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Aim and Scope

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Faculty of Social and Political Science Pembangunan Nasional Veteran East Java

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Comparative Study of the US-China Trade War Impacts on Canada, Australia, and Vietnam

Badriyatus Salma
International Relations Department
Universitas Sebelas Maret
badriyatussalma@student.uns.ac.id

Febrianti Nur Qothimah
International Relations Department
Universitas Sebelas Maret
brian09febri@student.uns.ac.id

Arvito Rachman
International Relations Department
Universitas Sebelas Maret
arvitorachman@student.uns.ac.id

Ferdian Ahya Al Putra
International Relations Department
Universitas Sebelas Maret
ferdianahya@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract

The US-China trade war is a trade conflict that has an impact on the global economy. In this trade war, the hegemon state becomes the main global focus. Therefore, the US-China trade war reflects the rivalry between two superpowers that influence global economic stability. This trade war creates uncertainty for economies around the world. This research examines the concept of hegemonic stability theory in the US-China trade war which reflects the rivalry between hegemons. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. This research also uses the theory of hegemonic stability in the international system. Moreover, this research used literature study techniques to obtain relevant data. The results show that the US-China trade wars have an impact on the global economy. This study finds that Canada and Australia suffer from trade disruption, while Vietnam benefits from investment diversion. The emergence of China as a new and great economic power proves the hegemonic stability though, that a world with more than one dominant player causes chaos, especially in the world economy.

Keywords: China, United States, Trade War, Hegemonic Stability Theory

I. Introduction

The emergence of the US-China rivalry in the trade war has had a profound effect on the global economy. The two countries are competing for influence as superpowers. This has an impact on other countries that experience economic uncertainty in maintaining relations between the two countries. This rivalry continues to grow into a trade war.

The US-China trade war has been ongoing since 2018. The trade tensions between the world's two largest economies, the United States and China, have had significant economic, political and social impacts. These two countries have a role as dominant actors in international relations. The tension between the two countries has led to a trade war that has an impact on other countries in the world. Initially, the trade war was caused by President Trump imposing tariffs on imported Chinese goods. President Trump considers that China has harmed the United States economically and politically. The actions taken by President Trump certainly made China do the same to imported goods from the United States. China also imposes tariffs on imported US goods.

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This research is important to discuss considering that the two countries in dispute are countries that have an important role in the global economy, especially in export and import activities. When viewed from the perspective of hegemonic stability theory, this condition contradicts theory. The US-China trade war reflects that there are two hegemonic countries that affect the stability of the global economy. The existence of two hegemonic countries can potentially cause chaos to the stability of the international system.

Previous research has found the impact of trade wars on the global economy. Steinbock (2018) wrote that the emergence of the US-China trade war has led to a prolonged global recession. Then, the United States and China failed to agree on a trade compromise. This caused uncertainty about the economy to continue to increase. Increased tariffs by the two countries also disrupted global supply chains. High tariffs from China have also caused price increases for US consumers and companies that use imported goods from China. Meanwhile, Itakura (2020) evaluated the impact of the US-China trade war with several scenarios. The study found two impacts: short-term and long-term. The impacts are also more severe in scenarios with non-tariff measures and investment diversion. The trade war also involves regulations on high-tech industries as well as political competition, but these are beyond the scope of this study. Then, research from (Li et al., 2018) found that China will experience significant losses due to trade wars compared to the United States. This is because the United States has a stronger position in trade war negotiations when analyzed from the Nash bargaining equilibrium framework. On the other hand, this study shows that the existence of a trade war provides losses, especially in terms of GDP and manufacturing employment for most countries in the world.

Previous studies have focused mainly on the macroeconomic consequences of the US-China trade war. However, few have compared its differentiated impacts on third-party economies such as Canada, Australia, and Vietnam. The existence of two dominant countries that go against the theory of hegemonic stability can threaten the stability of the global economy. Therefore, through the framework of hegemonic stability theory, this study aims to better understand the impact of the US-China trade war on the global economy. More deeply, this research will analyze how rivalry between the two hegemonic countries can threaten the instability of the global economic system and see how these challenges affect the policies taken by countries affected by this trade war.

II. Methods

This research uses a comparative qualitative method. Qualitative research methods are research methods used to examine the conditions of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument. In qualitative research, data collection is not guided by theory but is guided by facts discovered during field research. Then, comparative research refers to a research design that collects and compares data from various phenomena in society and/or culture. The analysis in this research can be carried out in the same way in several countries simultaneously (Allardt, 1990). The key point is

that comparative research has the aim of identifying, analyzing, and explaining the similarities and differences between societies or an object of research (Hantrais, 1995). This research will analyze competition for hegemony in the global economy, involving the United States and China. Competition between hegemons then has a broad impact on the global economy. This research compared the impacts experienced by 3 countries including Canada, Australia and Vietnam. It can be measured by several indicators such as investment, trade, and the policy in responding to the trade wars. Meanwhile, the data is obtained from literature study from various sources such as investment and trade data from related parties, news, books, and research articles. The authors use the hegemonic stability theory to analyze the research object. The research focuses on the trade war started in 2018 and how it gives impact towards those three countries. Canada, Australia, and Vietnam are chosen to represent different impacts they experienced, both in obtaining a negative impact or maximizing momentum to get more benefits from the trade war.

III. Theoretical Framework

Hegemonic Stability Theory is a theory in international relations derived from research in the fields of political science, economics, and history. This theory explains that the international system will be stable if there is a country that is the only *superpower* in the world or hegemon (Unipolar) (Webb & Krasner, 1989). The stability of the international system will be threatened if the hegemon falls or is replaced by another country.

The theory also emphasizes the importance of the role of big countries as the only power or hegemon that can establish order and stability and world peace. One of the key mechanisms in this Theory is the provision of public goods, where a superpower capable of providing most public goods is required to solve collective action problems (Rosamond, 2023). The main claim of hegemonic stability theory is that the nature of the global economic system is significantly affected by power relations between states. The best conditions for the development of an open and stable international economic system are those that result from a hegemonic distribution of power, defined as a distribution of power controlled by a single state (Webb & Krasner, 1989).

According to the hegemonic stability theory, hegemons behave like privileged groups and therefore prevent freedom. A hegemony is a country that produces most of the global total and leads in the creation of new technologies. The hegemony benefits greatly from trade due to its size and level of technical development, so it is ready to bear the entire cost of developing international trade rules. In addition, the hegemony realizes that its contribution is necessary for the provision of public goods. Therefore, during the hegemony's rule, the issue of free riding basically disappears, and a stable regime is established. When a hegemon's power is threatened, it is not willing to bear the cost of maintaining trade rules and world trade will not be as open as before (Oatley, 2018). Compared to the value society places on them, public goods are often more difficult to obtain. Free riding is a phenomenon that makes public goods difficult to obtain. The scenario where people depend on

others to pay for public goods is referred to as free riding (Sandler, 1992).

According to hegemonic stability theory, hegemony can promote collaboration and stability in the international system, but it can also cause conflict and stress. Although some researchers argue this theory asserts that openness is only possible in the presence of hegemony, this is not the position taken by the originators of this theory. Krasner argues that a different distribution of power, such as one with several small states, can also result in an open system. However, the absence of hegemony can lead to instability and uncertainty in the global system. Proponents of this theory of hegemonic stability often cite the history of Pax Britannica and Pax Americana as evidence of hegemonic stability, as well as instability before World War I (when British hegemony declined) and instability in the interwar period (when US hegemony declined and the hegemony reduced its presence from world politics) (Cohen, 2008).

In the context of this research, the situation that occurred was the emergence of China as a new power challenging US dominance in the global economy. The basic assumption of this theory emphasizes unipolar stability, which assumes that the global economy can be stable if there is only one dominant actor. However, China's presence has caused this system to no longer be unipolar, thus causing chaos. This is because the US views China as a threat that could disrupt its position. As a result, various countries are experiencing difficulties due to the trade war, leading many to take strategic steps in trade such as diversification, trade diversion, and involvement in various free trade agreements. In addition, affected third-party countries are required to engage in dialogue with both the US and China to negotiate various trade barriers implemented as mitigation measures against greater impacts. These actions should be taken since both China and the US have large resources that are needed by many other countries.

IV. Discussion

a. Structural Shifts in Global Power: From US Dominance to China's Rise

The contemporary rivalry between the United States and China cannot be understood without examining the long-term structural changes that have reshaped the global economic system. Following the end of the Second World War, the United States emerged as the primary actor capable of stabilizing the international economy. Its leadership was institutionalized through the Bretton Woods arrangements of 1944, which created the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and through postwar initiatives such as the Marshall Plan that facilitated Europe's economic recovery (John, 1989). This period also witnessed the expansion of American influence in the global trade regime through support for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The dominance of the United States and the central position of the dollar created a predictable environment that aligned with the core assumptions of Hegemonic Stability Theory. According to this theory, a single powerful state can provide public goods, enforce rules, and reduce uncertainty in the global economic system (Webb and Krasner, 1989; Rosamond, 2023).

This stability gradually shifted as China experienced rapid economic transformation.

Beginning with the 1978 reform program known as Gaige Kaifang, China opened its economy to foreign investment and developed large industrial zones that became the foundation of its manufacturing strength (Silfiana, 2018). China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 accelerated its integration into global supply chains and significantly increased its export capacity. By 2018, two thirds of all countries traded more with China than with the United States, a dramatic reversal from the trade patterns of the 1980s (Rajah and Leng, 2019). China's economic expansion was equally notable in terms of scale. Its gross domestic product grew from 1.2 trillion dollars in 2000 to 17.7 trillion dollars in 2021, which represented one of the most sustained economic expansions in modern history (Allison et al., 2022).

Figure 1. Global Trade Through US-China Lens
Source: (Rajah & Leng, 2019)

China's rise has also been accompanied by an active effort to shape regional and global economic institutions. The Belt and Road Initiative expanded China's infrastructure influence across multiple regions. In addition, China played a central role in constructing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which now accounts for nearly one third of global economic output (Ajami, 2021). In contrast, the withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership limited its institutional presence in the Asia Pacific region, while the remaining members continued the agreement under the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (Aggarwal, 2016; Bluth and Jungbluth, 2020). These developments highlight a broader shift from a system once dominated by a single hegemon toward a configuration where influence is increasingly shared and contested.

This transition from a unipolar to a semi bipolar or multipolar environment is central to understanding the current instability in the global economic system. Hegemonic Stability Theory suggests that periods of transition are characterized by uncertainty because no single state is both willing and able to maintain the rules that underpin open economic exchange (Oatley, 2018; Sandler, 1992). The United States still plays a crucial role in security networks and in several global institutions. However, China now holds dominant positions in global manufacturing, regional trade frameworks, and many supply chain networks. The coexistence of two major powers with overlapping spheres of influence has created a competitive environment in which trade norms, investment patterns, and technological standards are increasingly contested.

These structural shifts are essential for understanding the varied impacts of the United States and China trade conflict on Canada, Australia, and Vietnam. Each of these countries is positioned differently within the emerging distribution of global power and therefore

experiences distinct forms of economic pressure. The rivalry between the two major powers intensifies systemic uncertainty, particularly for countries that maintain strong ties with both. The following sections examine how these dynamics affect each country and how their responses reflect broader changes in international economic order.

b. Trade War and Its Impact on Global Economic Stability

The rivalry between the United States and China is increasingly apparent and felt when the two countries compete for influence in the international trade system. Both the United States and China have long tried to outperform each other in many aspects of life. One of the events that currently attracts the most attention is when the two countries holding the world economy are involved in a trade war. In response to the trade war, China is trying to reduce its dependence on the US by carrying out various initiatives, one of which is Made in China 2025. This initiative aims to modernize China's industrial capabilities. This is a 10-year comprehensive strategy, which focuses heavily on smart manufacturing in 10 strategic sectors and aims to secure China's position as a global power in high-tech industries such as robotics, aviation, and new energy vehicles such as electricity and biogas (Institute for Security and Development, 2018). Moreover, previously Huawei, which is a Chinese cell phone brand, was one of the biggest potential security threats with their new 5G network. During this conflict, many governments, companies, and political leaders considered the importance of banning Chinese products in the US. The new 5G network developed by Huawei, although very fast, is believed to be used for surveillance by the Chinese government (Bhall, 2019). This condition pushed China to rely on their own technology rather than using US-based technology, such as Google software. This means that Chinese technology companies have had to adapt quickly in creating and using different operating systems (Tang, 2019). This Made in China 2025 initiative is a breakthrough to encourage China's independence regarding technological production. The rivalry between the two countries creates economic and geopolitical competition that tends to increase tensions in the international system.

Some argue that trade wars can have a positive impact on several countries, including Vietnam (Ha & Phuc, Nguyen Duc, 2019). However, it cannot be denied that trade wars tend to have a negative impact on the US and China as countries directly involved and on the global economic system (Cerutti et al., 2019). In this section, we will describe how trade wars have a significant impact on the stability of countries involved in relations with the two conflicting countries.

Canada

Canada and the United States (US) have a very close relationship in economics, military, and diplomacy. Canada is a member of the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) which consists of three countries: the US, Canada, and Mexico. The US being Canada's largest trading partner more than Mexico, due to its emphasis on exports, Canada's economy is defined by its reliance on strong trade relations with countries like the US, which has a sizable customer base. Since 1993, US and Mexican investment in Canada have quadrupled, marking a significant increase in

cross-border investment during the NAFTA period. US investment increased from $70 billion in 1993 to more than $368 billion in 2013, accounting for more than half of Canada's FDI share. Overall, Canada has increased its dependence on trade with the United States with 75% of the value of exports to the country. As a result of Canada's dependence and close relationship with the US, Canada has been affected by the US-China trade war, which has destabilized the Canadian economy in several sectors, especially import-export (Flaherty, 2021).

This close diplomatic relationship between the US and Canada also gave birth to an extradition treaty. This extradition treaty was also used by the US to request Canada to arrest Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Chinese telecommunications company Huawei who was detained by Canadian police in response to a US extradition request. This is an important turning point in Canada's capacity to fill the gap created during the trade war, and it poses a particular challenge to the relationship between China and Canada (Flaherty, 2021). China's initial response was to close its ports to Canadian canola, beef and pork and detain two Canadian citizens in Beijing, accusing them of espionage. Several industries in Canada have been severely hurt by the US-China trade conflict and the arrest of Meng Wanzhou in December 2018. China purchased 40% of Canadian canola in 2018, with Canadian canola seed exports to China worth about C$2.17 billion. But in 2019, China banned Canadian canola imports. Then, in late June, China also banned Canadian pork imports, which dealt a major blow to Canada as China is its largest pork market (Chatzky et al., 2020).

Therefore, Canada is suffering because of this trade conflict, as China's ban on Canadian agricultural products is due to Canada's close relationship with the US. Since prices are highly sensitive and can be significantly affected by diplomatic tensions, Canadian agriculture is thus caught in the middle of this battle. In response to this situation, Canada has diversified its trade by expanding access to non-US markets through FTAs (e.g., CETA with the European Union, CPTPP), providing support to affected sectors such as agriculture through subsidies and assistance to farmers, and strengthening its position in multilateral trade negotiations (Chen, 2025). From another perspective, this situation opens opportunities for broader cooperation for Canada through its involvement in various free trade areas.

Australia

Australia's economic dependence on China places it in a vulnerable position about the dynamics of the US-China trade war. As one of the largest exporters of iron ore, coal and natural gas, Australia relies on China as its main market, which absorbs most of its commodities.

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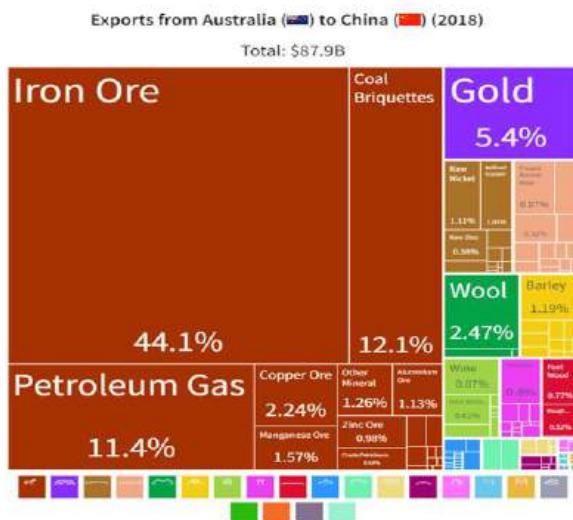
Figure 2. Export from Australia to China
Source: (OEC, 2018)

Based on the data above in 2018, the main products exported by Australia to China were iron ore ($38.8 billion), coal ($10.6 billion) and natural gas ($10.1 billion). We can see that Australia's dependence on China lies in the export of natural resources (OEC, 2018).

President Trump's tariff increase on China has had a significant impact on Australia. This is because the tariffs imposed by President Trump can affect Australia's exports to China. If tariffs are high, Chinese products will become more expensive, so China will experience a decrease in demand from consumers. Then, Australia's exports to China will also decline, so that it can reduce Australia's access to the Chinese market. In the end, Australia's export revenue will also decline.

In addition to affecting Australia's import-export activities, the US-China trade war also affects Australian investment. As explained earlier, the US-China trade war has caused global economic uncertainty, which has an impact on investment. Investors will become more cautious in investing. The imposition of high tariffs by the US-China also makes production costs increase which causes companies to make considerations which then affect the investment decision.
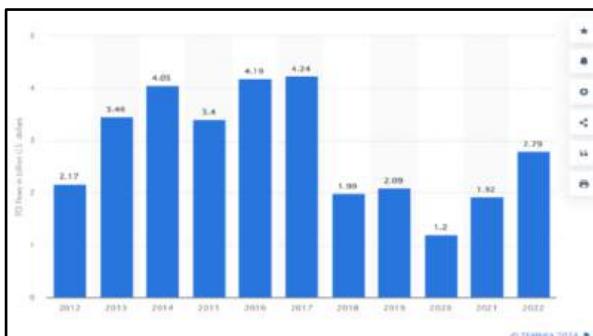
Figure 3. Annual Flow of Foreign Direct Investment from China to Australia between 2011 and 2022 (in billion USD)
Source: (Statista, 2022)

Based on the Statista data above, China's annual flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Australia has decreased in 2018. Previously, in 2017 China's annual flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Australia was $4.24 billion. Then, in 2018 it decreased to as much as $1.99 billion (Statista, 2022). Trade tensions between the US and China have prompted the Australian government to implement stricter investment policies, making it difficult for foreign investors, especially those from China, to invest in Australia. This policy reflects the Australian government's vigilance in maintaining national security. In addition to these policy factors, the weakening of China's economy due to tariff pressures has also contributed to a decline in investment flows. This is due to the tendency of Chinese companies to prioritize domestic economic stability over overseas expansion.

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The trade tensions between the US and China have the potential to hamper global demand. The Australian government continues to create new opportunities for businesses and exporters (Bagshaw, 2018). This is done to overcome the economic shock of falling global demand and reduce export dependence on China. Australia is also seeking to expand its export activities to other countries as a form of market diversification. However, this diversification is difficult to achieve in the short term because Australia's export structure is heavily dependent on demand from China industries, particularly in the steel dan energy sectors, making market shifts require significant time. To maintain relations with both major powers, Australia also continues to strengthen diplomatic relations with the US-China in order to minimize the impact of the US-Chin. In addition, Australia responded with several steps such as continuing to emphasize "open regionalism" and rejecting the overly protectionist "trusted trade" policy, strengthening regional economic integration and expanding cooperation through economic alliances such as the Quad and Five Eyes, while still hile still maintaining trade openness (Laurenceson & Armstrong, 2023).

In the context of Hegemonic Stability Theory, the phenomenon occurring in Australia shows that countries with high economic dependence on a single major power, such as China, place themselves in a more vulnerable position when rivalry arises between two hegemons. Australia has experienced negative impacts due to its economic structure being centered on Chinese market demand, particularly in the commodities sector. As tensions escalate, Australia faces the risk of declining exports, weakening Chinese investment, and pressure to adjust national policies in order to maintain economic stability.

Vietnam

Vietnam is often identified as the country that benefits the most from the United States and China trade war, yet its experience must be understood analytically within the broader structural context of shifting global power relations. Vietnam's economic linkages with both the United States and China are historically deep, although the nature of these linkages differs significantly. As a socialist-oriented economy led by the Communist Party, Vietnam has long maintained close investment and trade cooperation with China, which was further institutionalized after the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2020. This agreement expanded Vietnam's export and import channels with China and reinforced its integration into China-centered production networks. At the same time, Vietnam has cultivated increasingly strong trade ties with the United States, particularly after joining the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in 2022, which focuses on economic development and innovation (Ngoc, Pham Phuong & Wie, 2023). This dual engagement positioned Vietnam in a structurally advantageous location: it was economically connected to both competing powers, yet not locked into the asymmetric dependencies that constrain countries such as Canada or Australia.

The impact of the trade war on Vietnam reflects this structural position. Rather than facing immediate economic losses, Vietnam experienced substantial gains driven primarily by trade diversion. As tariff barriers reduced American

imports from China by 13.9 percent in the first three months of 2018, the United States shifted procurement to alternative suppliers. Vietnam became one of the main destinations for this redirected demand, recording an export expansion of 40.2 percent to the United States during the same period (Fatharani, 2022). Vietnam's manufacturing structure, characterized by relatively low labor costs, improving regulatory reforms, and strong integration into global supply chains, enabled it to quickly absorb the inflow of new export orders. The country's trade surplus with the United States continued to expand in 2019, with exports rising by 24.5 percent, the highest growth rate recorded in recent years. At the same time, Vietnam also saw an increase in exports to China, which rose by 17.1 percent in 2019, indicating that the trade war did not force Vietnam to choose between the two markets but instead allowed it to deepen trade relations with both.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) dynamics further demonstrate Vietnam's ability to capitalize on geopolitical disruption. The trade war accelerated the relocation of production from China to Vietnam as firms sought to circumvent US tariffs. This resulted in a sharp rise in investment approvals, with more than 1,720 projects licensed in the first half of 2019, marking a 26 percent increase compared with the same period in the previous year. Total FDI inflows reached 16.74 billion dollars during these months, with 12 percent originating from China, making China the fourth-largest investor after Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore (Nguyen et al., 2014; Igorevna and Kristina, 2021). The manufacturing sector absorbed 71.8 percent of the total registered capital, reflecting Vietnam's growing

role as a preferred alternative production base in Southeast Asia. These patterns reveal that Vietnam was not merely a passive recipient of trade diversion but an active participant in global value chain restructuring triggered by the trade conflict.

Despite these gains, Vietnam's policy response reflects strategic caution rather than overconfidence. While the trade surplus with the United States expanded significantly, Vietnam recognized the risk of becoming overly dependent on the US market under conditions of geopolitical volatility. Washington's growing scrutiny toward trading partners with large surpluses created potential vulnerabilities. Consequently, Vietnam undertook deliberate diversification efforts, strengthening economic ties beyond the two major powers. A landmark agreement with the European Union eliminated 99 percent of tariffs on traded goods, offering significant opportunities for market expansion. Furthermore, Vietnam's participation in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) opened access to key markets such as Canada and Japan and enhanced Vietnam's resilience to geopolitical shocks (Boedreau and Chau, 2019). These policy choices demonstrate a conscious effort to avoid strategic entrapment and to maintain autonomy within an increasingly contested global environment.

Vietnam's experience offers a valuable refinement to Hegemonic Stability Theory. While the theory suggests that the absence of a single dominant hegemon tends to create instability and generate negative spillovers for most states, the Vietnamese case demonstrates that periods of structural transition do not necessarily produce uniform outcomes. Vietnam's pattern of

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development shows that countries with flexible economic structures and adaptive policy strategies may convert geopolitical disruptions into opportunities for strategic advancement. Its capacity to absorb redirected investment, expand export volumes, and deepen trade relations with multiple major partners indicates that agile economies are able to utilize systemic competition rather than be constrained by it. Moreover, unlike what happened in Canada and Australia, Vietnam has the potential to take advantage of this situation by encouraging the strengthening of domestic production capacity and the development of local resources to reduce dependence on the Chinese supply chain (Ha, 2025).

c. Implications

The findings of this study offer several important implications for understanding the dynamics of the international system, particularly in relation to Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST). Overall, the cases of Canada, Australia, and Vietnam demonstrate that rivalry between the United States and China has generated a higher level of uncertainty and instability compared with the period when the United States held an uncontested hegemonic position. In line with HST, the absence of a single dominant hegemon reduces the system's ability to maintain stability and consistent rule of enforcement.

However, the study also shows that the effects of this instability are not uniform. Canada and Australia illustrate the vulnerabilities experienced by middle powers that are economically or strategically dependent on one of the competing hegemons. Canada's strong dependence on the United States left it with

limited policy options when China imposed import restrictions as a form of political pressure. Similarly, Australia's dual dependence on China for economic growth and on the United States for security placed the country in a structural dilemma. These cases demonstrate that middle powers in a dual-hegemony system often experience reduced autonomy and a narrowing policy space, making them susceptible to external pressure from either side of the rivalry. This reinforces the core proposition of HST that bipolar or semi-bipolar systems tend to produce instability and increase risks for states lacking structural flexibility.

In contrast, Vietnam presents a different and more adaptive pattern. Owing to its flexible economic structure and active market diversification strategies, Vietnam successfully converted system-level disruption into economic gains. The redirection of investment flows from China, the surge in exports to the United States, and deeper integration into frameworks such as CPTPP and the EU–Vietnam Free Trade Agreement demonstrate that some states can turn systemic instability into opportunities for competitive advantage. Vietnam's ability to strengthen domestic production capacity and reduce reliance on Chinese supply chains shows that adaptive states can leverage hegemonic rivalry to enhance long-term resilience. This finding adds nuance to HST by showing that while instability increases in the absence of a single hegemon, not all states are equally disadvantaged. Vietnam's experience suggests that opportunities also emerge for states capable of strategic adjustment.

To illustrate these differences clearly, Table 1 summarizes the structural positions,

dominant impacts, and strategic responses of the three countries.

Table 1. Comparative Overview of Impact and Response in Canada, Australia, and Vietnam			
Analytical Dimension	**Canada**	**Australia**	**Vietnam**
Economic Dependence	Strong export dependence on the United States, limited diversification, politically aligned with Washington	Reliant on China for commodity exports and on the United States for security cooperation	Balanced trade with both major powers and integration into regional production networks
Main Impact of the Trade War	Chinese restrictions on canola, pork, beef resulting in significant export losses	Indirect export pressure from declining Chinese demand and a significant drop in Chinese FDI, increasing market uncertainty	Increased exports to the United States, strong FDI inflows, and relocation of manufacturing facilities
Structural Position	Vulnerable due to asymmetric dependence on a single hegemon	Exposed to dual vulnerabilities because economic ties are rooted in China while security ties rely on the United States	Advantageous structural position supported by competitive manufacturing and diversified partnerships
Policy Response	Attempts to diversify markets through CETA and CPTPP, supported by sectoral assistance, but still constrained by dependence on the United States.	Hedging strategy through market diversification and regional engagement, including stricter investment screening and support for open regionalism, but still unable to fully avoid instability	Diversification through CPTPP and EU agreements, strengthening domestic production capacity

These findings lead to two key conceptual reflections. First, the study reinforces HST's assumption that the international system becomes more fragile when no single hegemon is able to provide stability and coordinated rules. Second, the study challenges the simplified view that instability affects all states in the same way. Vietnam illustrates that states with flexible economic structures can take advantage of multipolar competition, while Canada and Australia reveal the opposite trend, namely the loss of autonomy and increased exposure to economic and political risks.

Thus, the implications of this research are not only relevant for international relations theory

but also for global economic policymaking. Middle powers need to strengthen market diversification, enhance domestic industrial capability, and adopt adaptive strategies to navigate an international system that is increasingly competitive and less predictable.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the US–China trade war has significant implications for the stability of the international economic system. The rivalry between the two major powers generates broader global economic tensions that affect countries embedded in their trade and investment networks. The cases of Canada, Australia, and Vietnam reveal that exposure to hegemonic rivalry is not evenly distributed. Canada and Australia face export losses, declining investment, and reduced policy flexibility due to their structural dependence on one hegemon, whereas Vietnam benefits from diverted trade and investment flows, showing that systemic disruption can also create opportunities.

These outcomes align with the core ideas of Hegemonic Stability Theory. The presence of two dominant powers in the global economy reflects the absence of a single hegemon capable of maintaining systemic stability. The US–China trade war has increased uncertainty for businesses and global markets, disrupted supply chains, and influenced investment decisions. The contrasting results among the three countries indicate that states with rigid economic dependencies are more exposed to risk, while those with flexible structures and adaptive policies may leverage instability for strategic gain. This confirms that today's bipolar or emerging multipolar system contributes to asymmetric outcomes among states and greater economic uncertainty.

The study suggests that middle powers must prioritize economic diversification, broaden trade partnerships, and strengthen domestic industrial capacity to reduce vulnerability to geopolitical rivalry. Further research should examine a broader range of countries to better understand the conditions that enable some states to benefit during hegemonic rivalry, and to assess whether Vietnam's adaptive strategy can serve as a model for other regions as global power dynamics continue to evolve.

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Research Article

The Role of Third Parties in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Negotiation Process 2003-2015

Qory Fizrianti Beru Sitepu
Department of International Relations, University of Indonesia
Qory.fizrianti@ui.ac.id

Abstract

This article analyses the JCPOA negotiation process using the Third Side Negotiation Theory by mapping three key stages: preventing, resolving, and containing. Using a qualitative case study design, with a deductive approach, this study draws on official JCPOA texts, UNSC resolutions, IAEA reports, policy documents, and secondary academic sources. The findings show that the success of the JCPOA is inseparable from the intervention of third parties—particularly the UNSC, E3, and IAEA—who played pivotal roles in preventing escalation, mediating diplomatic deadlocks, and monitoring compliance throughout the negotiation period. The study contributes to negotiation and conflict-resolution scholarship by demonstrating how third-party intervention can transform high-risk geopolitical confrontation into a cooperative, rule-based agreement, with implications for future nuclear diplomacy frameworks and multilateral negotiations involving asymmetric power relations.

Keywords: JCPOA, Iran, Negotiation, P5+1

I. Introduction

Negotiation is a form of diplomatic effort as well as an instrument of conflict resolution between actors aimed at achieving common interests through dialogue, compromise, and the formation of international agreements (Berridge, 2015). The negotiation process is employed to avoid the use of military force, thereby strengthening international stability and promoting peaceful settlement (Malanczuk, 1997). The results of these negotiations are outlined in formal and legally binding international documents, such as treaties, conventions, or mutual agreements, to ensure compliance by the countries involved (Malanczuk, 1997).

One important practice of successful international negotiations is the formation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement in 2015, involving the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany (P5+1), as well as Iran, regarding restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme (CRS, 2024). In the formation of the agreement, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (E3) were the countries that formed the primary foundation for the negotiations. On the other hand, to prevent the escalation of tensions and the threat of more severe economic consequences, the EU Joint Commission served as a mediator, monitoring all parties involved in the agreement (Fitzpatrick, 2017). The urgency of examining the JCPOA arises from its significance as one of the most notable diplomatic outcomes in recent global security politics, particularly in addressing the risks of nuclear.

proliferation in the Middle East. Iran's nuclear activities raised concern among major powers and neighbouring states, sparking debates regarding the possibility of a regional nuclear arms race, heightened geopolitical

instability, and the threat of military escalation (CRS, 2024; Fitzpatrick, 2017). Prior to the agreement, more than a decade of sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and stalled negotiations demonstrated the difficulty of resolving nuclear disputes through coercive or unilateral strategies alone (Sauer, 2007; Mousavian, 2023). The JCPOA, therefore, represents a critical turning point—not only because it temporarily constrained Iran's nuclear capabilities under comprehensive IAEA verification mechanisms, but also because it demonstrated that complex, high-stakes security disputes could be addressed through negotiated and institutionalised frameworks rather than through military confrontation (Jolley, 2018; Mills, 2024). Its relevance extends beyond the Iran case, offering broader implications for nuclear governance, multilateral diplomacy, and conflict resolution in similarly sensitive international contexts.

The agreement aims to limit Iran's nuclear programme for the next 10 to 25 years through various technical provisions, such as limiting nuclear use to 90%, reducing the use of uranium in centrifuge operations to 6,104, and full supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Iran's uranium enrichment facilities (Jolley, 2018; Mills, 2024). As a result of the agreement, the P5+1 ended nuclear-related economic sanctions and allowed Iran to sell oil on the international market. Furthermore, the P5+1 also had to recognize Iran's right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes (Mills, 2024).

During the 12-year intensive negotiation process between the P5+1 and Iran, the JCPOA became a testament to the negotiations that involved various actors in diverse situations to produce an agreement of international significance (Jolley, 2018). Before the JCPOA was formed, lengthy negotiations had been conducted by the E3 and Iran for years. However, these negotiations did not achieve significant results. Therefore, this unprecedented diplomatic event between the United States and Iran is not only a significant milestone in the history of international negotiations but also highlights a notable research gap (Mousavian, 2023). While previous studies have predominantly examined state-level bargaining strategies and power politics, far fewer have analysed the mediating role of third parties in shaping the JCPOA negotiation process.

Based on this explanation, this article will raise the research question 'How did the negotiation process of The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) 2003-2015?'. This article aims to fill the gap in analyzing the role of key parties in negotiations that facilitated and maintained stability during the JCPOA negotiation process from 2003 to 2015. It is based on the lack of previous studies that discuss systematically in mapping the JCPOA negotiation process through a third-party role-based approach. Therefore, this article will examine the constructive actions of third parties in preventing open conflict, resolving diplomatic deadlocks, and overseeing the implementation of the agreement.

Furthermore, this article will be divided into five main sections. The first section provides the background, problem formulation, and justification for the study's urgency. The second section will outline the

research method used. The third section outlines the theoretical framework of The Third Side Negotiation, providing the analytical foundation for understanding the JCPOA negotiation process from 2003 to 2015. Furthermore, the fourth section presents the results of the analysis by dividing the negotiation process into three main stages according to the theory: preventing, resolving, and containing. Finally, the fifth section presents the conclusions of the article's findings along with recommendations for future research.

II. Methods

This article employs qualitative methods, utilizing data collection and analysis techniques that focus on non-numerical data (Lamont, 2015). Then, a deductive approach is used to examine a single-case research design by linking various independent variables with dependent variables through hypotheses. In this case, the hypothesis refers to the use of theory as the primary conceptual framework (Neuman, 2014).

The data analysed in this article consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary data used comes from the official documents of the JCPOA international cooperation and agreement in 2015, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions especially Resolution 2231 in 2015, IAEA official reports related to the inspection and verification of Iran's nuclear programme, as well as official statements released through the official websites of the countries involved. This article also extensively utilizes secondary data derived

from scientific articles, mass media articles, reports from related institutions such as the Belfer Centre and CSIS, as well as previous studies related to the JCPOA.

The data collection technique relied on a document analysis approach, using systematic literature screening to identify relevant content related to negotiation patterns, actors' behaviour, third-party roles, and compliance mechanisms. The analysis process was carried out in three stages. First, the narrative content from each source was extracted and categorised based on its relevance to the negotiation timeline. Second, the material was coded thematically using analytical dimensions derived from Ury's negotiation model—Preventing, Resolving, and Containing. Once collected, the data will be classified into appropriate indicators according to the Third Side Negotiation Theory, in order to understand the process of conflict presence, agreement creation, third-party intervention, and the acceptance of international agreements that affect the formation of international agreements.

Upon further examination of the data, this article applies a triangulation strategy to strengthen the reliability of findings by comparing information across official primary documents, policy reports, and academic literature (Bryman, 2012). The analysis proceeds through narrative content analysis, which is used to reconstruct the JCPOA negotiation timeline and identify how actors' interests, strategies, and positions evolved. The coded documentary evidence is then organised deductively according to Ury's three negotiation stages; Preventing, Resolving, and

Containing—allowing the empirical material to be systematically linked to the theoretical framework. Through this combination of triangulation and thematic narrative analysis, the study ensures that claims about third-party roles are grounded in verifiable documentary evidence, yielding findings that are methodologically transparent, analytically consistent, and reflective of the complexity of the JCPOA negotiation process.

III. The Third Side Negotiation

The Third Side Negotiation theory, as explained by William Ury, suggests that negotiation with the help of a third party is necessary to reduce the intensity of conflict by forming an agreement that would be nearly impossible to achieve without it. In this case, the involvement of a third party can act as a mediator, facilitator, and peacekeeper, which is explained in three processes in the negotiation, namely Preventing, Resolving, and Containing (Ury, 2000).
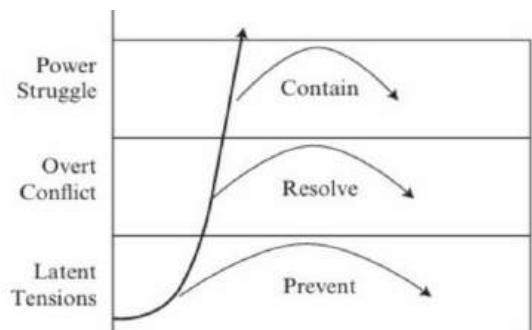
Containing roles: Witness, Referee, Peacekeeper
Resolving roles: Mediator. Arbiter, Equalizer, Healer
Preventing roles: Provider, Teacher, Bridge-builder

Figure 1. Third Side Negotiation Theory
Source: (Ury, 2000)

Based on Figure 1, the Preventing stage involves the provider, teacher, or bridge-builder as the initial party that identifies the threat of conflict, educates constructively, and establishes initial communication relationships (Ury, 2000). Then, in the Resolving stage, mediators, arbitrators, equalizers, or healers facilitate dialogue to find solutions, provide decisions based on shared criteria, balance power, and restore relationships damaged by conflict or historical tensions between the countries involved (Ury, 2000). Finally, in the Containing stage, the roles of witnesses, referees, and peacekeepers focus on monitoring, providing moral pressure, enforcing rules, and maintaining peace to prevent further escalation (Ury, 2000).

The various parties involved in the negotiation process help reduce the intensity of conflicts that occur in countries without prior agreements and a high level of conflict escalation (Ury, 2000). The agreements that are formed will also focus on cessation of violence agreements, such as ceasefires, to reduce the risk of damage and create a more expansive negotiation space (Zartman, 2008; Mousavian, 2023). The stability created by an agreement is considered to foster conducive conditions, resulting in a decrease in physical intensity through trust between the parties involved (Ury, 2000). It will also reduce greater losses if negotiations are not reached, both materially and socially. Therefore, to maintain the inclusiveness of the agreement, further resolution is necessary, accompanied by monitoring that takes into account the interests of all parties, ensuring continued

compliance with the agreement (Bercovitch & Gartner, 2009).

IV. Three Stages of Negotiation Process

According to the Third Side Negotiation theory, the negotiation process involves three stages that ultimately result in an agreement between the countries involved. This article will focus on these three stages by dividing them into three time periods: 2003-2004, 2005-2012, and 2013-2015. The three levels of time were formed based on the intensity of the conflict, the parties involved, and the form of interaction carried out, which is an important momentum that marks each negotiation process that takes place.

a. Preventing Stage 2003-2004

This stage will be divided into two processes during negotiations between the EU, Iran, and the IAEA to form the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The treaty contains agreements formed by the E3, the EU High Representative, the IAEA, and Iran as parties to the negotiations.

1. The 2003 Tehran Declaration

The starting point of the Iran nuclear deal negotiations can be found in the disclosures made by the National Council of Resistance of Iran in 2002 as an Iranian political organization that opposed the Iranian regime by stating that Iran was secretly working on a nuclear weapons programme (Sauer, 2007). This resulted in the formation of the IAEA General Conference in September 2002, with the Iranian Vice President and the President of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEIO) present to look into confirming the use of

nuclear power in Iran. At the conference, Iran confirmed its efforts to initiate long-term plans for building a nuclear power plant and constructing a large nuclear-related underground facility at Natanz, as well as a heavy water production plant at Arak (IAEA, 2006). Another confirmation occurred in February 2003 by the IAEA Director General, who visited Iran, accompanied by Iran's acknowledgement of its uranium enrichment programme and new facilities located at Natanz and Arak.

As a result of these direct statements, in June 2003, the IAEA reported that Iran had failed to fulfil its obligations under the Safeguards Agreement concerning the reporting of nuclear material, the processing and subsequent use of such material, and the declaration of facilities where nuclear material is stored and processed. This led the Foreign Ministers of the E3 countries to write to Iran to further discuss the nuclear programme issue before the UNSC. The E3 also urged Iran to halt its ongoing enrichment activities and the upgrading of its uranium facilities (Mousavian, 2023). Therefore, on October 21, 2003, a meeting was held in Tehran at the initiative of the E3, inviting the E3 Foreign Ministers, the Iranian Foreign Minister, and the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (Mousavian, 2023).

During the meeting, the E3 proposed three main demands—first, Iran's full cooperation with the IAEA in some of Iran's nuclear activities. Second, Iran should sign the Additional Protocol, as it is a part of the NPT that contains ratification procedures, and ultimately, suspend Iran's uranium enrichment

and reprocessing activities. Finally, in November 2003, Iran agreed to provide a comprehensive description of its nuclear activities, accompanied by an agreement to sign the Additional Protocol. On December 18, 2003, Iran signed the Additional Protocol under the Safeguards Agreement on nuclear non-proliferation.

Despite the agreement, in September 2004, Iran began converting Uranium into Uranium gas, or one step further towards Uranium conversion with possible military use. This created tension at the negotiating table and required E3, as the EU's representative, to urge Iran to cooperate and immediately halt its enrichment activities (Sauer, 2007).

2. Paris Agreement 2004

Iran's violations led to an IAEA Board of Governors meeting on 18 September 2004. The IAEA issued a resolution urging Iran to provide all necessary information before the next meeting, scheduled for November 2004. If Iran did not submit the report, a report would be prepared and sent to the UN Security Council (Sauer, 2007).

The next meeting was held in Paris on November 15, 2004, with the EU High Representative in attendance. Generally, the Paris Agreement required Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment activities during talks with the E3 and the EU (Davenport, 2018). In this agreement, the EU reaffirmed Iran's commitment to the NPT and acknowledged Iran's rights under the NPT, particularly the right to enrichment for peaceful purposes (Mousavian, 2023). These negotiations saw Iran reaffirm that it does not and will not seek

to acquire nuclear weapons and commit to full and transparent cooperation with the IAEA. Furthermore, to build trust with the EU, Iran reaffirmed that it would voluntarily continue and expand its suspension to cover all activities related to its enrichment and reprocessing nuclear activities.

During this stage, the E3 demonstrated initiative by taking early Leadership in shaping diplomatic engagement with Iran. However, the progress achieved during this period was fragile, mainly because the agreements relied on voluntary commitments rather than robust enforcement mechanisms. Iran's subsequent resumption of enrichment activities suggests that the E3 lacked sufficient leverage to transform temporary de-escalation into durable compliance, reflecting both the limits of persuasion-based diplomacy and the absence of unified international pressure at this early stage.

Based on the Preventing stage, which describes the negotiations and meetings from 2003 to 2004, the E3 and the IAEA represent the provider, teacher, or bridge-builder as parties that initiated the negotiations, recognizing the potential for conflict escalation (Sauer, 2007; Davenport, 2018). The E3 and the IAEA also constructively educated and established initial communication links with Iran through the two established agreements, creating conditions conducive to peaceful relations by preventing the development of conflict into open conflict (IAEA, 2006; Davenport, 2018). This stage also demonstrates how the E3 and the IAEA acted as early bridge-builders, educators, and providers by initiating dialogue, identifying the

risks of nuclear escalation, and establishing initial norms of cooperation. Their efforts aligned with Ury's Preventing role by reducing the likelihood of conflict escalation and building the foundational trust necessary for formal negotiations.

b. Resolving Stage 2005-2012

This stage will be divided into two processes of the negotiation journey among the P5+1, Iran, and the IAEA. The series of attempts and meetings that took place did not result in an agreement between the parties involved. This was also accompanied by various changes in Presidential leadership in the countries involved, which made the negotiations experience numerous obstacles.

1. Sanctions by the UN

The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 led to political change in Iran. Ahmadinejad openly stated that Iran had the right to enrich uranium as a national priority and part of Iran's sovereignty, so Iran continued enrichment and uranium conversion activities at several nuclear facilities. As a result, the EU halted its negotiations with Iran, and the IAEA issued several warnings that were ignored by Iran (Davenport, 2018). Therefore, the IAEA and E3 recognized that negotiations with Iran were no longer viable and that the UNSC was needed to deal with Iran's nuclear activities (IAEA, 2006).

With the involvement of the UNSC in Iran's case, the issue of sanctions to be imposed on Iran arose. EU High Representative Javier Solana recommended limited sanctions on Iran, such as visa bans on key Iranian officials, and clarified the EU's position on military actions in Iran to the detriment of the international community (MacAskill & Tait, 2006). As a result of global security concerns and UNSC involvement, in June 2006, China, Russia, and the United States joined the EU to form the P5+1 to propose a framework agreement to Iran that offered incentives for Iran to suspend its enrichment programme (Davenport, 2018). The P5+1 made demands in 2003 for full cooperation and reassessment by the IAEA, as well as the suspension of all enrichment activities and verification by the IAEA. It urged Iran to implement the Additional Protocol it had previously signed (Solana, 2006).

In the same year, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1696 of 2006, which made it legally binding for Iran to honour the IAEA's call for the suspension of nuclear enrichment and reprocessing-related activities, with imposed deadlines (Davenport, 2018). However, Iran did not meet the deadline set by the UNSC and was sanctioned by Resolution 1737 in the same year. Resolution 1747 in 2007 and Resolution 1803 in 2008 were follow-up resolutions that focused on sanctioning arms sales to Iran and tightening other sanctions (Davenport, 2018).

Despite the sanctions, the P5+1 negotiated with Iran through the formation of cooperation proposals and ultimately held meetings with Iran in Geneva and Istanbul. However, these meetings did not result in substantive agreements and were considered to only benefit the Iranian side. Then, in October 2009, the P5+1 and Iran agreed to a proposal regarding one of Iran's nuclear facilities. The proposal involved a fuel swap, whereby Iran would export 3.5% enriched

uranium in exchange for 20% enriched uranium fuel. However, domestic opposition and prominent Iranian politicians voiced their objections to the arrangement, so the implementation of the proposal did not materialize (Davenport, 2018).

In the same year, UNSC Resolution 1835 was again issued, reaffirming previous resolutions adopted regarding Iran's nuclear programme. Like several resolutions issued previously, Iran still ignores several resolutions that have been issued and continues to carry out nuclear development activities (Zartman, 2021).

2. Sanctions by the UNSC, US, and EU

On June 9, 2010, UNSC Resolution 1929 was adopted, significantly expanding sanctions against Iran. This included tightening sanctions related to proliferation as well as a ban on Iran's ballistic missile activities, an arms embargo on the transfer of Iran's major weapons systems, a ban on companies from other countries working with Iran's energy industry, and a ban on financial transactions with Iranian banks, (Davenport, 2018).

The Council of the European Union also provided a comprehensive EU sanctions package against Iran, by UNSC resolutions, covering trade, financial services, energy, transport, as well as visa bans and asset freezes (Council of the EU, 2012). Along with this, the United States also adopted the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act to expand economic sanctions against Iran (United States Congress, 2010). As a result, the P5+1's reconvening meetings with Iran in Geneva and Istanbul did not yield any substantive agreements due to a lack of support from the various parties to the negotiations (Davenport, 2018).

In 2012, the IAEA reported Iran's Uranium enrichment operations at a 20% level at a deeply buried underground facility in Fordow (Council of the EU, 2012). Therefore, the Council of the EU began implementing additional restrictive measures in the energy sector including a phased embargo on Iranian crude oil imports to the EU, the financial sector, the transport sector, further export restrictions on gold and goods and technology, as well as additional designations of persons and entities (Council of EU, 2012).

Based on the explanation above, the Resolving stage is the stage with the highest level of negotiation intensity based on Ury's Resolving role. The P5+1 and the UNSC are the parties that represent the role of mediators, arbitratos, and equalizers in facilitating dialogue to find solutions, providing decisions based on shared criteria, and balancing power (Zartman, 2021). The P5+1 also plays an important role as a mediator who restores damaged relations following the change of President in Iran, which has an impact on creating obstacles to negotiations. In this case, the P5+1 countries also play a significant role in the negotiation process, which has not ceased at every opportunity, as a representation of a form of problem-solving negotiation, examining the substantive context and prioritizing win-win solutions in the various agreements reached.

c. Containing Stage 2013-2015

This stage will explain the process of open and secret negotiations conducted with minimal conflict escalation compared to previous years. At this stage, another party, namely Oman, a country that initiated a secret meeting between the US and Iran to conduct negotiations, also became involved.

Previously, in February 2013, the P5+1 held a meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan, without producing an agreement, and no further meeting agenda was scheduled (Davenport, 2017). In March 2013, the Sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Said Al Said, offered to secretly host a three-day meeting between US Deputy Secretary of State William Burns and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Asghar Khaji. This marked a new beginning for the US and Iran, as they began secret bilateral talks in November 2013 (Trynor, 2013).

It also coincided with the election of Hassan Rouhani to the Iranian presidency, who called for the resumption of negotiations with the P5+1 and Iran (Davenport, 2018). The Iranian president replaced Iran's negotiating team led by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, a career diplomat who had spent almost half his life in the US, in a meeting with the P5+1 in August (Belfer Centre, 2018). On September 26, 2013, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, the P5+1 foreign ministers also met with Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, who presented a new proposal for negotiations to the P5+1. Therefore, all parties agreed to meet in Geneva on October 15, 2013 (Davenport, 2018).

Meetings between the P5+1 and Iran took place over three stages in Geneva, on 15-16 October, 7-10 November, and 20-24 November. In these meetings, the basic design of substantive negotiations and the projected future cooperation between the countries resulted in positive steps regarding the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. The negotiations were depicted at a multidimensional level, involving several multilateral meetings and bilateral reunions among all actors involved in the negotiation process (Traynor, 2013). Ultimately, on November 24, 2013, the P5+1 and Iran announced the formation of the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA), which provided limited temporary sanctions relief to Iran, subject to oversight by the IAEA (Centre for Strategic & International Studies, 2017). The JCPOA was then implemented on January 20, 2014, and is considered a long-term, comprehensive solution (Jolley, 2018).

Additional rounds of negotiations took place in Vienna in June, July and November 2014 (Davenport, 2018). The multiple rounds of talks were the result of an impasse in the negotiations. It was due to recurring disagreements between the parties regarding the limits of Iran's uranium enrichment capacity and the duration of the restrictions on nuclear activities. As a result, another meeting was held from December 2014 to March 2015 to reach an agreement on the general framework of a comprehensive nuclear deal (Davenport, 2018). In July 2015, intensive negotiations were conducted by all parties in Vienna over a period of two weeks, resulting in an agreement on the JCPOA.

The JCPOA is considered a historic agreement that ensures Iran's nuclear programme exclusively has peaceful purposes. The agreement includes Iran's long-term plans, with agreed-upon limits on Iran's nuclear program, and will result in the comprehensive lifting of all sanctions in UNSC resolutions (Davenport, 2018). It also deals with the lifting of multilateral and national sanctions related to Iran's nuclear programme in access measures in various sectors, such as trade, technology, finance, and energy (Mogherini & Zarif, 2015). The JCPOA was signed in July 2015 and implemented in January 2016, with IAEA verification confirming that Iran fulfilled its commitments under the nuclear deal. Subsequently, UNSC Resolution 2231 came into force, and Iran implemented various measures that included modification of existing nuclear facilities and infrastructure. The EU also lifted temporary sanctions, and the US provided temporary waivers following the JCPOA (Centre for Strategic & International Studies, 2017).

Based on the explanation above, this stage illustrates Ury's final Third Side role, where peacekeepers, witnesses, and rule enforcers ensure compliance and prevent renewed escalation. The involvement of the UNSC, IAEA monitoring mechanisms, and Oman's facilitation of confidential talks contributed to stabilising the negotiation environment and sustaining commitment until the JCPOA was concluded, demonstrating how containment mechanisms can reinforce trust and safeguard agreements during critical final phases.

Furthermore, the culmination of negotiations reflects a shift toward more measurable and enforceable solutions (Zartman, 2021; Davenport, 2018), driven by the mutual interest of both sides in avoiding further escalation in the form of economic sanctions, embargoes, and renewed nuclear developments. However, while third-party involvement was ultimately instrumental in reaching consensus, its role was not uniformly constructive throughout the process. The repeated rounds of sanctions, procedural delays, and sometimes fragmented mediation approaches prolonged negotiations and, at times, reinforced mistrust rather than reducing it. Thus, the Containing stage demonstrates that third-party intervention operated both as a catalyst and a constraint—pressuring Iran toward compliance while simultaneously extending the diplomatic timeline before a final comprehensive agreement could be achieved (Zartman, 2021; Belfer Center, 2018).

V. Conclusion

This article explains the negotiation process in the JCPOA from 2003 to 2015, utilizing the Third Side Negotiation theory by William Ury. Through three main stages—Preventing, Resolving, and Containing—the article outlines the role of third parties, such as the UNSC, E3, and IAEA, which helped lower the intensity of the conflict by shaping the process and outcome of negotiations that were previously almost impossible. During the Preventing stage, the E3 and the IAEA functioned as early bridge-builders and educators by initiating dialogue and reducing escalation risks. In the Resolving stage, the

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UNSC and the P5+1 acted as mediators, arbitrators, and equalizers, facilitating structured diplomatic engagement and imposing calibrated pressure to shift bargaining positions. Finally, in the Containing stage, the IAEA, the UNSC, and Oman served as peacekeepers, witnesses, and rule enforcers by maintaining monitoring, enabling confidential diplomacy, and ensuring compliance until the JCPOA was concluded.

The main findings indicate that the involvement of these third parties was crucial in preventing open conflict, rebuilding trust between the countries involved, and ensuring the agreement's implementation through regular monitoring. The three stages of the negotiation process help to explain the flow of negotiations, intentions, interests, and efforts made by various actors more specifically.

This article suggests that multi-actor mediation frameworks remain highly relevant for future nuclear diplomacy. Nevertheless, their effectiveness depends on the co-existence of formal mechanisms and flexible informal channels, including back-channel diplomacy and confidence-building efforts. Accordingly, future research may further examine how informal negotiation mechanisms interact with institutional frameworks in shaping long-term compliance and agreement durability in similarly sensitive international negotiations An in-depth analysis of the communication carried out by diplomats, Track II diplomacy, and backchannel diplomacy by crucial actors representing the countries involved can be conducted to develop studies on micro-diplomacy.

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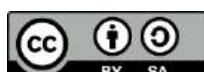
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Research Article

Bordering Beyond Borders: A Governmentality Analysis of Australia's Operation Sovereign Borders and Israel's Externalisation of Asylum Policy

Titan Alramadhan
School of Social and Political Sciences,
Master of International Relations,
University of Melbourne
talramadhan@student.unimelb.edu.au

Abstract
This paper analyses how Australia and Israel transform deterrence into an ethical means of moral control; it investigates how these nations are using the concept of "care" in order to rationalise their strict border management practices. Through its analysis of Australia's Operation Sovereign Borders and Israel's externalisation policies, this paper demonstrates how the act of coercion can be disguised as compassionate action, and exclusionary actions are portrayed as protective actions. This paper utilises the theoretical framework of Foucauldian governmentality to illustrate how the Australian and Israeli governments utilise moral reasoning to govern asylum seekers; they merge authority with empathy, and both appear to be one and the same. Furthermore, this paper illustrates that while deterrence may work through physical force, it also works by the notion that controlling movement is an ethically responsible obligation. Both instances demonstrate how morality is used as a mechanism of power and how humanitarian language serves as an exclusionary device. Thus, by demonstrating how such practices occur, this paper aids in explaining how the discourse of care has become a core aspect of the global governance of mobility.
Keywords: Governmentality, Operation Sovereign Borders, Externalisation, Asylum Seekers, Deterrence, Australia, Israel

I. Introduction

The sea has long been a source of promise and rejection. For those fleeing danger, it prompts hope of safety, but so often the hope ends in rejection. In recent years, governments have taken that contradiction and made it official policy. There are words of compassion, reasonableness, and obligation to save lives, but so often these words disguise control. This pattern emerges all too clearly in Australia's Operation Sovereign Borders and in Israel's relation to its African asylum seekers. Both profess moral purpose while engaging in deterrence.

Australia's Operation Sovereign Borders was initiated in 2013 with the idea of nullifying the advantage of boats traversing the oceans and carrying asylum seekers (van Berlo, 2015). The military, immigration agencies, and border authority were placed under one command, given the purpose of stemming deaths at sea. Israel, on the other hand, signed "voluntary departure" agreements with Rwanda and Uganda, calling it humanitarian expressed as relocation (Birger et al., 2018). The various emphases differ, but all bend coercion into care. They depend on moral reasonings in their guard of sovereignty but exclude others.

Despite their differences in geography, identity, and history, Australia and Israel deploy remarkably similar discursive strategies when justifying deterrence. Both governments frame restrictive border practices as necessary acts of protection that are carried out in the name of compassion and responsibility. In each case, humanitarian language softens the appearance of coercion, transforming interdiction at sea or removal to third countries into measures portrayed as humane solutions rather than exclusion. By tracing how

moral language operates within these policies, the study positions Australia and Israel not as separate cases but as parallel examples within a broader pattern of moral governance directed at asylum seekers. This comparative approach highlights that deterrence today is mediated through the language of care and that the border has become a site where compassion and control are fused.

This article will submit the idea of Michel Foucault's governmentality as a satisfactory explanation of the way in which states govern through moral reason. The term governmentality refers to the way in which the state has a monopoly on direct governing through force but controls through norms and persuasion (Foucault, 1991). It shows that moral eloquence can be a weapon of power, that compassion can be a result of governing (Fassin, 2011). When states mix verbal morality and nominal bureaucracy, they gain legitimacy among one another insofar as they are supposed to care. In immigration policy, this is the process whereby deterrence can be metamorphosed into moral governmentality (Bigo, 2002).

II. Literature Review

Michel Foucault's theory of governmentality has helped us understand how power can be exercised through the use of everyday forms of thinking and behavior rather than just law or the application of physical force; he defined governmentality as the "conduct of conduct," which is the ability to guide how individuals conduct themselves (Foucault, 1991). The focus of governmentality is how certain forms of thought create the appearance of legitimate and moral forms of control. In today's modern societies, governmentality is exercised through the

encouragement of self-discipline and responsibility, along with an alignment with a particular state agenda. Therefore, power is at its most effective when individuals perceive that they are making free choices and doing the "right" thing while still being governed (Foucault, 1991).

Governmentality is useful for understanding how migration control functions. Governments often frame restrictive policy initiatives as both morally imperative (for example, as humanitarian) and necessary (for example, as a means of maintaining national security). As Lemke (2002) points out, governmentality links moral thinking to political action and converts ethics into a tool for governing. Additionally, the use of moral language provides governments with a way to justify the act of excluding migrants from a country. Bigo (2002) terms this "a governmentality of unease," where fear and risk management are performed in the guise of protection. Furthermore, Fassin's term "humanitarian governmentality" illustrates how compassion itself is a mechanism of control, and when states articulate policies as a means of protecting lives and alleviating suffering, coercion is framed as care, and the state gains moral authority (Fassin, 2011).

Through governmentality, this research demonstrates how Australia and Israel have constructed deterrence in a manner that appears to be moral and ethical. Rather than viewing their border policies as unique or reactive, governmentality allows researchers to view these policies as an extension of a rational system that combines administrative, security, and moral reasoning. Both Australia and Israel establish legitimacy

by portraying exclusion as protection and control as compassion, and governmentality allows researchers to demonstrate the moral reasoning underlying these policies that sustains authority.

Additionally, governmentality facilitates comparative case studies. It does so by examining similar logics that underlie both cases, and not through geography or institutional frameworks. Therefore, researchers are able to examine the similarities in the reasoning that underlie Australia's sea-based deterrence and Israel's externalization agreements, and demonstrate how both are based upon similar reasoning regarding the governance of mobility. Finally, through this theoretical framework, governmentality allows researchers to not only demonstrate what these policies do but also provide insight into why they appear to be justified to those who develop and implement them.

III. Methodology & Data

This paper studies the field through qualitative textual and discursive analyses, as gained through government utterances, government legislation, academic writing, and evidence of asylum seekers. It studies connotation rather than denotation, with the view of gaining meaning on how the elocution of humanitarianism and security gives cover for deterrence. The argument of the paper is that both Australia and Israel are engaged in governmentality outside their respective borders. Their moral elocution attracts valid authority, whereas coercive solutions are made to appear responsible.

The analysis draws on recurring themes found across the texts, including moral justification, deterrence framing, responsibility narratives, and humanitarian language. Policy documents such as Operation Sovereign Borders briefings, amendments to Israel's Prevention of Infiltration Law, voluntary departure agreements, and official press statements are examined alongside independent reports, academic scholarship, and testimonies from asylum seekers. These materials are read not only for their explicit content, but for the ways they construct asylum seekers as subjects of protection or exclusion and align state interests with moral virtue. In doing so, the research uncovers how deterrence becomes articulated as care within differing legal and political environments.

The comparative component of the study is conducted through cross-reading rather than being treated as two separate case descriptions. Similarities are identified through shared rationalities of moral governance, and differences through institutional and historical contexts that shape how control is implemented. This approach is later illustrated through a comparative table that highlights patterns of convergence and divergence, demonstrating how both countries use humanitarian reasoning to justify exclusion, even through distinct mechanisms. In doing so, comparison becomes direct and visible within the analysis, showing that Australia and Israel are linked not by geography, but through a common governmental logic of deterrence presented as moral responsibility.

IV. Discussion

a. Australia: Operation Sovereign Borders

Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB), Australia's border enforcement agency since 2013, is much more than a border control

agency. Rather, it is a model of how a government transforms control into care. The government created OSB to be portrayed as a humanitarian response to stop illegal boat arrivals. The stated goals were to "save lives," "restore order," and "protect the country's borders." However, beneath the surface of this narrative is how deterrence has been transformed into moral governance. Using a military command structure, secrecy, and appeals to compassion, the Australian Government has effectively transformed coercive policies into policies of kindness (van Berlo, 2015).

From its inception, morality has provided the framework for the operational logic of OSB. The "No Advantage Principle," which was implemented in 2012, established the moral basis for the policy; the principle established that those arriving by boat would not receive any advantages over those who were waiting in offshore processing camps. According to Brown (2016), this was a transformation from restriction to fairness, and also suggested that the use of deterrence was not cruel but rather fair. Similarly, Ibekwe (2021) argues that when the Australian Government referred to its efforts as "saving lives at sea," it created another example of how interdiction could be framed as compassionate and, therefore, how the turning away of boats could be framed as protective rather than exclusionary. Thus, within the story of OSB, the prohibition on arrivals became an act of rescue.

The organizational structure of OSB also contributed to the framing of its mission as a humanitarian endeavor. The operation is managed jointly between the military and civilian authorities, which allowed the Australian Government to place the management of immigration within the purview of national defense. This enabled the government to maintain close control over the process and keep it secret. Van Berlo (2015) states that the Australian Government maintained a balance between "public panic" and "quiet maneuvering" to allow it to maintain public fear of unregulated borders while conducting the deterrent measures in a quiet and secretive manner behind bureaucratic processes. Kampmark (2017) further argues that the utilization of military authority allowed the government to conceal information regarding the details of the process in the name of national security, thereby preventing scrutiny of the process. Although the government utilized secrecy in implementing OSB, it has continuously spoken of the need to display compassion and fairness. Therefore, OSB used both fear and empathy to manage populations through the use of moralistic language.

Using the theoretical framework of governmentality, it can be seen that OSB demonstrates how morality can serve as a form of power. Citizens are socialized to view border control as a moral obligation, while asylum seekers are socialized to believe that their exclusion is due to their own decision-making. Furthermore, according to Ann Martin (2025), in this type of environment, sovereignty is more about defending national virtue than about protecting national territory. In essence, OSB represents a broader trend in governmentality where care and coercion become indistinguishable from each other. By describing its actions as being done to "save lives," the Australian Government legitimized its policies that deny asylum seekers access to safety. Ultimately, the control of individuals by

the state takes the form and meaning of compassion.

b. Comparative Discussion: Bordering Beyond Borders

Although Australia and Israel differ significantly in geography, history, and security environments, both countries rely on a similar moral logic when governing asylum seekers. Each state uses humanitarian narratives to frame deterrence as an ethical responsibility, transforming coercive measures into practices of care. Australia employs a military model to justify maritime interdiction, while Israel relies on bureaucratic pressure and legal categories to control mobility. These different tools produce the same effect: exclusion is presented as protection, and responsibility becomes a rationale for denying access. By placing the two cases side by side, the comparative nature of this study becomes clear, revealing that their approaches are not isolated national strategies but examples of a shared mode of governing through moral reasoning.

At first sight, there appears to be little in common between Australia and Israel: one, a great island continent surrounded by ocean; the other, a tiny state wracked by long-standing conflict and narrow borders. But their attitude towards refugees reveals a common logic. They both use morality as a language of control. They purport to save lives and protect fairness and national integrity, but what underlies those claims is a much more fundamental exercise of power. The Australian Operation Sovereign Borders and the Israeli externalization contracts both depend on humanitarian discourses that change coercion into care. This governmentality, as Foucault (1991) called it, is the practice of governance by means of norms and persuasion rather than force. In both instances, deterrence works not merely by movements being prevented but by citizens being taught what it is to be good, safe, and civil.

This governmentality has a similar aspect to morality. Australia enacts it through military operations and secrecy. Israel carries it into effect through bureaucracy and law. Both shift their border practices away from the public gaze to which they were initially exposed, by offshore detention and by third-country transfers. Van Berlo (2015) and Birger et al. (2018) show that the externalisation of control makes deterrence seem humane because its harshness is concealed. Each government defends exclusion under the aegis of a moral script: "saving lives at sea" in the one and "voluntary departure" in the other. Through these narratives, the moral necessity of deterrence perpetuates the notion of national virtue.

Dimension	Australia	Israel	Comparative Insight
Primary moral narrative	"Saving lives at sea" is presented as protection	"Voluntary departure" framed as individual choice	Both transform coercion into a form of care
Operational mechanism	Military interdiction, maritime turnbacks, secrecy	Bureaucratic pressure, legal categorisation as "infiltrators."	Different tools but similar logic of managing mobility
Mode of coercive soft power	Turnbacks justified as preventing harm	Forced "voluntariness" justified as humanitarian relocation	Soft power relies on moral reasoning in both cases
Visibility of deterrence	Offshore detention and classified operations reduce public scrutiny	Third-country transfers and administrative processes occur out of view	Deterrence is relocated away from the national public
Governmentality technique	Encourages self-blame and personal responsibility among asylum seekers	Normalises consent through legal procedures and language of choice	Both reshape behaviour through moralised governance
Outcome of the policy	Exclusion reframed as protection of life and order	Exclusion reframed as responsibility and moral compliance	Exclusion appears ethical in both national narratives

Table 1. Comparative Features of Moralised Governmentality in Australia and Israel
Source: Author's analysis

The table illustrates how Australia and Israel employ different institutional tools yet arrive at the same moralised logic of deterrence. Australia relies on military operations, secrecy, and a narrative of saving lives, while Israel uses legal classifications, administrative pressure, and the language of personal choice. Both states relocate the most coercive elements of their policies away from public view, and both justify exclusion through claims of compassion and responsibility. These similarities demonstrate that coercive soft power is not produced through force alone, but through moral reasoning that frames exclusion as ethical protection. When examined side by side, the two cases reveal a shared mode of governing mobility in which governmentality is expressed through moral claims that reshape how asylum seekers and citizens interpret responsibility, safety, and belonging.

The moral aspects of the various systems arise from differing histories, but each in practice attains the same results. Australia's past as a settler-colonial country is still glorified, yet rooted in a belief in sovereignty as both territorial and moral obligation remains deeply influential. Ann Martin (2025) notes that border control in Australia is often depicted as cleansing and protective, a mode of restoring order. In Israel, moralisation is allied to an ethnocratic state functioning to give Israeli identity an ethnic or Jewish form. Yaron et al. (2013) show that the label "infiltrator" serves not merely as a legal term but as a moral dividing point discriminating between the deserving and the undeserving. In each society, deterrence serves to disclose who belongs and who does not.

What ties these instances together and spreads this moralising governmentality across boundaries is another fact. Brown (2016) notes that the Australian system of deterrence has been adopted by other states, including Israel, so that those states as well have been encouraged to represent exclusion as a responsibility. This shows that deterrence has become a shared political language, no longer merely a means of preventing movement but one of moral order. Acts of resistance, such as the testimony of asylum seekers and the work of civil rights groups, expose the suffering concealed beneath this narrative. Yet the endurance of these policies suggests the degree to which the moral

justification of deterrence has become embedded in modern systems of power. Australia and Israel show that these boundaries are no longer mere physical delineations but moral frontiers, where compassion and control converge.

VI. Conclusion

The first step in this research was to understand how power works when it uses the language of care. This was achieved using governmentality, as well as showing that deterrents on both sides of the border were a moral issue for both Australia and Israel. Each country takes compassion and converts it into a method of governance; control looks like responsibility, with each country teaching citizens and asylum seekers that exclusion could be virtuous and that security and morality go hand in hand.

Governmentality is an effective means of revealing what is concealed within these narratives. It allows the analysis to show how moral reasoning functions as a technique of power that shapes how individuals understand danger, duty, and belonging. Australia uses "saving lives at sea" as the justification to transform deterrence into protection. Similarly, Israel transforms "voluntary departure" into a means of allowing the individual to make a personal decision about whether or not they wish to leave their home. While neither example is a slip of the tongue, they represent two methods of governing that allow the state to claim that control is not being used while maintaining a veneer of humanity. What sustains the continued use of deterrence is not only the coercive capacity of the state but also the belief that harm can be morally justified when it is framed as a protective act.

In addition, viewing these examples through a governmentality perspective illustrates how far-reaching the influence of these ideas has become. The rationale behind Operation Sovereign Borders can also be seen in Israel's externalisation arrangements and in the practices adopted by several other states. Deterrence has developed into a shared form of governance, and its spread occurs based upon moral rationales rather than geographic location. Deterrence operates not only at borders but in laws, in institutions, and in the day-to-day rhetoric of ethics.

A primary lesson from these examples is that moralized governmentality does not merely cover up coercion under a veil of compassion; rather, it transforms compassion into the mechanism of coercion. As such, when the act of saving lives is transformed into the rationale to close borders, humanitarianism becomes a subtle yet effective means of control. The importance of recognizing this transformation cannot be overstated. Only by understanding how morality has been incorporated into the mechanisms of deterrence will it be possible to envision a different type of protection, one that separates care from control.

Taken together, the findings from Australia and Israel show that deterrence operates through a shared moral framework that presents exclusion as an act of protection. Although the two countries employ different mechanisms, each relies on the same rationality that converts control into responsibility and transforms coercion into care. This study demonstrates that governmentality is central to understanding why these policies appear justified both to policymakers and to the public. It also shows that contemporary border governance is

shaped by moral narratives that influence how safety, virtue, and belonging are defined. Recognising this dynamic is essential for understanding the global reach of moralised deterrence and for imagining forms of protection that do not rely on the fusion of care and control.

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Research Article

Toward Resilient and Peaceful Futures: Climate Security and Governance in the Global South

Muhammad Danish Mohd Haikel
University of Sultan Zainal Abidin
Dmuhd983@gmail.com

Nur Izzah Hadirah Zawawi
University of Sultan Zainal Abidin
izzahdirah04@gmail.com

Syahir Arif Syahmi Sazali
University of Sultan Zainal Abidin
syahrsyahmy@gmail.com

Abstract
This study investigates the pivotal issues between climate change and security in the Global South. These countries, which often contribute the lowest emissions and are the least wealthy, are among those affected by climate change. This study aims to examine how governance challenges influence peacebuilding amid environmental crises by reform the security systems to incorporate climate security dimensions. Existing studies highlight the connection between environmental crises and conflict but often emphasize the Global North. There is a lack of comprehensive analysis exploring how good governance, diplomacy, and multilateral cooperation in the Global South can address climate security risks. The aim of this research is to fill that gap by examining governance approaches that will enhance peace and build more resilience amid environmental pressures. This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining policy reviews, case studies from the Global South, and quantitative analysis of environmental and conflict data. The results were understood using themes and statistics. The research highlights that effective governance is characterized by transparency and diversity can reform climate resilience and reduce prolonged impact. Multilateral efforts that address Global South voices yield more sustainable pathways and peace outcomes. The form of "climate diplomacy" that focuses on local, community-based solutions offer alternatives to conventional securitized approaches. This supports the urgent call to frame climate security as a collaborative governance challenge. Its findings provide empirical evidence and practical policy for climate adaptation with peacebuilding and security strategies and sustainable governance in the Global South amidst ongoing environmental change.
Keywords: Climate Security, Governance, Global South, Peacebuilding, Climate Diplomacy.

I. Introduction

In the past few decades, climate change has become a major menace to the international stability and the wellbeing of human populations and the entire natural environment. Climate change affects almost all aspects of economic and social development (Keohane, 2016). The escalating impacts of climate change pose an unprecedented challenge to global stability, increasingly recognized as a profound driver of conflict, displacement, and socioeconomic disruption (Maertens, 2021), mark a radical turning point defining the international security environment. As a result, a concept of climate

security has arisen, referring to the interplay between changing climatic conditions, namely, the increase in average temperatures, sea-level rise, and the intensification of the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, and the human aspects of water access, food availability, public health, and livelihoods. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023) notes that climatic disruption has significantly impacted physical and mental health in the evaluated areas and has worsened humanitarian crises that occur in places where climate-related hazards meet with increased vulnerability.

The Global South, most of whose member states are still among the poorest, tends to bear a disproportionately high burden of these effects, it produces a relatively low proportion of global greenhouse-gas emissions. In fact, the emission of China exceeds a quarter of the overall emission, and Africa and South America contribute to about 3-4 % of anthropogenic emission. However, the two continents are prone to high levels of exposure to extreme climatic events. This disproportionate impact exacerbates existing socio-economic vulnerabilities, manifesting as heightened food insecurity, water scarcity, and mass displacement, thereby creating complex humanitarian crises and destabilizing political landscapes (Häusermann & Kitschelt, 2024). The United Nations Environment Program (2024) also explains that high-income countries currently consume about six times the amount of material resources per capita compared to the low-income countries. However, the environmental effects that are emitted by

middle-income states are still less compared to those that are released by their rich counterparts. Environmental change threatens these conditions for dignified lives, and so constitutes a risk to the security of persons (O'Brien and Barnett 2013)

Researchers have assigned much of this disparity in vulnerability to disjointed governance architectures that do not incorporate the idea of climate security into collective peacebuilding efforts. Conventional security systems often consider the environmental factor as a policy sector in itself, even in situations where climate-related stressors coincide with long standing land, resource distribution, and political voice grievances. This showed the gap between empirical reality on fragmented and reactive governance and normative ideal which cohesive, proactive and resilience oriented toward climate security systems. This disjointed approach limits the ability to build sustainable peace, as climate-related stressors often intersect with existing grievances over land, resources, and political representation (Devi et al., 2024).

A human security lens draws attention to how climate change can lead to negative consequences for people, even if state security is not challenged (Adger et al., 2021). The fact that current governance models fail to incorporate climate security into more comprehensive peacebuilding agendas thus impedes the attempts to prevent the reoccurrence of crises as well as the development of resilient societies. This divergence highlights the need for a paradigm shift from solely state centric security models to a human-centric approach that

prioritizes the well-being and resilience of individuals and communities (Moulds et al., 2021).

Despite the fact that most contemporary research on climate security focuses on the Global North or even solely dwells on militaristic solutions, the importance of effective governance and multilateral climate diplomacy in the Global South is often underestimated. Climatic shocks in areas where governance capacity is in its infancy will undermine administrative systems, destroy the trust of the population, and increase prior resentment related to land, resources, and political representation (Adger et al. 2014: 774). Scarcity of fiscal resources, lack of adaptation mechanisms, and poor institutional arrangements then pose an obstacle to effective implementation of environmental protection. In this analysis, it is assumed that effective climate diplomacy, as well as inclusive and resilient governance systems, forms the necessary backbone of the construction of durability and the establishment of a sustainable peace within such precarious environments. In the case of the Paris Agreement, the agreement provides a multilateral framework against which Global South states can convert general commitments into locally specific approaches. Such diplomacy should be built into developmental pathways, poverty reduction efforts, rural-development programs and the like which incorporate climate security considerations within non-climate priorities of the society in general (Kok et al., 2008).

Action plans based on such governance issues must involve international efforts to build

peace building in the environment with joint institutional structures. To prevent continuous negative consequences, the joint participation of local governmental bodies, civil society organizations, and the actors of the private sector in the processes of resource control, mitigation of disasters, and peacebuilding is necessary. The embeddedness of institutions, furthermore, enhances the involvement of citizens and their capacity in the local governance systems, therefore, strengthening resilience (Edelenbos et al., 2010; Edelenbos, 2005). Since local governance is the most immediate institutional level, resilience-based policies at this level not only reduce the direct effects of climate change but also develop a lasting peace by reducing the conflict (Kurkela, 2022; Smith, 2009). International cooperation and comprehensive climate diplomacy are necessary to continue the work of closing the capacity gaps in vulnerable areas. Multilateral systems like the Paris Agreement are only important when states translate international commitments into national plans that respond to local conditions. In light of the fact that development priorities are essential, policymakers should incorporate climate security into national poverty reduction, rural development, and the overall Least Developed Country (LDC) transition agenda, shifting their focus in the process to proactive resilience-centered governance instead of reactive crisis management (Kok et al., 2008). This kind of agenda turns institutional paradigms to proactive resilience building as opposed to reactive crisis response, setting the stage to

more stable and peaceful futures in the Global South.

II. Methods

Using qualitative descriptive analytical research methodology, this paper examines the governance strategies in addressing climate related security in the Global South. The qualitative method allows deeper into the analysis of concepts and policies and is not only limited to quantitative indicators, making it relevant to complex, multidimensional problems, such as climate security.

The study relies on secondary data that are credible, such as peer reviewed journals, academic books, policy briefs, government reports and international organization publications, including the United Nations, IPCC, African Union, and ASEAN. Current news articles and NGO reports are also considered to the latest trend, developments and field practices.

The data are collected using a systematic literature review and numerous analysis documents. Eligible sources are being referred directly to at least one of the key themes of climate security, governance, or environmental peacebuilding in the Global South and have been published in the past 15 years, with some exceptions to foundational works.

The use of different case study in this paper is intentional as it reflects the multi-dimensional dynamics of climate governance in the Global South. Climate insecurity does not operate on certain states and regions, it emerges through regional conflict systems, national governance structure and local adaptive mechanism. Therefore, the case study design

strengthens a comparative analysis rather than undermining the consistency.

Thematic analysis used in data analysis so that the results are categorized according to relevant themes like human security, governance challenges, climate diplomacy and resilience building. The Human Security Approach, Environmental Peacebuilding Theory, a Governance and Resilience Framework identify and interpret patterns and differences.

III. Climate Security Risks in the Global South

The Global South has the highest risks relative to the development of climate related hazards in the region despite contributing lowest greenhouse gases to the global. The Global South encompasses Africa, Latin America, Asia and sections of the Middle East, and those regions individually contribute a minimal percentage of overall emissions yet they mostly effected and suffer from climate shocks. The vulnerability of these countries from climate shocks because of the lack of economic and institutional capability to adapt efficiently. Environmental insecurity is the double vulnerability of people that arise when underdevelopment and impoverishment are compounded by human induced environmental change (Barnett 2001b).

Erratic rainfall, droughts and floods are other major climate security risks associated with food insecurity that affects agricultural production. Vulnerabilities to climate change are

strongly influenced by wealth, gender, and age, affecting population in dissimilar ways (FAO, 2024), with disproportionate impacts in developing countries and among the most vulnerable groups, including women, fisherfolks, small-scale farmers, youth, and Indigenous Peoples (IPCC, 2022a). Food and agriculture have to produce 49 percent and the food system already contributes a large proportion of climate change, and is extremely vulnerable to it, in spite of the fact that it is expected to increase food production by 2050 (FAO, 2021). The effects of climate change like extreme weather, spreading pests and diseases, loss of biodiversity, degrading ecosystems, and water shortage, will increase with rising global temperatures. These effects will hurt food security and the livelihood and cause forced migrations.

Water scarcity is one of the major climate security threats in the Global South. Several regions like North Africa and the Middle East are already experiencing chronic water scarcity which is expected to increase with ongoing climatic conditions. While water management systems already have strategies to deal with a certain level of variability and uncertainty, it is questionable whether these will be sufficient to cope with the projected rate of water resources under climate change. The variations in the water vulnerability in the countries in the region are strongly related to the degree of access each country enjoys a variety of water resources both from fresh water and the non-conventional sources of water. During El Niño drought periods, collecting water can take up to 12 hours a day and then often requires entire families to help (MacDonald et al 2019).

The uncertainty about ongoing climatic conditions needs more practical approaches rather than just rely on theories. The impact of facing water scarcity on livelihoods is a decline in access to nutrition and sanitation, and water scarcity exacerbates the farming and other labor sectors that are dependent on water sources.

Another critical risk on climate shocks is induced displacement and migration. Severe weather disasters and slow environmental destruction influenced people to migrate to other places, causing both internal displacement and cross border migration. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2023), disasters caused 26,4 million internal displacements, which represent 56 percent of all internal displacements, most of them belonging to the countries of the Global South and the displacements caused by disasters were still caused by floods and storms. Other major disasters like floods in Pakistan displaced millions of people in 2022. In fragile states, such movements put further pressure on limited resources and governance capacity, which can lead to competition over land, jobs and social services.

Moreover, the problem of climate risks in the Global South is intertwined with the issue of political stability and weak governance system contributing to the vulnerability. Conflict and fragile states are less likely to manage or mitigate the social, economic, political, security, or environmental risks exacerbated by climate change, thereby creating a negative feedback loop that further intensifies conflict and reduces state capacity for recovery (Lee & Kwon, 2022). A clear demonstration of this can be seen in

Yemen, which is experiencing a long-standing civil conflict as well as a harsh climatic burden. In the absence of effective governance responses, climate change are threat multipliers that exacerbate pre-existing insecurities and generate a loop of violence, displacement and underdevelopment.

The International nature of the risk of climate security is impossible to ignore. The unstable conditions of some countries in the Global South due to climate shocks can overflow into the international system in terms of refugee flows, broken supply chains, and greater pressures to intervene in humanitarian crises. This interconnectedness highlights the necessity for robust international cooperation and governance frameworks to address climate-induced security challenges effectively (Jolly & Mahajana, 2014). To build more resilience on the effects of climate change, local adaptation, governance system re-structure are important to measure the upcoming impacts on these climate shocks.

IV.   Case Studies and Findings

This paper examines the linkage between climate change, governance, and security in the Global South through a comparative analysis of three case studies which is Sudan, Bangladesh, and South Africa. Rather than treating climate change as a purely environmental or technical problem, the paper emphasizes on climate impacts as deeply mediated by political institutions, governance capacity, and social structures. The central argument is that governance quality determines whether climate stress functions as a catalyst for fragility or a driver of resilience. Sudan, Bangladesh, and South Africa. They describe how environmental stressors are interwoven with political institutions, social relations, and multi-tiered policy responses and thereby illustrate the interplay of climate change, governance, and security in the Global South. These cases highlight some of the pathways toward fragility and resilience with particular reference to governance quality, institutional innovation, and harmonized adaptation actions.

In Sudan, decades of worsening environmental stress, including severe droughts, desertification, and changing rainfall patterns, have made food security and rural livelihoods very weak, especially in North Darfur, where traditional systems for sharing resources broke down under the pressure. Community-centered adaptation strategies such as the Wadi El Ku Catchment Management projects aimed to improve agricultural productivity and natural resource governance, these promised reforms yield of key crops triple in the early days alongside developing local cohesion. Yet, these gains were irretrievably disintegrated in civil war engulfed the whole of the region in fragmentation and violence instigated by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since April 2023. The war has caused mass displacement impacting millions and has unleashed one of the largest humanitarian crises in recent memory, with famine and catastrophic hunger overtaking Zamzam, Abu Shouk, Al Salam, and other camps, as confirmed by the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Famine Review Committee, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Program (WFP)

and United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) famine has been projected in other areas as well, including Al Fasher, and the Western Nuba Mountains. Zamzam camp in particular has over 500,000 persons mostly women and children, is under terrible conditions, one child now dies roughly every two hours, rates of mortality and malnutrition have spiked and attempts to deliver lifesaving assistance that included food, medical treatment, and therapeutic nutrition have been thwarted time and again through RSF-imposed sieges, broken infrastructure, and ongoing violence. The RSF attacks on the Zamzam and Abu Shouk camps, which involve live artillery bombardments, massacres, executions of humanitarian workers, looting of clinics and markets, and the transformation of displacement camps into military bases. They have brutalized the already catastrophic crisis and put a lot of fuel to the fire of accusations of war crimes and ethnic cleansing while choking off humanitarian corridor access. As per the latest warning by the UN, about 24,6 million people nationwide are now experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, with some even in "catastrophic" conditions, when humanitarian access is severely restricted and famine spreads rapidly. It is the ruinous coincidence of climate vulnerability, governance failure, violent conflict, and impeded humanitarian response that epitomizes how environmental shocks without resilient institutions and coordinated governance can act as force multipliers of insecurity instead of opportunities for adaptation or recovery.

Other than that, the case of Bangladesh demonstrates the potential of inclusive governance, collective resilience, and multi-scale adaptation options to turn extreme environmental vulnerability into robust institutional capacity in the case of Bangladesh, the Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP), established in 1973, is a collaborative program of the Government of Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society. The CPP mobilizes over 55,000 trained volunteers in coastal unions to provide early warning, conduct evacuations, provide first aid, and support shelter operations. It is cited as the model program that has saved multiple lives in a series of impactful tropical cyclone evacuations. For instance, during cyclone Roanu, more than half-a-million people were safely evacuated, and many structures were reinforced against the storm. The shift of Bangladesh from reactive response to proactive disaster risk reduction with early warning systems, strong cyclone shelters, coastal embankments, and increased awareness has resulted in a dramatic reduction in cyclone-related deaths. For example, Bangladesh went from an estimate of 147,000 deaths during the cyclone of 1991 to approximately 4,500 deaths from Sidr in 2007 and just six deaths from the much weaker cyclone of Mora in 2017. The resilience provided by decentralized governance is enhanced through Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMCs), which are chaired by Union Parishad personnel and coordinate local mapping, preparedness, and awareness activities, even if their contributions are sometimes hindered by resource limits, partially offset by collaboration with NGOs and coordination with other levels of government at

the district and national levels. It is also derived from community characteristics including traditional ecological knowledge, social capital, self-organization, and place-based values that strengthen adaptive recovery and institutional legitimacy. For example, Innovative grassroots initiatives, such as community-led repair and maintenance of embankments with local materials like mud, bamboo, and sandbags through participatory methods in Khulna and Satkhira that illustrate the potential impact of great connections between fresh civil engineering and indigenous practice on future resilient flood embankments. In addition, this structural and organizational work, adaptive agricultural innovations like floating gardens referred to locally as baira to support food security and livelihoods by enabling farming activities post-monsoon flooding and were recognized as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the FAO in 2015. The United Nations and disaster resilience specialists affirm that better early warning systems and planning have considerably reduced deaths from natural hazards, including in cyclone-prone countries such as Bangladesh, even in the context of worsening climate threats collectively, Bangladesh's example illustrates how hybrid governance bringing together a volunteer-based early warning network, decentralized institutions, community knowledge, infrastructure innovation, and adaptive agriculture can change environmental exposure into social cohesion, adaptive capacity, and a model of climate resilience for the Global South.

Furthermore, The Climate Change Act (Act 22 of 2024) of South Africa was a historic first step in legislating a national climate response that includes mitigation and adaptation measures alongside a just transition to a low carbon resilient economy, and it requires national, provincial and municipal governments to embed climate considerations into all decision-making processes, including carbon budgeting, development of greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation plans and aligning Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and related sectoral policies. The Act also enshrined the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) as a statutory body with oversight and advisory responsibilities, but the actual effect of this initiative is now clouded by the delaying of regulations, absence and/or weak operational legal enforcement mechanisms, and capacity limitations, especially related to local government responsibilities. Critics suggest that while the law introduces stiff penalties for only failing to submit mitigation plans, there are no explicit penalties for exceeding carbon budgets or failing to meet environmental targets and it ignores provisions on liability for climate-induced loss and damage, such as floods, really cutting into its compliance strength, direction. Critics suggest that while the law introduces stiff penalties for only failing to submit mitigation plans, there are no explicit penalties for exceeding carbon budgets or failing to meet environmental targets and it ignores provisions on liability for climate-induced loss and damage, such as floods, undermining its directive strength. Institutional fragmentation compounds these shortcomings, the heavy reliance on coordination by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE)

risks overburdening a single ministry, while the PCC's broad stakeholder representation, though laudable for inclusivity, may dilute its capacity to resolve interdepartmental deadlocks, particularly when community-level capacity is precarious. Governance weaknesses are present at the subnational level that over 60% of municipalities are deemed dysfunctional due to weak systems, poor administration and finances, inadequate planning, and corruption, all of which hampers the implementation of the policies established by the Act. For instance, the 2022 and 2024 KwaZulu-Natal floods showcased failures in municipal disaster risk management and the ineffectiveness of disaster management structures, which does not enable effective climate resilience actions on the ground. Therefore, While the Climate Change Act of South Africa marks a highpoint in South Africa's climate governance framework due to its legal mainstreaming of climate governance, its potential to effectuate the transformative change South Africa requires is generally undermined by the absence of regulatory emission pathways, lagging implementation, gaps in enforcement and intergovernmental coordination, incapacitation of local-government, policy and regulatory incoherence, and socio-economic dependencies, underscoring the urgency for effective implementation mechanisms, transparent regulatory frameworks, coherent policy choices, and inclusive capacity-building at all levels of governance.

Table 1: Comparative Case Studies of Climate Governance

Country	Governance and Institutional Context	Climate Security and Challenges	Adaptive or Response Mechanisms
Sudan (Darfur, civil war) (Kevane, 2008)	Fragile, militarized governance, entrenched corruption, regional marginalization, breakdown of customary institutions.	Desertification and recurrent droughts intensify resource competition; violent conflict, famine, displacement	Limited adaptation (Wadi El-Ku project) overshadowed by conflict, aid blocked or weaponized by RSF. (Gray, 2008)
Bangladesh (Cyclone-prone delta) (Gadu,2025)	Stronger central governance, decentralized emergency	Highly exposed to cyclones, floods, sea-level rise, limits to	Cyclone Preparedness Program (55,000 volunteers, early warning),

	structures (CPP, UDMCs), robust volunteer networks.	adaptation approaching.	shelters, embankments, floating gardens, local NGO partnerships.
South Africa (Climate Change Act 2024) (Weyer, 2024)	Middle-income democracy with formal institutions; enactment of Climate Change Act and Presidential Climate Commission (PCC)	Need for mitigation across emissions-intensive sectors, just transition imperative amid energy crises and flooding	Legal mandates for sectoral emissions targets (SETs), carbon budgets, climate assessments by municipalities, adaptation strategy development, PCC advisory role.

Throughout these multiform Global South contexts, the study demonstrates the critical importance of governance quality in determining climate outcomes in Sudan,

institutional collapse morphed climate stress into food insecurity, conflict, and forcible displacement, while in Bangladesh, the manner of governance decentralized, community based mechanisms like the Cyclone Preparedness Program and Disaster Management Bureau transformed extreme weather events into sites of agency, feasibility and resilience. However, without capacity and coherence, policy ambitions are ineffective, South Africa's Climate Change Act of 2024 has clear policy intentions, but suffers from delays to come into force, patchwork intergovernmental coordination, and ineffectiveness at local capacity. At last, the long-term resilience is premised on secure foundations of finance, inclusion and enforceable mechanisms. Bangladesh's successes depend on sustained financing and social inclusion, while Sudan's disaster reveals the catastrophic consequences when climate shocks intersect with governance failure and humanitarian blockade.

To sum up, these findings support the conclusion that climate governance is a more expansive concept in the Global South than merely adopting technical measures for adaptation. Sustainability and resilience relate to legitimacy, participation, coherence and coordination as well as infrastructure and finance. The narratives from Sudan, Bangladesh, and South Africa illustrate that these are not mutually exclusive states from fragility and conflict through to innovation and resilience, and that durable peace and environmental security depend on interlinked governance changes that simultaneously address

environmental, political, and socio-economic aspects of vulnerability.

In order for climate governance in the Global South to function effectively, models that are context-specific, nuanced, and empirical are necessary to alleviate power asymmetries, promote inclusivity and coordination across multiple levels. This essay investigates a number of country-specific cases where participatory, multi-level and regional governance experiences have produced climate resilience impacts. The cases, presenting South Africa, Colombia and Thailand contribute to our understanding of how different governance configurations operate to build adaptive capacity, legitimacy and sustainability. By placing each of the cases in the context of relevant academic and non-academic literature, we not only highlight systemic effectiveness in governance models but also, limitations and pathways to improve governance.
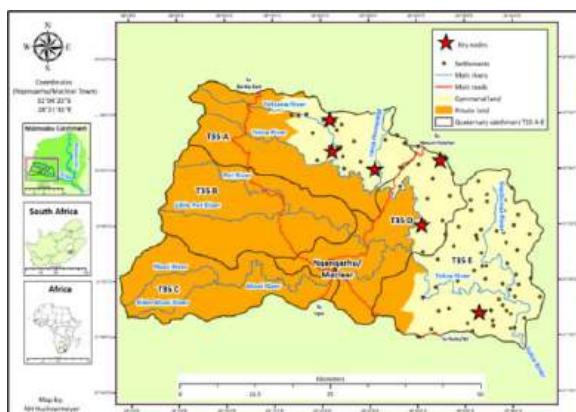

Fig. 2. The Tsitsa River catchment, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

The Tsitsa Project in the Eastern Cape of South Africa serves as an inspiring example of adaptive, participatory governance in landscape restoration which leverages transdisciplinary collaboration, epistemic justice and relational stewardship to rehabilitate a rural catchment that is highly degraded. Started in 2015 and based on the reflexive Capability Pathway, the project seeks to harness the knowledge of community members, policymakers, traditional leaders and researchers to co-develop restoration plans, which they refer to as "Co-Knowing", therefore developing a collective language and equitable participation in governance. Instead of chiefly focusing on technical fixes only, the project uses a social–ecological systems (SES) approach and makes connections between restoration activities. For example, erosion control, grazing management, and vetiver planting for income generation, also local livelihoods and biophysical realities by participatory mapping and capacity building. Eventually, relational expertise became developed from informal activities, building trust, and cultured legitimacy, facilitated through isiXhosa, in local places, and adhering to local conventions that enabled the co-production of knowledge, and the level of collaborative decision making despite repeated structural inequalities bound to legacies of apartheid. The narratives provided by stakeholders suggest that participants are cultivating governance agencies, becoming active custodians of their environment and stewards of sustainable resource practices. However, the project recognizes that intermittent setbacks, such as equipment loss and the inability to ensure funding sustainability

are major obstacles to broader scalability and institutional embedding.

In addition, The Low Emission Development Strategies Global Partnership (LEDS-GP) is now a part of the Global Climate Action Partnership, promotes multilevel governance through the Subnational Integration Working Group (SNI-WG) which supports vertical integration of climate action through peer learning, technical exchanges, sharing best practices and regional workshops that not only helps to increase the likelihood of more ambitious Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) but also serves to align with national development, enhancing MRV (Measurement, Reporting and Verification) systems and making local climate investments bankable to unlock public and private climate finance. In Colombia, these institutional levers have been established through mechanisms like Sistema Nacional de Cambio Climático (SISCLIMA) , the National Climate Change System, created in 2016 that contains the Intersectoral Climate Change Commission and a series of Regional Nodes for Climate Change meant to assist subnational authorities, civil society, Indigenous Peoples and academia to develop local climate plans and incorporate climate objectives into planning processes at the territory level. The efficacy of these multilevel collaborations is further validated by Colombia's engagement with the Low Carbon Cities forum in Medellín in 2016, where the SNI-WG highlighted the importance of intersectoral coordination, with Medellín cited as a national exemplar in reducing CO_2 emissions while producing a compact urban environment. More recently, in

Colombia, climate finance and engagement with stakeholders in climate funding has become more coherent, underscored with technical cooperation such as that of the Inter-American Development Bank with its USD 400,000 support in 2024 to strengthen the capacities of subnational entities for action in climate change within a NDC and Long-Term Strategy (E2050) context, demonstrating the progress of a multi-level cooperation to foster both institutional capacity and resource mobilization. Yet, there are ongoing challenges with consistent integration as subnational capacities and commitments differ substantially across regions, as effective coordination is often determined by clearer mandates, broader institutional structures, and sustained investment in both human and technical capacity.

Furthermore, Thailand's climate governance has demonstrated a greater articulation with a polycentric and multilevel governance mode that has exploited digital transformation, institutional coordination, and pro-poor and multistakeholder inclusivity to improve transparency, responsiveness, and policy coherence. In the past two decades, the country has transitioned underway to a polycentric mode developing cross-scale institutional arrangements, involving multiple actors from the public and private sectors, and diversifying policy instruments to drive effective climate action at a practical, day-to-day level to drive a zero-emissions society. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), possessing institutional autonomy under the 1985 BMA Act, began the local climate policymaking agenda with the 2007–2012 Action Plan on Global

Warming Mitigation and the Master Plan on Climate Change (2013–2023). The Action Plan and Master Plan, which included policy areas such as energy, renewables, green infrastructure and public transport, were developed in collaboration with national ministries, international development partners, including JICA, the private sector and civil society. Digitization at the national level has stemmed from centralized agencies such as the Digital Government Development Agency (DGA), which was established under e-Government 4.0 initiatives to offer digital services in a more straightforward manner and promote interoperability between ministries along with building the government's digital capability. Digital platforms like Traffy Fondue, created by the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC), also enhanced civic engagement. The web-and LINE-based civic feedback mechanism boasts over 1.37 million issue reports and 77% resolution rates as of mid-2025; urban residents can report infrastructure issues directly to their local administrators, which fosters transparency, responsiveness, and evidence-based local governance. Moreover, the AEDP 2015-2036 and EEP 2015 outline ambitious targets to achieve 30 percent renewable energy and reduce energy intensity by 30 percent by 2036; both plans include investment in energy storage, smart microgrids, battery systems, hybrid renewables and grid modernization through the opportunity to install smart meters and use analytics to approach the integration of decentralized energy sources. All of them represent governance models that combine digital innovation, policy leadership at the subnational level, and collaboration across sectors to improve Thailand's climate response by promoting institutional integration, local adaptation and public involvement and they still face challenges in infrastructure readiness, regulatory fragmentation and full institutionalization of polycentric coordination.

Table 3: Country Examples of Governance Model and Effectiveness

Country	Strengths	Limitations
South Africa - Tsitsa (Participatory) (Baker,2018)	Trust, local leadership, relational stewardship, epistemic equity.	Scalability, institutional sustainability, funding uncertainty
Colombia (LEDS-GP) (Multilevel) (Philips,2018)	Vertical policy integration, financing, MRV improvement	Uneven subnational capacities, variable political will.
Thailand (Digital Vertical Integration) (Brennan, 2020)	Tech-enabled coherence, urban-national policy alignment.	Infrastructure gaps, complex stakeholder dynamics.

The effectiveness of climate governance in the Global South relies on a combination of relational trust, diagnostic tools for evaluation of governance, vertical coordination, and clear

institutional roles as evidenced across multiple contexts liked the Tsitsa Project in South Africa recognized the advantages of polycentric, trans-disciplinary engagement rooted in local trust and shared learning. The effects of multilevel coordination critical to both the LEDS-GP-supported Subnational Integration Working Group in Colombia and in conceptualizing multilevel governance facilitates policy coherence between local and national actions, improves MRV systems, while also supporting finance mobilization and scaling mitigation activities. Altogether, these cases emphasize that sustainable climate security in the Global South does not depend only on technical interventions, but on intentional governance systems designed to build trust, embed evaluative clarity, align action, and clarify accountability.

These insights provide the foundation for the governance models which are able to support resilient and peaceful futures in the Global South exist at the intersection of relational integrity, participatory legitimacy, multilevel coherence, and institutional effectiveness. The Tsitsa Project demonstrated an effective relational governance approach, and multilevel approaches as demonstrated in LEDS-GP have illustrated how governance systems can be characterized and scaled. Digital platforms have also opened new worlds of possibilities for integration. Going forward, we have to leverage the strengths of both: to situate respectful inclusion, facilitate vertical coordination, and entrench accountability, all while equitably allocating resources and building capacities.

Collective action in multilateral action would help mitigate climate shifts. Multilateral diplomacy has become a key platform where global, regional, and local players are trying to coordinate with one another in order to achieve climate justice. Despite efforts of some corporations, industries, and politicians to frame climate change as an individual problem (thereby dodging responsibility), scholars and communities increasingly recognize climate change as a collective issue (Masson, 2021). Collective climate action can take many forms and involve various actors across scales and this collaborative effort encourages more states to participants in order to achieve sustainability justice despite ongoing climate disruption among Global South states. This practice drives the state's governance system to enforce and adapt a new policy to decrease greenhouse emissions in government or private sectors.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) remains the central institutional mechanism in multilateral governance. According to this scheme, the Paris Agreement was a game changer as it established the nationally determined contributions on the premises of varying responsibility and explicitly recognized the importance of adaptation and resilience as a fundamental aspect of climate action (Kuyper et al., 2018). The Paris Agreement (2015) was a game changer as it established the nationally determined contribution (NDCs) on the premises of varying responsibility and explicitly recognized the importance of adaptation and resilience as a fundamental aspect of climate action. To the Global South, the Paris framework provides

climate finance to help the vulnerable adapt to climate change and also enforce technology transfer and justice in reduced emission in industrialized states. Nonetheless, the failure to deliver climate finance as promised (e.g., the unfulfilled pledge of USD 100 billion annually by 2020) demonstrates the inherent weakness of multilateral pledges in securing tangible outcomes for climate-vulnerable nations.

Regional platforms have emerged as critical supplements to global negotiations. As an example, The Climate Change Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032 adopted by the African Union. This Strategy provides a broad outline for harmonized and coordinated actions to respond to the impacts of climate change, as well as to plan for the continent's low-emission, climate-resilient future. The strategy provides a guideline on harmonized and coordinated response to working of climate change as well as planning on the low emission to build climate resilient future of the continent, although Africa generated less than 4 percent of the total global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The strategy provides a robust framework through inclusive and equitable participation in climate action. The African Development Bank (AfDB) estimates that Africa will need investment of over US$3 trillion in mitigation and adaptation by 2030 to effectively implement its NDCs (African Union, 2022). NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions) are nationally specific climate action plans under the Paris agreement that detail the commitments on how to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. Climate change may affect human security and be one of the sources of conflict in Africa not because

there is causal connection, but because it interacts with other sources of conflict including social, political, and economic marginalization such as water scarcity, resource competition, food insecurity, low economic development and population displacement. In a similar way the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has established mechanisms of disaster risk disaster risk reduction and humanitarian coordination such as the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre). The AHA Centre is to encourage collaboration and coordination among the ASEAN Member States. In the period of 2015-2020, ASEAN region contributed to 7.68 percent of global disaster-related deaths, i.e., 6,135 out of 79,834 deaths worldwide, US$11.1billion in economic losses, the temporary displacement of 10.8 million people and the impact on a total of 104.5 million (AHA Centre, 2025). This highlights the urgent need for enhanced regional resilience-building initiatives and integrated governance structures to mitigate the profound socio-economic disruptions wrought by climate-induced hazards in the region (Tahalele et al., 2023). These efforts show that climate diplomacy on a regional basis is not merely confined to efforts on emission negotiation but also encompasses cross border collaboration in disaster response. This multilevel diplomacy allowed Global South states to combine resources and expertise, and acquire bargaining power in international forums.

Moreover, the increased South-South cooperation emerged as an alternative multilateralism. Cooperation structures such as

the Brazil-India-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum and the Green Development initiative of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have shown how Global South states can collaborate to share technologies, financial resources and develop shared positions in climate negotiations. As an illustration, more than 120 countries (with many of them being in the Global South) have joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA) initiative established by India, which will encourage states to share technologies, mobilize financial resources, and develop shared positions in climate negotiations. These activities help subvert the notion that the Global South is a mere recipient of aid, a passive participant in climate governance, and instead, they are innovators in climate governance. The effectiveness of multilateral activities however, depends on the inclusion of climate security into the agendas of diplomacy. Climate negotiations tend to separate climate adaptation and mitigation issues with peacebuilding issues, even though it is well proven that the impacts of climate shocks fuel the conflict, displacement, and governance fragility. Efforts such as those of the UN Security Council to discuss the risks of climate security, especially in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, can be seen as efforts to close this gap, but they are politically controversial. According to Busby (2022), climate-induced negative security outcomes are more likely to occur when states have limited capacity, exclusive political institutions, and where international assistance is insufficient or unequally distributed.

The ability to implement performative multilateral action should be shifted to pragmatic channels that connect directly to the local need and realities. In the Global South, the objectives of climate diplomacy need to be incorporated within broader developmental agendas such as poverty issues, rural development and sustainable livelihoods, rather than being treated as standalone issues. The inclusion of adaptation measures in the Development Goals (SDGs) framework and in particular, SDG 13 on climate action provides a clear platform in establishing links between multilateral diplomacy and domestic policy reforms. In this regard, climate diplomacy can be the personification of peacebuilding and sustainable security as it can connect international agreements with local government and community-based resilience. To achieve this, the initiatives must take place where the implementation of these conditions which are equitable funding, authentic representation of vulnerable states, and incorporation of climate security tie into broader systems of governance. The full participation of the Global South must not only act as negotiators but also as a climate solution is an indication that a rethinking of the paradigm of climate diplomacy is in dire need of a shift toward resilience, inclusivity and peace. Multilateralism however must not be used as a mere negotiation arena but should transform into a platform that guarantees peaceful and resilient futures.

In terms of talking of peacebuilding, Lederach (2007) defines peacebuilding "as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable,

peaceful relationships". Peacebuilding can be built together through bridges or connections that link groups of people who are fighting in seeking justice. This required much involvement, process and planning, not only just one step such as taking things out, understanding each other's issues, cooperating to achieve mutual solutions. Lederach highlights the means of peacebuilding by the wise concept that include the process, approach and step to resolve the conflict. The aim of peacebuilding is to live together with safety in harmonious communities through mutual respect. However, the main goal of peacebuilding is to enhance people's quality lives. Johan Galtung (1975) a scholar in peace studies said that peacebuilding is the abolition of structural violence and the root causes of war, such as oppression and domination, rather than being solely focused on eliminating direct violence or warfare. The root of conflict is structural violence like oppression, discrimination, poverty and unfairness in the social structure. Climate security is closely linked to peacebuilding in the Global South countries like food and water shortages, which can increase tensions and conflicts over resources. These two scholars, peacebuilding means effort to live together in peace, fairness, mutual respect and cooperation for long lasting. In the Global South, it goes beyond silencing the guns. It is about quenching the thirst of those without water, feeding the hungry where crops have failed, and guarding communities against the storms of climate change. True peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice, resilience, and the quiet dignity of people living safely together.

The Liptako-Gourma region is an area in West Africa that lies between three countries Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. European Institute of Peace (2023) shows The Liptako Gourma region is experiencing an extended period of violent conflict. It is the result of a complex political, economic and security governance crisis, which is compounded by climatic variability, competition over scarce resources, and demographic pressures. Since around 2015, this region has faced many problems such as politics, economy, environment, and also security. This conflict has caused a lot of violent conflict which causes environmental damage. This area is facing desertification, which means more land is becoming dry like a desert. This happens because of climate change, cutting too many trees, and farming that is not sustainable. Scientists also found that the temperature here is rising much faster compared to the world average. Studies show that temperatures in most parts of the subtropics and tropical Africa have been increasing at more than twice the global average rate (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Trisos et al., 2022), with temperatures frequently exceeding the upper limit of human comfort (Sherwood & Huber, 2010; Iyakaremye et al., 2021), because of this, the people there have to struggle with less land and water. This is very serious because most of the communities in the region are pastoralists (people who depend on moving their livestock from place to place, called transhumance). When natural resources become scarce, it creates more competition between groups, which then makes conflict worse. From starting to identify and solve the root of problems in society like unfair treatment,

oppression and domination, peacebuilding comes to keep people from getting along and living safe and equal lives. Before discussing the challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding, it is important to remember that peace requires removing the causes and lead to create a society built on fairness, justice and respect.

Global South countries have difficulties in implementing the concept of this peacebuilding to climate security. The first highlight of the challenges is environmental challenges that land turning into desert (Desertification) in Sahel. Resource scarcity and competition over land, water, and forests. Resource scarcity can increase competition and conflict over the access and control of resources, especially when conflict management mechanisms are weak and certain groups face political exclusion. In Mali and Niger this conflict currently occurs mostly at the interpersonal level, one example would be between fishers and pastoralists and farmers over water use and cattle entering water bodies. There is some evidence of water-rich resource areas in the Sahel experiencing a higher number of conflict events Herbert, S. (2025, February). By UNDP 2020, the Sahel temperature is rising 1.5 times faster than the global average. This event happened because desertification increasingly reduces soil fertility and makes farming less productive. According to climate researchers, the effects had been crop failures and food insecurity. More than 80% of cultivable land in some parts was lost or damaged, causing hunger and malnutrition in local communities. Violent conflict also forces people to abandon farms and villages, worsening the food crisis. Plus,

Increased competition, with fewer resources, farmers and herders compete violently over land and water rights, escalating social tensions and clashes. This because of Unsustainable farming practices, such as excessive land clearing and burning for agriculture, result in soil nutrient loss and degradation of the topsoil layer. Also, rapid population growth increases demand for land for farming and grazing, pushing communities to expand into previously uncultivated areas without proper land management.

The second challenges are dependent on economic issues of the region. As known, the Liptako-Gourma area is one of the poorest regions in the world. Most citizens depend on agriculture but environmental challenges reduce their income. Located in the heart of the Sahelo-Saharan strip, the Liptako-Gourma region is characterised by an economy that is highly dependent on agriculture and livestock breeding. Unemployment and lack of economic opportunities remain the main problem for 60% of respondents in 2020 and 59% in 2021. Men rank these problems in first place at 61% and women at 58%. It decreases with age: 15-24 year olds at 63%, 25-45 year olds at 60% and 46+ year olds at 51%. The second most important problem is the limited access to agricultural land (33% in 2020 and 31% in 2021), in all three countries (Burkina Faso: 27%, Mali: 42% and Niger: 29%). Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2022). Agricultural activities are greatly affected by the insecurity: burnt fields, prevented from going to cultivate distant fields. Farming is increasingly difficult, although some agreements with armed jihadist groups in the areas surveyed in Mali allow

farmers to return to cultivate their fields, this mostly only concerns fields close to the villages and not the more distant ones. This creates frustration, especially among youth, who then become more vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups offering money or a sense of belonging. Impact on livelihoods, Conflicts and insecurity disrupt farming and livestock activities, while displacement caused by violence forces many to abandon their homes and land. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened these economic hardships by limiting access to markets and increasing food insecurity. Research points out that this lack undermines trust in authorities and weakens social cohesion, increasing the risk of radicalization and conflict. In sum, economic challenges like poverty, joblessness, and poor infrastructure are deeply intertwined with security issues in Liptako-Gourma. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening both livelihoods and governance to break this cycle of vulnerability and violence.

Others issue that strive into challenges are social challenges of Ethnic and community tensions play a large role. The Liptako-Gourma region, spanning Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, is the epicentrum of the security crisis gripping the Sahel-Saharan strip. The rise in insecurity is attributed to the growth of three phenomena which are violent extremism, transnational organized crime and local conflicts (Benjaminsen, T. A., & Ba, B. (2019). Historically, Liptako covers the Burkina Faso-Niger border area where a kingdom was installed in the 19th century. Gourma lies on the right bank of the Niger river loop in Mali. In the 1970s and 1980s, this three border zone was in the news because

of the severe droughts it experienced, the consequences of which are still felt. These climatic disparities greatly upset the lifestyle of certain communities and exposed the state's failures in terms of governance. This zone is characterized by the presence of various communities and socio-professional groups with relationships that are complementary and sometimes conflictual. Liptako-Gourma has seen an increase in armed violence since 2015. This is linked to violent extremist groups, the intensification of local conflicts and the persistence of transnational organized crime. Attacks attributed to violent extremist groups have increased and spread across Mali, and into Niger and Burkina (Benjaminsen, T. A., & Ba, B. (2019). Since 2015, armed violence in various forms has grown and expanded across the Liptako-Gourma region. This happens because both groups need land and water to survive, but these resources are very limited. Scholars who study this region say that small fights over land and water can turn into much bigger violence when armed groups get involved. These groups sometimes use the problems to cause more conflict and control people. For example, explain that local disputes often become larger communal violence when political or armed groups manipulate them. Many analysts suggest that increased violence linked to local conflicts in Central Mali, Burkina Faso and on the Mali-Niger border results mainly from manipulation by extremist groups (Benjaminsen, T. A., & Ba, B. (2019). The data collected shows that violent extremist groups' positions vary regarding local conflicts. Their attitude seems to be influenced by a number of factors, including their capacity

(strength and resources), their objectives (desire to settle in the area, to expand their recruitment base, etc.), their sociology (their members) and the sociology of the conflict zone. Sometimes, the governments don't solve these problems fairly, so people feel angry and think they are treated unfairly. This makes the tensions between groups worse. Also, many people in the region have very little access to schools and hospitals. Without good education and healthcare, it is harder for people to improve their lives, which adds to the difficulties they face. Scholars who study the Sahel say that small fights over resources can grow into bigger violence, especially when armed groups get involved and use these problems to create more conflict.

At last, Global South Countries like in the African region encounter multichallenges in the quest for peacebuilding as domestic factors in the first counter. Significantly, impact of domestic influences gives fatal challenges from environmental challenges, economic disputes and regional arms groups. Climate change and long periods without rain (drought) are making water and land very scarce. Because of this, people and communities fight over these limited resources. For example, in some areas, farmers and herders argue because there is not enough water or land for farming and grazing animals. This lack of water and land makes life very difficult and causes tensions between groups. Climate shifts make it harder for people to live peacefully together. Economic problems such as unfair income distribution, high unemployment, and widespread poverty make social and political tensions worse. In certain cases, climate

disruption forces rural populations to migrate to urban areas, as their hometown or environment are no longer habitable. Not only that, people may face difficulties finding jobs because there are many competitors with higher qualifications than those who live day to day doing rural occupations. Frustration may seed social divisions and wrangles, which can result in instability and conflict and further the socioeconomic gap between the rich and the poor. Also, the presence and influence of armed groups in the region create complicated security problems such as forced displacement and political instability, thereby exacerbating tensions in the region. These groups take advantage of weak government control and political instability to gain more power and control. These are compounded by the fact that he is dealing with more than one actor. To overcome these challenges an integrated and inclusive approach is needed. This includes strengthening community resilience, promoting fair and sustainable development, and improving cooperation between various parties, including regional and international agencies.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the existential crossroads between climate change, security and governance in the Global South and presented that multi-level governance as one of the determining factors in the transformation of climate induced security risks into opportunities of resilience and sustainable peace.

Environmental stressors are not only a source of conflict but a driver of conflict, they act as conflict multipliers on the outcomes, whether adaptation and peacebuilding depend on the policy and the quality of governance that is transparent, localized participatory system and demonstrates organizational unity and allocates resources fairly. Using Human Security and Environmental peacebuilding frameworks, the study shifts the focus from state centric or militarized approaches towards human well-being and dignity.

The qualitative examination of a variety of case studies that supports this key argument. Sudan, famine and violence represent the failure of governance and breakdown of institutions to make climate vulnerabilities the active participants in the dehumanizing human security problems. There is a clear distinction in Bangladesh where they developed a system of decentralized disaster risk management that employs early warning systems and community-based adaptation measures, which have proved to save lives and build resilience when disaster occurs. Future studies should be prioritized on empirical work that quantifies causal relationships between certain governance indicators, especially levels of community participation in decision making or transparency in climate finance allocation, and measurable resilience outcomes. Search must also be directed at exploring how new digitalization technologies are instrumental in promoting transparency in governance and citizen participation in the Global South. The way forward to resilient and peaceful futures necessitates a paradigm shift in climate diplomacy and multilateral action, including one that truly gives a hearing to the voices and solutions of the Global South, ties climate security to development and peacebuilding agendas, and upholds the delivery of concrete financing and technology transfer to enact global commitments.

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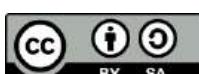
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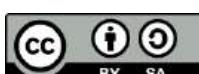
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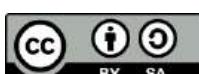
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Research Article

Chinese Investment, Social Relations, and Local Actors: The Case of IMIP in Central Sulawesi

Ridha Amaliyah

Beijing Foreign Studies University,

UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya

ridha_amaliyah@outlook.com

Abstract

Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Indonesia, especially in the nickel downstream sector, has reshaped local political and social dynamics in resource-rich regions. This article critically examines the relationship between Chinese companies and local actors through a case study of Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP) in Central Sulawesi. Employing Alvin Camba's concept of social embeddedness, the study analyzes how Chinese investment is sustained through interactions among firms, state elites, local governments, and civil society. Based on qualitative analysis of policy documents, media reports, and interviews, the findings reveal that IMIP's operations are strongly embedded within Indonesia's central government coalition elites, whose political support facilitates regulatory flexibility and minimizes local resistance. This elite alignment enables investment continuity but simultaneously weakens environmental governance and limits meaningful community participation. While IMIP contributes to local economic growth, it also generates social tensions related to labor practices, environmental degradation, and limited technology transfer. The management of these structural issues, rather than their resolution, relies on corporate social responsibility and strategic communication. The article posits that political embeddedness within a strong regime drives Chinese investment in Indonesia more than market efficiency alone. This dynamic highlights the asymmetric power relations between investors, the state, and local communities, raising critical questions about the long-term sustainability and social justice of resource-based development under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Keywords: social embeddedness, local actors, Chinese companies, Indonesia, China

I. Introduction

The strengthening of relations between Indonesia and China has had a significant impact on Chinese foreign investment in Indonesia, especially since the implementation of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area in early 2010 and the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries in 2013. Since its launch in 2013, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has become a major source of foreign investment in Indonesia. This project focuses on developing connectivity routes, both by land and by sea, through massive infrastructure development across various countries, including Indonesia, which lies along the maritime route.

Chinese investment in Indonesia has continued to rise over recent years, moving from the 9th-largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2015 to the second-largest in 2019. From 2019 to September 2024, Chinese investments in Indonesia reached USD 34.19 billion, accounting for 18% of total foreign investment in the country (bkpm.go.id, 12/10/2024). The latest report of the Investment Coordinating Board (*Badan Koordinasi Penanaman Modal—BKPM)* recorded that investment realization and the number of projects from China rank second, with a total value of 16.323 million US dollars and 30.360 projects, respectively. The investment value indicates that Indonesia

remains the main destination for Chinese foreign investment.

Figure 1. Realization of Foreign Investment and Projects in 2024
Source: (BKPM, 2025), compiled by the author

Chinese foreign direct investment has played a significant role in supporting Indonesia's dominance in the nickel market, with projects such as the Morowali Industrial Park in Central Sulawesi, which is heavily backed by Chinese investment. In the nickel industry, China controls nickel processing valued at 114 trillion US dollars (BKPM, 2025). Chinese investors are rapidly entering Indonesia's electric vehicle market, exemplified by companies such as BYD establishing manufacturing facilities, thereby contributing to Indonesia's industrial capacity and infrastructure development in downstream sectors aimed at creating value-added products (aseanbriefing.com, 05/06/2024).

The investment activities are intensive and extend across Indonesia's eastern region, including Central Sulawesi. However, Chinese companies' investments in Indonesia have not always gone smoothly. Many challenges and problems arise in investment activities, including employment issues, environmental concerns, relations with local actors, and regulatory and policy constraints. A Chinese company, Xinyi Group, received protests from locals when it built Rempang Eco-city in the

Riau Islands. Development has triggered evictions, forced relocations, and a lack of public consultation (time.com, 13/09/2023). The operations of Chinese nickel processing companies on Obira Island, North Maluku, also encountered similar obstacles. Nickel refining for EV batteries, including the use of high-risk technology, has a significant impact on millions of tons of toxic waste on the environment and local communities on the island. Increasing global demand is driving industrial expansion, but the problems of waste disposal, pollution, and health risks remain poorly addressed (washingtonpost.com, 10/05/2023). Both cases represent the tension between the national development agenda and the social justice of local communities. Chinese companies must adapt to a business environment different from their home region and interact with local actors with distinct interests and cultures.

This paper aims to discuss the pattern of relations between Chinese companies and local actors in Central Sulawesi. This case study examined how Chinese companies adapt to the diverse business and cultural environments in Indonesia and how they interact with local actors, including the government, communities, and NGOs. The results of this case study are expected to provide an overview of the investment dynamics of Chinese companies in Indonesia and provide input for relevant parties to increase the success of foreign investment in Indonesia.

II. Literature Review

Research and writings on Indonesia-China relations across various fields have indeed been widely discussed by scholars over the past decade (see Sukma, 2009; Hadi, 2012; Pattiradjawane, 2016; Negara & Suryadinata,

2018; Fitriani, 2018; Damuri et al., 2019; Mutia & de Archellie, 2023). However, the issue of political economy and Chinese investment in Indonesia does not seem to have been a concern in recent Indonesia-China studies. In fact, as cooperation between the two countries intensifies, various discourses and issues have emerged, including the structure of the relationship between Chinese companies and local actors in the region.

Buckley et al. (2009) argue that Chinese investment tends to focus on natural resource investments because they are directly related to ownership of the host country. Researchers also found that cultural proximity significantly influences investment decisions aimed at reducing transaction costs and expanding networks. Meanwhile, Gammeltoft and Tarmidi (2013) noted that Chinese investment in Indonesia is aimed at expanding markets and securing resources, with a focus on the manufacturing sector. Chinese companies are involved in a wide range of activities in Indonesia, including natural resources, automotive industries, electronics, telecommunications, air shipping and transportation, finance and insurance, and construction and engineering.

The investment relationship between China and the government of the investment destination country is the subject of a series of studies by Alvin Camba et al. (2017, 2020, 2021, 2022). Camba's research (2021), titled "How Chinese Firms Approach Investment Risk: Strong Leaders, Cancellation, and Pushback," provides a favorable overview of the relationship between Chinese companies and local actors in Indonesia. By selecting the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia as his case studies, he concluded that Chinese companies prefer to work with national leaders they

consider strong and side with them. If Chinese companies choose the wrong one, this results in the cancellation of projects, as national leaders cannot protect them from elites and social mobilization. If Chinese companies vote correctly, there will be resistance from the leaders of the host country who use their interests to oppose those of the Chinese state and companies. Furthermore, Camba also emphasized the concept of "*social embeddedness.*" Chinese companies take social and cultural factors into account when assessing investment risks and applying a cultural approach to investment yields novel research in international political economy.

Chinese investment has reshaped Indonesia's political economy, enabling Chinese companies to influence policy and reap large profits, sometimes at the expense of local interests and the environment. Mahendru (2021) noted that Indonesia enforces policies requiring Chinese firms to hire local staff, but language and cultural barriers can lead to conflicts. Despite being a major FDI source, China's involvement raises internal vulnerabilities for Indonesia. Pramono et al. (2022) found that three clusters of Chinese FDI projects pose significant environmental risks, especially to forests, species, carbon sinks, and water and air quality; they recommend sector-specific oversight centered on affected communities. Dinata et al. (2022) observed that while China's investment boosts Indonesia's processed materials industry, it also risks market dominance and falling nickel ore prices for local miners, potentially causing more environmental harm than benefits. Additionally, new sectors may increase corruption through unchecked concessions. Liu and Lim (2022) highlighted that projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed train have

led to greater state intervention and reflect Indonesia's political-economic challenges alongside China's profit and geopolitical ambitions.

Existing studies highlight resource-seeking motives, market expansion, environmental risks, labor issues, and state intervention. It also emphasizes Camba's social embeddedness, which explains how Chinese firms manage investment risk by aligning with strong political leadership in host countries. Drawing on the literature review above, the authors develop their arguments about the pattern of relations between Chinese companies and local actors in Indonesia and offer a broader perspective on foreign investment in Indonesia.

III. Social Embeddedness in Chinese Investment

This paper adopts the conceptual framework developed by Alvin Camba (2021), which argues that the dynamics of Chinese companies in their foreign investment activities are inseparable from the social embeddedness among three parties: the company, the Chinese government, and the host country's government. There is no significant difference between private and public companies in China. It is important to examine how Chinese public and private companies are connected to their country, particularly through the social, historical, normative, and institutional contexts that influence their understanding of risk and the host country's environment. Institutionally, this social attachment is one of the main characteristics of large Chinese companies.
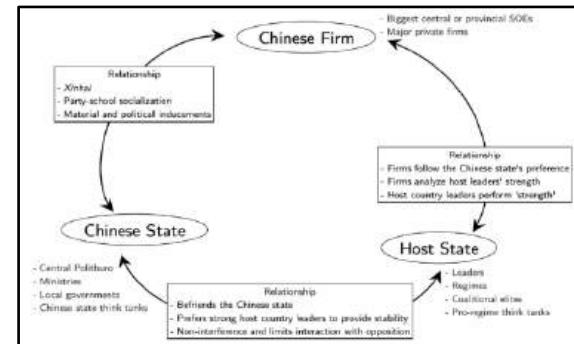

Figure 2. Social Embeddedness of Chinese Foreign Investment
Source: (Camba, 2021, p.6)

Based on the above model, the social relations among Chinese companies, the Chinese government, and the government of the investment destination country can be more clearly explained. The company is a major actor, operating with the approval of the Chinese and host country governments, including Chinese state-owned enterprises and large private companies. The company is occupied by members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadre or business people who join or often work with the CCP and are educated at the party's schools. These cadre members and entrepreneurs are among the most important sources of information on investment risk. Companies act when the Chinese government and the host country's government have agreed to cooperate. The Chinese government includes CCP officials, ministries, local governments, and strategic study institutions. The Chinese government tends to choose investment destinations in countries that can provide stability for smooth investment and limit interaction with the opposition. Chinese companies have a unique relationship with the host country's government. The company selects investment objectives aligned with the Chinese government's goals and preferences.

Furthermore, companies must be able to assess the "strength" of the host country's leader. Chinese companies and governments prefer a "strong" host country, which can be interpreted as a country controlled by a leader who can provide strong leadership, political stability, and policy certainty. The host country is the leader, the ruling regime, the coalition elite, and the strategic research institution that sides with China.

The article will focus on the relationships between Chinese companies and the Indonesian government, including local actors, in Chinese investment activities at the nickel smelter at PT Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP), Morowali, Central Sulawesi.

IV. Chinese Investment Penetration in Indonesia

Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013. President Xi Jinping introduced the project in the fall of 2013 during his official visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia. By taking the BRI initiative, China confirms its transition from a country that takes advantage of the current global economic conditions to a leader capable of creating a positive, synergistic effect on other countries. In general, BRI can be described as a new paradigm of globalization, and this initiative can be considered as the main determinant of foreign investment activity in the Chinese economy (Balaz et al., 2020).

The Indonesian government welcomed the BRI project. President Joko Widodo has prioritized the World Maritime Axis (*Poros Maritim Dunia*) as the guiding principle of Indonesia's foreign policy and has employed economic diplomacy to advance Indonesia's national interests. The CSIS report on Indonesia's perception and readiness for the BRI project stated that in the context of bilateral relations between Indonesia and China, the BRI project plays a crucial role. Besides infrastructure, the projects focus on energy and natural resource projects, such as the construction of a nickel smelter in Central Sulawesi.

During 2015-2020, China's main investments were in base metals and metal goods, the non-machinery and equipment industry, which accounted for 42%. Given the development of the global electric car industry and Indonesia's abundant nickel resources, the Indonesian government is optimistic that investment will continue to grow and become a source of investment in battery processing for electric cars (kompas.com, 13/01/21). The natural resources sector, especially mining, has been the backbone of Indonesia's economy for decades. The increasingly robust cooperation between Indonesia and China in the mining and mineral processing sector affects the important role of Chinese investors and companies as implementers of BRI projects. Chinese companies are involved in government-financed infrastructure projects. Some Chinese companies have also invested funds and technology in BRI projects (Balaz et al., 2020).

Investment projects in the nickel processing sector appear to be a priority for China amid global economic developments, particularly in the electric vehicle industry. The Chinese government created a policy framework and provided financial assistance to develop the *electric vehicle* industry in the early 2000s. Therefore, this booming industry requires an increasing amount of nickel. This demand is driving increasingly rapid Chinese investment in Indonesia's mining sector, which

is rich in nickel reserves. One of the large-scale nickel processing companies is PT. Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP).

IMIP is a ferro-nickel mining and smelter group that has emerged as one of the largest investments by Chinese companies in Indonesia (Camba et al., 2020), established in Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi. Morowali's parent company, Sulawesi Mining Investment (SMI), is jointly owned by China-based Shanghai Decent Investment (66.25%) and Indonesian mining company Bintang Delapan Group (33.75%) (Dinata et al., 2022). IMIP's investment activities began even before the launch of the BRI project. In 2009, Decent Group and SMI invested in nickel ore mining and export. The activity then shifted to the ferronickel smelting industry in response to the government's ban on the export of mineral ores. In 2014, the government established IMIP as an industrial park specifically for nickel-based industries. Morowali Regency is known for its nickel deposits. According to one estimate, Morowali has about 370 million tons of nickel reserves, enough to sustain decades of mining (Damuri et al., 2019).

Bintang Delapan Group and Tsingshan Steel Group collaborate to operationalize IMIP. Tsingshan Group is the world's largest company in nickel processing and has mastered complete processing technology, including advanced, modern technologies (IMIP, 2023). IMIP combines efficient nickel extraction with the latest smelting technology. The presence of IMIP makes Indonesia an important player in the global electric vehicle industry. President Jokowi even asked Chinese companies to increase the number of their energy projects in other countries (Camba, 2021).

V. Social Embeddedness, IMIP, and Local Actors in Central Sulawesi

This paper will adopt and expand on Camba's (2021) concept of social embeddedness, grounded in the data. In a case study of IMIP and local actors in Central Sulawesi, researchers identified three actor types that are influential in IMIP's investment activities: local governments, coalition elites, and civil society. Although the basic concept of social *embeddedness* does not include elements of civil society, the author considers that the two additional actors have contributed to IMIP investment activities from a socio-cultural approach, as intended by Camba. The pattern of IMIP's relationship with each actor will be explained in more detail.

a. *Subnational Governance and Investment Facilitation*

IMIP is one of the foreign companies under the supervision of the Central Sulawesi provincial government. Based on interviews with representatives of the Central Sulawesi Investment Office, the nickel smelter industry grew rapidly in 2019. This is due to the ban on nickel ore exports, which has been in place since 2009, so that nickel business actors sell their mining products only domestically. This encourages the smelter industry to develop and advance in Central Sulawesi. Throughout 2021, the Central Sulawesi Provincial Investment Office recorded Singapore's foreign investment of 17.17 trillion, followed by China's 11.82 trillion and Hong Kong's 9.05 trillion, all of which operate in the nickel processing industry. The base metal industry dominates foreign investment in Central Sulawesi, amounting to 33.82 trillion US dollars. The majority of investments in Central Sulawesi are made by companies from Singapore with parent companies in China,

such as Wanshiang Group, Tingshan Group, Dexin Group, and Huayue Group. The production capacity of the smelter in Central Sulawesi has far exceeded the capacity of the existing smelter. In 2022, IMIP already had 38 tenants with 37 lines in each smelter furnace (Central Sulawesi Investment Office, 2022).

As an extension of the Investment Coordinating Board, the Central Sulawesi government, through the Investment Office, provides ease of investment to foreign investors, including IMIP. One of those facilities is an import duty exemption. Heavy equipment from China easily enters the factory. Other facilities provided include tax holidays and a 10-year production tax exemption. The Investment Coordinating Board plays an increasingly important role in managing the ease of doing business in Indonesia, including in ensuring the improvement of ease of doing business (EODB) rankings, evaluating the implementation of business licensing and investment facilities carried out by ministries/institutions and local governments, and facilitating the granting of licenses to business actors and investment facilitation. This encourages the Board to focus on increasing investment in sectors that add value, including export-oriented, labor-intensive industries, downstream mining, new and renewable energy, and infrastructure (kompas.com, 13/01/2021).

Regarding employment, the Investment Office of Central Sulawesi explained that the foreign workers from China who arrived were temporary experts. The experts' job is to supervise the installation of the machines as they work alongside local workers. Even so, knowledge transfer is not as smooth as imagined because local workers are not accustomed to how Chinese foreign workers work, so they tend to be intolerant and quit. One example of a way of working that is difficult to follow is the calculation of 45 working days with 1 day off (Central Sulawesi Investment Office, 2022). This obstacle is certainly an important point for IMIP and local governments to address together in pursuit of mutually beneficial solutions. Transparency in providing up-to-date information on the number of Chinese foreign workers at IMIP, including those undergoing work permit processing, is a measure that can be taken (Damuri et al., 2019). Transparency will also reduce the likelihood of friction between local and foreign workers. Foreign companies are expected to comply with the country's laws and regulations.

b. Elite Coalitions and State Support Mechanisms

Since its inception, IMIP has received strong support from national elites, including President Joko Widodo and Indonesia's Minister of Maritime Coordination and Investment, Luhut Binsar Panjaitan. In addition to cooperation in the nickel processing sector, Indonesia and China have also signed an MoU between Tsingshan Group and Bintang Delapan Group and PT IMIP regarding cooperation in the construction of a power plant in the Morowali industrial estate, Central Sulawesi, with a capacity of 700 MW and a total investment value of 650 million US dollars (kemenperin.go.id, 17/6/17). The cooperation is one of the follow-ups to the bilateral meeting between President Joko Widodo and President Xi Jinping on increasing Indonesia-China economic cooperation within the BRI framework.

The central government has consistently paid close attention and provided strong support for IMIP's activities. In particular, Joko

Widodo (President 2014-2024), Yusuf Kalla (Vice President 2009-2014), and Luhut Pandjaitan (Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs 2014-2019) are the national elites who oversee all project negotiations under the BRI (Tritto, 2021). From China's perspective, President Joko Widodo is a leader with strong character and can "guarantee" the sustainability of Chinese investment in Indonesia. The IMIP project can be considered an example of investment by Chinese companies, including several state-owned companies linked to Jokowi, in energy, infrastructure, and natural resources (Camba, 2021). In September 2022, Luhut Pandjaitan inaugurated the QMB New Energy Materials project at IMIP. QMB is part of the strategic cooperation framework between Indonesia and China under the BRI. He emphasized that there will be the first museum dedicated to the nickel resource industry in Indonesia (kompas.com, 26/09/22).

The central government has designated IMIP as part of the national strategic project area. The total value of investment absorbed by IMIP reached 21 billion US dollars. By 2022, the number of direct and indirect workers at IMIP had reached 77,000. So it is not surprising that this area is one of the destinations for working visits by national elites. The visit of the Indonesian Army Chief of Staff to IMIP during the closing of the 123rd TNI Integrated Village Development Program (TNI Manunggal Masuk Desa –TMMD) in March 2025 underscored the military's role in supporting industry (imip.co.id, 21/03/25). Deputy Minister of Industry, Faisol Riza, visited IMIP in August 2025. He highlighted that effective collaboration among stakeholders—including local communities and security forces—has helped boost economic performance (imip.co.id, 13/08/25). The visit of central government officials confirmed that the relationship between IMIP and the coalition elite is very close and solid.

The central government's support has even been evident during IMIP's planning stage. In fact, the Central Sulawesi provincial government has discussed the environmental impact of the IMIP development plan. However, the provincial government of Central Sulawesi implemented the recommendations issued by the Ministry of Forestry and Environment. The recommendation was also made at the behest of coalition elites in other government agencies, like the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Maritime Coordination and Investment. Therefore, the environmental assessment indirectly triggers an 'order' and 'formality' from the central government, paving the way for the immediate completion of the IMIP construction.

The alignment of coalition elites in supporting IMIP's investment activities is clear. Professor Ilyas Lampe, a sociologist from Tadulako University and a member of the expert team assessing the environmental impact of the construction of the IMIP smelter, admitted that the team only needs to adjust, since all facilities have already been built. According to him, there is no comprehensive assessment of IMIP development. Apart from the central government's insistence, the Central Sulawesi provincial government is also institutionally weak. The Central Sulawesi Provincial Environmental Service has a limited number of personnel. For example, in Morowali Regency, only 3 personnel can carry out monitoring. The number of personnel is certainly not comparable to the number of industrial estates in Morowali Regency (Lampe, 2022).

c. *Socio-Economic Effects on Local Communities*

The presence of IMIP among the people of Central Sulawesi, especially in Morowali Regency, creates a profound socio-cultural relationship between IMIP and civil society. Ilyas Lampe explained that IMIP shows a paradox of development: economic growth and the potential for social conflict. On the one hand, the government and the local community feel the presence of a domino effect economically. IMIP has a positive domino effect for the majority of civil society, especially those living around the IMIP area in the Bahodopi District. Before the industrial area, the surrounding community had a low standard of living, with many people working as fishermen and factory workers.

However, after the opening of the IMIP area, the local economy increased. Local people open their own businesses, such as stalls and boarding houses. Public facilities, such as banks, are also present to observe the development of the area around IMIP. Road infrastructure was also added and widened to support the activities of this industrial estate. Bahodopi turned into a densely populated and expensive area, a village with a "city feel." House buildings that were previously scarce are now crowded and busy. The houses are now also equipped with electronic furniture, motorcycles, and cars (Lampe, 2021, 2022). The Deputy Regent of Morowali, Najamudin, also conveyed this economic improvement. He emphasized that the Bahodopi District is the only sub-district in Central Sulawesi with rapid economic growth, and this is due to the presence of IMIP (imip.co.id, 02/10/22).

On the other hand, factors hinder the occurrence of positive economic and socio-cultural effects. The most obvious obstacle is employment. The local community believes that IMIP provides preferential treatment to Chinese foreign workers rather than to local workers. The interaction between Chinese foreign workers and local workers occurs only at the workplace and during working hours, so socio-cultural relations are not really visible. The technology transfer from Chinese foreign workers to local workers is also slow. This is because the machines and heavy equipment imported from China are knockdown (semi-finished) and require only installation. The guide is also in Chinese. That way, technology transfer is difficult. In addition, the livelihoods of local communities, especially farmers and fishermen, changed. Some local people choose to work at IMIP rather than in their previous jobs. The growing potential for social conflict due to the influx of immigrants from various regions of Indonesia, especially South, Southeast, and West Sulawesi (Lampe, 2021), must also be a concern for IMIP and local governments.

d. *Strategic Communication and Legitimacy Building*

IMIP strives to create positive socio-cultural relations with the local community. This can be seen in the corporate social responsibility activities carried out over the past few years in the socio-cultural and environmental fields. One of IMIP's CSR activities was a blood donation drive in the Bahodopi District, Morowali Regency, in March 2022. The activity was carried out to overcome the shortage of blood stock at the Regional General Hospital (RSUD) and other health facilities in Morowali. The RSUD and representatives of the Morowali Regency government really appreciate the blood donation activity initiated by IMIP (imip.co.id,

22/3/22). In June 2022, IMIP, together with the conservation group Sombori Dive Conservation (SDC) Morowali, rehabilitated coral reefs on Sombori Island, Mbokita Village, Menui Islands District, Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi. The IMIP representative said that coral reefs have a very important function in marine ecosystems. IMIP took concrete action to support the conservation area of Sombori Island, as determined by the Indonesian Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (imip.co.id, 01/06/22).

According to Lampe (2021), IMIP has pursued several strategies to communicate with the public about its investment activities, including a community approach, the implementation of corporate social responsibility and community empowerment, and news publications through national media (print and online), news cooperation, and advertising. He also recommended strengthening the public relations function, especially in managing corporate communication, using both conventional communication methods and social media.

VI. Dynamic Social Embeddedness of Chinese Investment

The social attachment between IMIP and local actors in Central Sulawesi can be interpreted as the relationship between IMIP and the coalition elite, namely the central government elites, including President Joko Widodo, who represent what Camba perceives as a strong regime. The central government plays a crucial role in overseeing the development and implementation of mining activities in Morowali Regency. The central government's pro-investor regime provides companies with convenience. Both parties benefit from this situation. The host country's

government has an interest in attracting foreign investment, while investment companies seek political, economic, and socio-cultural stability to conduct their business.

The host party's solid leadership then shapes the company's relationship with other local actors. IMIP's relationship with local governments and civil society tends not to encounter significant obstacles. The Central Sulawesi provincial government facilitated IMIP mining activities in line with recommendations and 'urges' issued by the central government. However, the provincial government is an apparatus of the central government regime. IMIP's relationship with the local community had faced several obstacles, such as environmental issues. However, it did not expand due to the support and facilities provided by the central and local governments. Moreover, IMIP has prepared a strategy for managing its corporate communications.

VII. Conclusion

As one of the largest forms of Chinese foreign investment in Indonesia, IMIP is required to 'assess' Indonesia as the host country and maintain this relationship. This paper concludes that the social attachment drawn from the relationship between IMIP and local actors in Central Sulawesi can be interpreted as the relationship between IMIP and the coalition elite, namely the central government elite, which represents what Camba perceives as a strong regime. The Indonesian government plays a crucial role in overseeing the development and implementation of mining activities in Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi. This, in turn, yields a mutually beneficial outcome for both parties. The host country's government

has an interest in attracting foreign investment, while investment companies seek political, economic, and socio-cultural stability to conduct their business.

This paper has not comprehensively discussed the concept of social embeddedness, as in Camba's model. The relationship between Chinese companies and the Chinese government has not been discussed in detail, likewise with the relationship between the Chinese government and the host country's government. The limited number of interviewed informants is also a limitation of this article, and it will be addressed in future work. This paper is very open to constructive criticism and input.

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Book Reviews

***Beyond The Boomerang: From Transnational Advocacy Networks to Transcalar Advocacy in International Politics.* By Christopher L. Palas and Elizabeth A. Bloodgood. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2022. ISBN: 0817321144**

The book makes a significant contribution to the study of transnational collective action by challenging the continued use of the term "transnational." However, contemporary advocacy phenomena in international politics are seen as inadequate to capture the growing complexity of modern collective action. In response, the authors introduce an innovative concept: *transcalar*. The transcalar approach examines activism and mobilization across multiple overlapping scales, rather than merely across national borders.

Furthermore, the book illuminates how experiences of social advocacy movements—from the World Social Forum to Brazil, Mexico, and Vietnam, can be analyzed more effectively through a transcalar lens. This perspective highlights that activism relevant to global politics often takes place within domestic or local arenas and does not necessarily depend on cross-border networks. The authors build their arguments upon several key theoretical foundations, including Donatella della Porta and Manuela Caiani (2009) demonstrated that many European social movements operate within national frameworks even when addressing issues at the EU level, while von Bülow (2010) showed how civil society organizations pursue multiple pathways to transnationality, some acting locally, others maintaining long-term international engagement.

This book seeks to challenge the long-standing status quo of transnational advocacy studies, which have been heavily shaped by the seminal work *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy in International Politics* by Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1994). Keck and Sikkink illustrated how transnational activism opposed Brazil's Polonoroeste and Planofloro development projects by forming international advocacy networks between Brazilian activists and environmental NGOs in the United States.

However, the book argues that local advocacy behavior has since evolved. Brazilian activists remain involved in transnational action, yet their current partners are no longer Northern-based INGOs but rather Brazilian government officials and NGOs from India, Brazil, and South Africa. The "revolving door" between activist organizations and government institutions has, at times, strengthened activist agendas. Meanwhile, local NGO staff often experience tensions with their former environmental allies from the United States as they seek to develop locally grounded strategies amid international pressure. Activism today may begin at the local level but extends internationally to amplify local power rather than bypass domestic obstacles.

The book is divided into two main sections: *"New Challenges: The Changing Architecture of Global Governance"* and *"Changing Agency and Advocates."* The first section highlights fundamental shifts in the architecture of global governance, which is no longer hierarchical or state-centric but increasingly polycentric, fragmented, and network-based. In this new order, non-state

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actors such as civil society organizations, corporations, local communities, and digital networks play crucial roles in shaping global agendas and policies. This changing structure sets the stage for the subsequent discussion on the evolution of advocacy.

The evolution of advocacy presented in this book demonstrates that advocacy practices are no longer entirely dependent on cross-national networks. Instead, advocacy now operates *transscalarly*, across interrelated levels of action (local, national, regional, and global). This shift reflects the very transformation of global governance itself: the once-dominant North–South relationship is being replaced by South–South collaboration, while national regulations and international political complexity push organizations to adapt through strategies such as operational nationalization and hybrid partnerships.

The second section focuses on how advocacy actors are adapting to these structural changes. Advocacy strategies are now far more diverse than the traditional *boomerang* model. Farmers, local business actors, and NGOs no longer rely solely on international pressure to change domestic policies; instead, they may work together to defend national interests from global pressures. Phenomena such as the *inverse boomerang*, where Northern NGOs seek legitimacy through partnerships with Southern actors, and the growing trend of South–South collaboration signal a shift in agency from Northern dominance toward Southern empowerment.

Beyond the redistribution of power, the text shows that advocacy agency has become increasingly reflexive, strategic, and adaptive to fragmented political contexts.

Activists now operate across scales in local, national, regional, and global, by engaging with the most relevant arenas to influence policy. This development is captured in the concept of *transcalar activism*, a form of advocacy that transcends traditional political and geographic boundaries, emphasizing cross-scalar mobility and the ability of actors to connect local issues with global implications.

Overall, the book offers an important renewal in the study of social movements and global advocacy by introducing the transcalar perspective as an alternative to the classical transnational framework. Across its two parts, the book demonstrates that the increasingly polycentric and networked architecture of global governance demands new forms of agency and advocacy strategy. Whereas earlier movements relied on the *boomerang* pattern—Southern activists seeking support from the North—advocacy today operates across multiple scales, where local actors possess the strategic capacity to act autonomously, collaborate South–South, and influence global policy from the ground up. By combining conceptual analysis with empirical cases from different regions, this book broadens our understanding of power dynamics, networks, and advocacy strategies in contemporary global governance, affirming that global politics today is shaped not only by states but also by non-state actors moving simultaneously across multiple scales.

Muhammad Iqbal Yunazwardi
Department of International Relations
Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia
muhammadiqbal_unazwardi@fisip.unsri.ac.id

Book Reviews

Gender and Diplomacy. By Jennifer A. Cassidy. Routledge: New Diplomacy Studies Series, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-315-27077-7 (e-book)

Gender and Diplomacy, edited by Jennifer A. Cassidy, positions itself as a critical intervention into a field long dominated by masculinist assumptions and historical erasures. As part of the Routledge New Diplomacy Studies Series, the volume seeks to make visible the gendered foundations of diplomatic practice and the enduring barriers that women face within Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs). While the volume succeeds in foregrounding diplomacy as a gendered enterprise and challenges the myth of neutrality embedded in diplomatic institutions, its interventions though significant expose deeper structural limitations in the field and within the book itself. The volume raises important questions but leaves several conceptual, empirical, and epistemic gaps that limit its transformative potential.

The editors frame diplomacy as a cultural, institutional, and symbolic system historically built by and for men. This foundational argument is convincingly laid out through historical chapters that demonstrate how diplomacy emerged as an elite masculine profession, with formal restrictions prohibiting women's entry well into the twentieth century. The authors make a strong case that women's exclusion was not incidental but structurally and ideologically embedded in diplomatic institutions. Yet, while the historical reconstruction is thorough, it tends to rely heavily on well-documented Western cases, which inadvertently narrows the universality of its claims. The absence of parallel historical trajectories from the Global South where colonialism, religion, and local gender norms shaped diplomatic exclusion differently, results in an incomplete genealogy of women's diplomatic marginality.

In its theoretical sections, the volume attempts to deploy feminist theory to deconstruct the gendered logic of diplomacy. However, the treatment of feminist debates often remains at a surface level. Although the book engages with distinctions between masculinity and femininity, and

discusses gender as a discursive structure shaping expectations of diplomatic conduct, its theoretical critique rarely engages more radical or decolonial feminist frameworks. Feminist IR scholars such as Tickner, Enloe, and Sjoberg are cited, yet the book does not fully extend their critiques to interrogate the embeddedness of diplomacy in colonial, racialized, and heteronormative power structures. Diplomacy is treated primarily as a patriarchal institution, but not necessarily as a racialized or imperial one. This limits the capacity of the volume to address intersectional inequalities faced by women diplomats of colors, Indigenous women, or women from postcolonial states groups whose marginalization is shaped not only by gender but also by structural global hierarchies.

The empirical chapters provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of women diplomats and the institutional biases they encounter. The authors highlight persistent stereotypes—women perceived as emotional, overly collaborative, or lacking credibility in security-related roles—and the informal norms that hinder women's career progression. These accounts are particularly illuminating in demonstrating how gender operates simultaneously as a symbolic system and as an embodied, social constraint. Yet, the empirical scope of the volume remains constrained: most narratives are drawn from the experiences of Western diplomatic corps or international organizations dominated by Global North actors. The book's reliance on elite accounts risks reproducing the same epistemic privilege it critiques. Women in early-career diplomatic roles, consular officers stationed in conflict zones, and diplomats from developing nations—a majority within the global diplomatic workforce—receive far less attention.

A significant blind spot emerges in the book's treatment of institutional reform. Several chapters emphasize the need for gender mainstreaming, representation, and leadership opportunities. However, the book rarely interrogates how these reforms can be co-opted by institutions without challenging deeper structural power imbalances. For instance, initiatives aimed at increasing women's representation often assume that numerical inclusion equals empowerment. Yet, feminist

critiques have long argued that representation without structural transformation risks tokenism and reinforces neoliberal forms of gender equality that leave patriarchal logics intact. Moreover, the book does not adequately critique how MFAs selectively adopt gender policies to maintain international legitimacy—particularly when states brand themselves as champions of "feminist foreign policy" while simultaneously maintaining exclusionary domestic practices.

Another critical gap lies in the absence of a sustained discussion on intersectionality. While gender as a concept is central, the book seldom addresses how gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, disability, or religion within diplomatic institutions. Women diplomats are often treated as a monolithic category, ignoring the differentiated vulnerabilities and opportunities that shape their trajectories. The experiences of Black women diplomats, Muslim women wearing hijab, LGBTQ+ diplomats, or women from low-income national contexts are scarcely mentioned. This lack of intersectional engagement weakens the analytical depth of the volume and undermines its ability to capture the full complexity of gendered diplomatic realities.

Despite these limitations, the volume remains a meaningful contribution to ongoing debates about gender equality in diplomacy. It is particularly relevant in the context of recent global momentum around feminist foreign policy, the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, and gender-mainstreaming efforts in international organizations. The book's central message—that diplomacy is far from gender-neutral and that achieving equality requires dismantling entrenched institutional cultures—resonates strongly with contemporary discussions on inclusive governance. Its historical and empirical contributions serve as an important foundation for further research, especially for scholars and practitioners seeking to understand how gender shapes global politics at multiple levels.

In conclusion, Gender and Diplomacy offers a valuable yet incomplete project. It successfully exposes the patriarchal underpinnings of diplomatic practice and provides a platform for discussing women's agency within global politics. However, its limited geographical scope, insufficient intersectional analysis, and underdeveloped engagement with decolonial feminist critiques constrain its transformative potential. The book ultimately opens a conversation that it does not fully resolve—a conversation that future scholarship must deepen by interrogating how gender interacts with race, empire, class, and global inequality. Nonetheless, it remains an essential text for understanding how diplomacy continues to be shaped—and constrained—by gendered power relations in the twenty-first century.

Ahmad Ridwan, M.Sosio.
Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Jawa Timur, Indonesia
Email: ahmadridwan@unesa.ac.id