state based on the UN Charter, resolution number 3314 of the UN General Assembly on the definition of aggression, the Convention on the Definition of Aggression and resolution number 377A of the UN General Assembly on unity for peace. Thus, Russia lost its voting rights in the UN Security Council under UN Charter article 27.

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## Book Reviews

***China-US Competition Impact on Small and Middle Powers' Strategic Choices.* By Simona A. Grano and David Wei Feng Huang. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023. ISBN: 978-3-031-15389-1 (e-book)**

The escalating geopolitical competition between China and the United States has profoundly changed the global strategic environment, going beyond the bilateral dynamics of the two superpowers. This competition is reflected in the policies and strategic decisions of small and middle powers, which are in a state of uncertainty. The continuous escalation of United States and China competition has created a challenging international environment for many small and middle powers around the world, forcing the countries to restructure their foreign policies to maximize national interests. As a result, small and middle powers' reactions to United States and China competition have grown in importance yet have received bigger attention.

In *China-US Competition Impact on Small and Middle Powers' Strategic Choices*, Simona A. Grano and David Wei Feng Huang delve deeply into the complex interplay of agency, pressure, and opportunity that defines the foreign policy decisions of these states in a world increasingly polarized by Sino-American tensions. This book discusses the increasingly intense strategic competition between the United States and China and its impact on the strategic choices of states with small and middle powers in Europe and Asia. This book examines how these states navigated the complex relationship between the two hegemonies, balancing their economic interests with security concerns.

In Part I, Grano and Huang provides an overview of the US-China rivalry, highlighting China's rapid rise to power and its ambitions to reshape the international order. This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks of balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging, which are used to analyze the strategic choices of smaller and middle powers. Grano and Huang's theoretical framework, the bandwagon continuum, which was adapted from Alan Bloomfield, divides hedging responses into two categories: gain-maximizing strategies like economic pragmatism or limited bandwagon, and risk-contingent strategies which seek to minimize security risks by creating a balance of power. This perspective emphasizes how small and middle powers are faced with a particular conundrum when deciding which hegemon to support, as they run the risk of reprisal if they are unable to successfully maintain the balance.

However, in reaction to the United States and China rivalry, European and Asian countries according to the Part II and Part III of this book are adjusting their foreign policy. Grano and Huang claim that European countries nowadays adopting a more assertive posture toward China in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, seeking to curtail its power through a policy of denial of dominance and a renewed focus on transatlantic ties with the United States. This also holds true in Asian countries like South Korea and Japan that have always welcomed U.S. involvement in Asia for regional security, they have also aimed to preserve profitable economic ties with China. These countries have reevaluated their stances and are now more aligned with the United States since they perceive China's muscular



efforts in the region as a greater security threat.

Furthermore, the book encourages policymakers and scholars to pay attention to the strategic decisions made by these small and middle powers as they struggle to maintain autonomy in a fragmented global context marked by Superpowers. These countries can better manage their relations with the United States and China by implementing proactive policies such as diversification and bargaining tactics that protect their national interests. Overall, the book is a valuable resource for understanding how smaller states can navigate the problems of great power competition, providing useful insights for academics and practitioners in international relations.

However, while the book provides a broad overview of small and middle powers' responses to United States and China competition, it has significant shortcomings that need to be addressed. One major challenge is that the book relies on a small number of case studies, which may not adequately illustrate the range of responses in different regions. For example, while the book effectively demonstrates the experiences of certain European and Asian countries, it would have been better to include broader perspectives from Latin America, Africa, or the Middle East, where geopolitical factors have changed significantly.

Finally, given the current global geopolitical shifts, this book remains relevant today. The insight offers into how small and middle powers manage their foreign policies under such pressures as the rivalry between

the United States and China heats up. The book does an excellent task of highlighting the strategies these states use to manage their relations with the two superpowers and maximize their interests, such as hedging and balancing. Its emphasis on case studies from a range of European and Asian countries offers nuanced perspectives on the various reactions influenced by regional, historical, and domestic circumstances.

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## Book Reviews

***A Genealogy of Bamboo Diplomacy: The Politics of Thai Détente with Russia and China.***  
By Jittipat Poonkham. Canberra: ANU Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-7604649-9-8

This book provides an explanation of the origins of Bamboo diplomacy and an exploration of Thailand's détente politics with major countries, especially Russia and China. Similar to other countries that have distinctive forms of diplomacy, the author provides an in-depth analysis to understand the form of Thai diplomacy, Bamboo Diplomacy, within the framework of Thailand's foreign policy discourse. To trace the history of Thai diplomacy and Thai Détente politics in the book *A Genealogy of Bamboo Diplomacy: The Politics of Thai Détente with Russia and China* by Jittipat Poonkham, its history is explained from the Cold War era to the present and is also explained in the practice of Thai détente in three leadership periods, namely under Minister Thanat Khoman (1968–1971), M. R. Kukrit Pramoj (1975–1976), and General Kriangsak Chomanan (1977–1980). This explanation relates to how Thai elites strategize to balance relations with major countries in order to maintain the stability of the country against changes in geopolitical dynamics that occur in ASEAN.

Chapter 1 explains the introduction of the term “Bamboo Diplomacy” which reflects the flexible nature of Thailand in implementing foreign policy strategies to survive under political pressure from major countries. Some refer to this form of diplomacy as ‘flexible diplomacy’, while others call it ‘bamboo diplomacy’. Chapter 2 explains the origins of bamboo diplomacy which explores the

discursive hegemony that challenges the anti-communist and pro-American narratives that prevailed in Thailand during the Cold War. This anti-communist discourse is one of the many discourses of Thailand’s foreign policy. A genealogy of Thai détente demonstrates a history of rupture. Thailand at that time was able to direct alliances and competition by managing relations with the United States and communist bloc countries. The book *A Genealogy of Bamboo Diplomacy: The Politics of Thai Détente with Russia and China* by Jittipat Poonkham can contribute to international history during the Cold War, especially the study of Thai détente, how a small power like Thailand initiated alternative strategies beyond superpower politics, and how successful these strategies were.

The next two chapters explain the first episode of Détente under Ministers Thanat Khoman (1968–1971) which is considered as the initial period of Thailand's flexible diplomacy practice with communist powers, especially the Soviet Union and the PRC in the context of America's withdrawal from the region. Seeing the uncertainty of America's position in the ASEAN region, under Thanat Khoman's leadership, alternative policies began to be reviewed in the event of American retrenchment. The policy options include non-alignment, bandwagoning, neutralization, bipolarization and regional cooperation. So the concept related to flexible diplomacy created under Minister Thanat in 1968 consists of three characteristics, namely increasing doubts on Americanism, regional cohesiveness, and détente with great powers. In short, Thanat Khoman showed a major change in Thailand's foreign policy from previously anti-communism where the Soviet Union and China





as "enemies" changed to "friends". In chapter 5, it explains the transition period from the military coup in 1971, which was originally intended to reduce tensions and start Thailand's relations or détente with the Soviet Union and China, but in reality the discourse of anti-communism still continued. In this chapter it is explained that the old discourse on anti-communism began to fade, but Thailand's détente was still not properly implemented.

In chapter 6 examines the second episode of détente practice under M. R. Kukrit Pramoj and Chatichai Choonhavan regarding the restoration of relations with China and relations with the Soviet Union between 1975 and 1976. In chapter 7 examines the third episode of détente under General Kriangsak Chomanan (1977–1980) where in this episode the term "equidistance" began to be known in determining Thailand's foreign policy with major countries. At this time anti-communism was no longer a discourse because Sino-American diplomatic relations began to be established. Thai détente became a defining characteristic of Thailand's foreign policy and began to be implemented maturely.

And the final chapter is explained by reflecting on the importance of a genealogical approach to Thai diplomacy. Poonkham argues that the genealogy of Thai détente can be explained as a history of rupture and the history of the present which are sequentially to reassess the changes in discourse and practice of Thai diplomacy. A history of rupture shows the emergence of détente discourse that developed into three episodes, namely under Thanat Khoman (1968–1971), M. R. Kukrit Pramoj (1975–1976), and General Kriangsak Chomanan (1977–1980). The history of

rupture also emphasizes that détente occurred in a discursive struggle against the hegemony of anti-communism in Thailand.

This book provides many views on Thailand's foreign policy theoretically and empirically. The study of the history and practice of Thai diplomacy in the 1970s through bamboo diplomacy and the concept of Thai détente which is closely related to the political construction in determining Thailand's foreign policy. The history of Thai détente that occurred in the long term from the 1970s to the present is a moment when the unthinkable- the normalization of diplomatic relations with the communists- began to become thinkable in the present. In the present, Poonkham shows how Thailand continues to utilize its strategic position to maintain national stability amidst the complex rise of China and the continuing influence of Russia. This book certainly contributes to the study of international relations as a science, where studies related to the genealogy and formation of bamboo diplomacy, how and in what ways knowledge can be discursively shaped by changes in the practice of bamboo diplomacy. Through the study of genealogy, this book can help in conducting research on Thailand's position in international history from the Cold War era to the present.

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