



THE IMPLICATIONS OF MYANMAR'S MILITARY COUP ON THAILAND'S SECURITY SITUATION

¹Nova Mei Rahmadita, ²Muhammad Arsy Ash Shiddiqy

^{1,2} Department of International Relations, Universitas Islam Riau

*Corresponding Email: novameirahmadita771@student.uir.ac.id

Submission: January 20, 2025 | Revised: February 28, 2025 | Accepted: March 18, 2025

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implikasi kudeta Militer di Myanmar pada 2021 terhadap keamanan, ekonomi, dan hubungan diplomatik antara Myanmar dan Thailand. Dengan metodologi kualitatif dan studi kepustakaan, penelitian menemukan bahwa kudeta memicu krisis kemanusiaan, arus pengungsi besar-besaran, tantangan keamanan lintas batas, dan dampak ekonomi yang merugikan. Thailand menghadapi tantangan dalam mengelola arus pengungsi, memerangi perdagangan narkoba, dan menjaga stabilitas sosial ekonomi di perbatasan. Dalam menghadapi situasi ini, Thailand mengadopsi pendekatan diplomasi pragmatis, termasuk kebijakan "Quiet Diplomacy", untuk menjaga hubungan bilateral dan meredakan ketegangan. Meskipun mendapat kritik karena dianggap memberikan legitimasi kepada junta militer, Thailand berusaha menjadi mediator dalam konflik. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kudeta militer Myanmar memengaruhi keamanan domestik serta dinamika geopolitik dan ekonomi di kawasan, yang memerlukan perhatian dan respons strategis dari komunitas internasional. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memperkaya literatur tentang dampak kudeta militer Myanmar terhadap negara-negara tetangganya dan dinamika keamanan di Asia Tenggara.

Kata Kunci: Implikasi, Kudeta Militer, Myanmar, Keamanan, Thailand

ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the impacts of military coup in Myanmar in 2021 on the security, economy, and diplomatic relations between Myanmar and Thailand. Through qualitative research and literature study, the study reveals that the coup led to a humanitarian crisis, large-scale refugee movements, cross-border security issues, and negative economic consequences. Thailand encountered difficulties in managing the influx of refugees, combating drug trafficking, and maintaining socio-economic stability along its border. In response, Thailand adopted a pragmatic diplomatic strategy, including a "Quiet Diplomacy" policy, to preserve bilateral relations and reduce tensions. Despite facing criticism for potentially legitimizing the military junta, Thailand sought to mediate the conflict. The study concludes that Myanmar's military coup influences domestic security and the geopolitical and economic landscape of the region, necessitating attention and strategic actions from the international community. This research contributes to enriching literature on the impacts of Myanmar's military coup to its neighboring countries and the dynamic of security in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Implications, Military Coup, Myanmar, Security, Thailand

BACKGROUND

Security politics is a crucial element in international relations that involves various aspects to protect national interests and maintain social and economic stability. In international security studies, the concept of security has evolved from the traditional paradigm, which focuses on state and military security, to a non-traditional paradigm, which includes human security and non-state issues (Bainus & Rachman, 2017).

According to Clayton Thyne, a political scientist from the University of Kentucky, a coup is a group's overthrow of an incumbent government, often with violence (Bayu et al., 2022). According to Robert Longley (2021), the leader of a military coup is often considered a would-be dictator who refuses to recognize the legitimate government, as he seeks to seize power from a government according to his own will.

Myanmar's political situation after the military coup on February 1, 2021, has created very complex and dynamic conditions, the coup overthrew the civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party, which had previously won a major victory in the general elections in November 2020. During this period, relations between the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) and Aung San Suu Kyi's government appeared to be smooth. But on February 1, 2021, the Tatmadaw again took power and arrested the current leaders. This coup was triggered by the military's claim that Aung San Suu Kyi and her party, the NLD, had won the general election through voter list fraud (Susanto et al., 2023).

The ongoing crisis in Myanmar has affected Thailand in terms of migration, cross-border security, economics, geopolitics, and diplomacy. Thailand has experienced a lot of migration and refugees from Myanmar. Besides, the Myanmar military coup also poses a threat to Thai citizens living along the border area; cross-border gunfire can also affect the property of Thai citizens living in the border area.

There are concerns about Myanmar military operations inside Thailand, such as increased drug activity and public health challenges (Jittiang et al., 2022).

After the Myanmar military launched airstrikes in Karen state on March 27, coinciding with Armed Forces Day, the Karen information center reported that around 10,000 villagers fled to the forest. In addition, more than 3,000 people had crossed into Thailand on March 29. However, Thai authorities reportedly repatriated more than 2,000 refugees back to Myanmar, although they still face the threat of further attacks. These internally displaced people are thought to be in urgent need of humanitarian assistance (Kobayashi et al., 2021). The people who have fled to Thailand are divided into three groups. *First*, temporary refugees who will return to Myanmar. *Second*, economic migrants. *Third*, activists, individuals, and regime opponents (Jittiang et al., 2022).

Cross-border security due to Myanmar's 2021 military coup threatened Thailand's security, especially at the border, with shootings, searches, and clashes causing displacement of citizens. In addition, the coup triggered domestic challenges such as Tatmadaw intelligence operations, increased drug trafficking, and health threats due to the worsening pandemic in Myanmar. In addition, economic affairs also impacted the relationship between Myanmar and Thailand. Thailand is a major investor in the country, and Thai companies face risks and seizures from the junta, decreased consumption due to resistance to military-related businesses, and labor strikes that hamper production (Jittiang et al., 2022). The economic impact and political uncertainty in Myanmar may affect and political uncertainty can affect trade and investment between the two countries (Muhammad & Sahide, 2022).

Thailand-Myanmar diplomatic relations as a result of the coup also damaged trust between the two countries. Thailand has had to adjust its policies as the junta now controls both the military and civilians. Meanwhile, Myanmar is increasingly skeptical of Thailand's neutrality, especially after reports of opposition rejection and

support for the junta, which complicates relations with the opposition rejection and international community. The conflict in Myanmar has also fueled geopolitical tensions on the Thailand-Myanmar border, especially in Lay Kay Kaw, which was originally planned as an economic zone but has now become a battlefield. The Tatmadaw seeks to control the border to strengthen its influence in cross-border trade (Jittiang et al., 2022).

The Thai government is also trying to deal with problems due to the impact of the military coup that occurred in Myanmar by taking approaches such as conducting foreign policies carried out by the Thai government. The military coup that occurred in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, has caused many problems both domestically and abroad. Ethnic refugees from Myanmar to neighboring countries, including Bangladesh and Thailand, are influenced by various historical, geographical, and political factors. Ethnic Rohingya, who are predominantly Muslims, mostly fled to Bangladesh because they come from the Rakhine State, which borders Bangladesh. Meanwhile, ethnicities from Kayin, Kayah, Mon, and Shan States in the eastern part of Myanmar prefer to flee to Thailand because the region is close to the Thai border.

Apart from the Rohingya, several other ethnic groups, such as Karen, Shan, and Mon, have also experienced conflict with the Tatmadaw. These groups are often the target of military operations, causing thousands to flee to Thailand to seek refuge. In addition, Thailand is considered more economically and politically stable than Myanmar, so many refugees hope for better living conditions. Thailand also has long-established refugee camps, especially for the Karen and Shan ethnic communities who fled conflict decades ago. Some refugees also see Thailand as a transit point to seek refuge in other countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In International Relations, the realist perspective was the first approach to attempt to produce a complete conception of national interests. This approach aims to explain international relations as they are by seeing the world as anarchic, self-governed, full of suspicion and misgivings, and therefore states are anarchic in international politics. Therefore, national interests are the same as state interests based on their power (Bakry, 2017). Realism prioritizes national interest, often defined in terms of power and security. States are expected to act in ways that promote their own interests, even if it means engaging in morally questionable actions. According to Hans Morgenthau, from the perspective of realism, politics is governed by objective laws derived from human instincts that are always hungry for power. Like all types of politics, international politics is where states determine their national interests by limiting their power. A rational and objective approach is needed to understand and improve politics (Dugis, 2016).

From a realist perspective, states are considered the main actors in the international system. A state's relative power to other states usually determines its security. Therefore, the state will try to increase its military power as a strategy to deal with potential threats (Martin & Si, 2021). Realism, therefore, posits that states are the principal actors in international relations. While other entities (like international organizations or non-state actors) exist, states are viewed as the most significant due to their sovereignty and ability to wield power. The realist perspective assumes that the state functions as the main rational actor in the context of international politics. This approach is based on the assumption that the existence of nation-states can be analyzed through their behavior, with the belief that all decision-makers, wherever they are, tend to act similarly when faced with the same situation. Therefore, to analyze diplomatic maneuvers and other diplomatic actions. It is necessary to see them as a

response to political pressure, ideology, public opinion, as well as economic and social needs that exist in the country (Mas' oed, 1990).

Realism sees international relations from the point of view of power, emphasizing that state interests are most important and ethics are often ignored. Realism distinguishes between the neo-positivist school of realism, which pays attention to philosophy and history. Although realism is considered amoral, realists believe in idealistic reform (Bell, 2017). Realism emphasizes the importance of power in international relations. States seek to maximize their power to ensure their security and interests. This often leads to competition and conflict as states vie for dominance and resources. The pursuit of power can create a security dilemma, where one state's efforts to enhance its security can inadvertently threaten others, leading to an arms race or conflict (Karmilawaty & Janvy, 2024).

Realism perceives the international system as anarchic, lacking any authority that holds sovereignty over states. This situation arises because the system's structure influences state behavior. As a result, countries often adopt aggressive policies, leading to conflicts within the international framework. Additionally, realism emphasizes that a state's primary concern is its ability to ensure its own defense, which can only be accomplished if it can deter other states from posing a threat (Karmilawaty & Janvy, 2024).

In summary, realism asserts that the state is the most significant actor, functioning independently within the international system and pursuing its interests rationally, with a focus on ensuring power and security (Syahdani et al., 2024). For realists, national security is centered on the use of military force by states to safeguard their borders and physical assets (Immanuel et al., 2024). Realism highlights power as a fundamental concept, emphasizing that military security is of paramount importance, which it terms as high politics, while economic and social issues are considered less significant or low politics. Realists believe that enhancing military power is crucial for

achieving peace and security, and that nations must possess weapons to ensure their own security. This realist perspective on international relations provides a comprehensive understanding of state behavior in a global system marked by uncertainty, anarchy, and competition (Syahdani et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research is the qualitative method. The qualitative method is used to investigate, discover, describe, and explain the qualities of features of social influences that cannot be explained, measured, or described through quantitative approaches (Saryono, 2010). According to John W. Creswell, the qualitative research method focuses on an in-depth understanding of social phenomena through the focuses on meaning, context, and characteristics. Qualitative research is a way to explore and understand the meaning ascribed to social and humanitarian problems by some individuals or groups of people. In this research process, questions and procedures are used, specific data are collected from participants and analyzed inductively from general themes to more specific themes, and then the meaning of the data collected is determined (Creswell, 2013). This research used a technique from a literature study. The data was selected and then processed with various literature such as scientific journals, books, newspapers, visits to internet websites, and other sources that support the research.

DISCUSSION

Causes of Myanmar's Military Coup in 2021

On February 1, 2021, the Tatmadaw launched a coup by arresting Aung San Suu Kyi and some NLD party leaders. The coup came ahead of the inauguration of a new parliament after the NLD won the November 2020 election. The military claimed

electoral fraud as the reason for their actions, although there is no evidence at all to support the claim.

The Tatmadaw launched the coup by detaining Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint and removing 24 elected ministers, who were then replaced by 11 military officials. This coup took place after the November 8, 2020 general election, in which the NLD won 364 parliamentary seats. However, the Tatmadaw claimed fraud, although the Union Election Commission (UEC) emphasized the election was transparent. Previously, on January 29, 2021, several roads in Naypyidaw had been closed and guarded as a preventive measure against a potential coup. Following the takeover, the military tightened control over the national communication system by restricting access to social media and cutting off the internet to reduce external interference (Kaat et al., 2024).

General Min Aung Hlaing, who led Myanmar's coup, was later appointed interim president. Min Aung Hlaing has had a long experience in the military since 1970 and reached the position of Commander-in-Chief in 2011. In addition, Min Aung Hlaing also has an educational background in law. In Myanmar's semi-civilian government, Min Aung Hlaing was expected to become president. However, the 2015 election results won by the NLD transferred power to Aung San Suu Kyi, who became Myanmar's de facto leader (Ashadi, 2022).

Min Aung Hlaing is known as a figure who is not in line with the civilian government and opposes the increasing popularity of his political opponent, Aung San Suu Kyi. His dislike for Aung San Suu Kyi grew stronger after the defeat of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) in the November election the previous year. Before the election, Min Aung Hlaing had cooperated with the USDP to support his candidacy for president. However, the election results showed a landslide victory for Aung San Suu Kyi, which Min Aung Hlaing and other generals deemed as a result of fraud, so they demanded a recount. Min Aung Hlaing

himself is scheduled to retire in July, sparking speculation among the public. Many linked the coup to his retirement, suggesting that he wanted to retain power and remain in politics (Ashadi, 2022).

Myanmar's military has held power for sixty years and continues to play an important role in the takeover process. After the November 8, 2020, election, the 2021 coup d'état took place after the NLD won with 396 seats out of 476, beating the USDP with only 33 seats. On February 1, 2021, President Win Myint, Aung San Suu Kyi, and several NLD leaders were detained by the military. Afterward, the state declared a state of emergency and handed over power to Min Aung Hlaing. The military rejected the election results as fraudulent, as the USDP's defeat resulted in an opportunity for them to have a democratic president with a military background (Iqbal & Dwiprigitaningtias, 2021).

Despite the threat of violence, demonstrators continued to protest on the streets, even though the Myanmar military's repressive measures resulted in dozens of casualties. According to conflict monitoring groups, the rising death toll is due to the escalation of fighting that occurred after civilians began taking up arms. These groups of resistance to the military are collectively known as the People's Defense Force (PDF), which is a civilian resistance network comprised mostly of young adults (Hakiem et al., 2023).

Implications of the Coup for Security in Thailand in 2021

Since the coup, the groups of Myanmar refugees entering Thailand have been the largest groups from Myanmar. Most of them came from areas controlled by ethnic groups and were forced to flee due to airstrikes by the Tatmadaw. Refugees from Myanmar reach Thailand through the natural routes that connect the two countries, mainly through the Mae Hong Son and Tak provinces. Since the February 1, 2021 coup, several waves of displacement have occurred, with two major events taking place

between March 27 to April 1, 2021, and April 28 to 29, 2021. These displacements were the result of ground operations and airstrikes by the Tatmadaw against anti-coup groups, as well as Karen tribal defense bases near the Thai border. As a result, many injuries and deaths were reported as around 7,000 people crossed the Salween River to seek temporary refuge in Thailand. The displacement continued until March 31, 2022, and it is estimated that nearly 2,000 refugees again crossed into Thailand to seek temporary safety in Tak Province (Jittiang et al., 2022).

From a humanitarian perspective, Thailand's policy of allowing refugees to stay temporarily with limited access, but for international organizations disrupts the refugees' ability to meet their basic needs. The increasing economic burden, pressure on infrastructure, and potential social tensions of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the international community, including the United States, are playing a role in the issue. In addition, Thailand's efforts to maintain border stability and public health during the crisis require long-term solutions, better ASEAN coordination, and international support. The military coup in Myanmar in 2021 further exacerbated the humanitarian situation, triggered a surge in the number of refugees, and impacted stability at the Thai border (Sullivan, 2021).

Many cases show that the flow of refugees into Thailand occurs through natural pathways that connect the two countries, especially in the Tak province region. The refugees then cross the border on foot, crossing rivers to reach Thai territory. In addition, there are indications of the practice of giving bribes to local border guards and police officers to facilitate and secure their presence in Thai territory.

In addition to border security challenges, the military coup also presents threats within Thailand. Some reports indicate active intelligence operations by the Tatmadaw in Thai territory. One local non-governmental organization reported that refugees from Myanmar in northern Thai cities are being watched by suspicious individuals who secretly take their photos and track their whereabouts.

Another significant security challenge is drug trafficking. Post-2021 coup, Jeremy Douglas, Regional Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, expressed concern that already high levels of drug production and trafficking could potentially increase. Political instability in Myanmar has created conditions conducive to the expansion of drug cartels, especially as groups involved in the conflict allegedly utilize the proceeds of the drug trade to acquire weapons and finance their operations. This prediction is not new, given that actors in the Myanmar conflict have a long track record of exploiting the illegal drug trade as a source of funding for military activities. Consequently, Thailand is expected to remain a major transit route for drug smuggling to other countries. Although drug trafficking is not a new security issue, the increasing scale of this activity demands a strategic response and intensification of law enforcement efforts from Thailand's authorities (Jittiang et al., 2022).

In addition, the group of refugees who have fled to Thailand are economic migrants who have been hard hit by the violence post-2021 coup. Loss of livelihood forced them to seek new opportunities in Thailand. Most cross through natural channels with the help of smugglers at a cost of up to 20,000 Thai baht. Transnational smuggling networks organize their passage from small towns in Myanmar to Thailand before handing them over to contacts in Thai territory. In 2021, Thai authorities arrested hundreds of migrants, including 184 in Tak province and nearly 100 in Chiang Mai. While often considered illegal workers, some are potentially refugees, reflecting the complexities of mixed migration. This group also overlaps with other refugee categories (Jittiang et al., 2022).

The two countries have strong economic ties, with Thailand being Myanmar's second-largest trading partner. However, political instability and tightened border controls have led to a decline in bilateral trade. The restrictive policies of Myanmar's military government, including the regulation of payments through banks under junta

control, have eroded business confidence and hampered trade flows. In addition, Myanmar's labor sector has been disrupted, with a 10 percent drop in productivity since 2019 and difficulty accessing food for nearly half the household population. Thailand, which relies heavily on Myanmar for energy supplies and imports, needs to take strategic measures to stabilize its supply chain and safeguard its economic interests. To achieve this goal, a long-term agreement between Myanmar's military government and rebel groups is needed (Kaat et al., 2024).

The economic dynamics between Thailand and Myanmar have been affected by the post-coup crisis. Thailand is the sixth-largest foreign investor in Myanmar, with nearly 200 companies operating in various sectors, including construction, energy, food, and agriculture. The economic concerns facing Thai companies are rooted in factors both internal and external to Myanmar. Domestically, there is a potential threat from the Tatmadaw, which could impose fines or even confiscate company assets, creating instability in business activities. In addition, the social turmoil resulting from the coup triggered public resistance to the consumption and use of services provided by business entities with ties to Myanmar's armed forces. The civil disobedience movement that developed in the aftermath of the coup has resulted in mass labor strikes, which in turn hampered the production and operational chains of many Thai companies investing in Myanmar (Prachachat, 2022).

The conflict in Myanmar has brought various impacts to Thailand, including an increase in the number of refugees, drug trafficking, the spread of disease, and threats to sovereignty at the border. As a nearby country, Thailand has become a major destination for migrants seeking refuge and employment opportunities. On the economic front, Thailand has seen bilateral trade decline by 12.11 percent since the coup, while exports decreased by 15.16 percent, according to a Ministry of Commerce report. In addition, natural gas imports from Myanmar dropped from 17 percent to 15 percent, potentially disrupting the national energy supply. These conditions forced

Thailand to increase international gas imports amid rising global prices, ultimately complicating the country's transition to renewable energy (Kaat et al., 2024).

Following Myanmar's 2021 coup, Thailand's diplomacy became more complex. As the neighboring country, Thailand seeks to maintain border stability and manage refugee flows. While not explicitly condemning the coup, Thailand adopted pragmatic diplomacy by encouraging dialogue and participating in regional forums and ASEAN initiatives. However, responses tended to be reactive and less assertive, influenced by political-economic dependence on Myanmar and the need to maintain domestic stability and bilateral relations.

The conflict in Myanmar triggered geopolitical tensions on the border, particularly in Lay Kay Kaw, which was impacted by Tatmadaw airstrikes. The town, originally designed as a special economic zone, became an area of conflict, driving away investors. The Tatmadaw used the PDF pretext for the attack, but the aim was to strengthen border control in the interest of trade with Thailand. Before the coup, the Myanmar military acquired land opposite Mae Sot, but post-coup, they confiscated it without finalizing payment.

The conflict in Myanmar following the 2021 coup triggered a refugee crisis and geopolitical tensions on the Thai border, especially in Lay Kay Kaw. Tatmadaw airstrikes caused a massive exodus, with thousands of refugees crossing the Salween River into Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces. Thailand's policy of restricting refugee access creates a dilemma between national security and human smuggling, which complicates the situation. The coup also exacerbated the narcotics trade in the region, with Myanmar being a major production center and Thailand a transit route. Thailand, as Myanmar's main investor, faces business uncertainty due to junta policies and civil disobedience movements. Thailand's diplomacy remains pragmatic, seeking to maintain border stability and manage refugee flows through ASEAN coordination, albeit without a firm stance on the coup.

Thailand's Foreign Policy Towards the Implications of Myanmar's Military Coup

After the 2021 Myanmar military coup, Thailand's foreign policy is oriented towards the role of mediator in resolving the crisis while maintaining diplomatic relations to avoid potential conflict. Thailand sought to establish communication with the Tatmadaw and support humanitarian initiatives in the region. However, this approach has been criticized as lacking proactivity and potentially hampering the effectiveness of ASEAN's efforts to address the Myanmar crisis (Yuniarti, 2024).

Although some Thais, particularly online, have shown support for the opposition in Myanmar, the Thai government has remained cautious in expressing its official stance on the situation in the country. However, there are indications that Thai officials have been closely monitoring political developments and the crisis in Myanmar since the coup in 2021. The geographical proximity factor makes the Thai government more cautious about the potential entry of refugees and Myanmar opposition groups into its territory. In addition, Thailand recognizes the risks posed to its security, economy, and international relations that could impact the country's stability. In March 2021, the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an official statement emphasizing that as a country that borders Myanmar directly and has close relations in various fields, Thailand must monitor the situation in Myanmar with great concern. The Thai government also expressed its concern over the escalating violence and its impact on the people of Myanmar, including the loss of life and suffering caused by the escalation of the conflict.

In July 2021, the Thai government emphasized the importance of peace, stability, and prosperity in Myanmar, given the geographical proximity and long border between the two countries. Thailand cannot be passive to the crisis and seeks to maintain open communication with Myanmar to avoid conflict escalation and maintain regional stability (Jittiang et al., 2022).

Thailand responded to the Myanmar crisis through ad hoc and business-as-usual approaches. The ad hoc approach focuses on rapid response to the immediate impacts of the coup, such as the influx of migrants and refugees, which is likely to continue if the crisis is prolonged. Meanwhile, the business-as-usual approach includes bilateral relations through government-to-government and military-to-military channels, although coordination between the two institutions is often out of sync. At the multilateral level, Thailand follows collective ASEAN decisions, including the five-point consensus and Myanmar's exclusion from the ASEAN Summit. However, its stance on Cambodia's leadership in handling the crisis remains unclear (Jittiang et al., 2022).

Quiet Diplomacy Approach

Quiet diplomacy is an approach that is conducted behind closed doors, where the negotiation and discussion process takes place behind the scenes without public involvement or exposure. This method resolves conflicts through inconspicuous mechanisms. Thereby reducing the potential for escalation or resistance from the parties involved.

Covert diplomacy refers to a negotiation process that is not explicitly publicized, but whose existence can still be recognized, while secret diplomacy effectively hides the existence of diplomatic interaction. This chapter is divided into four main sections. *First*, the correlation between diplomacy and secrecy. *Second*, arguments in favor of the sustainability of secret diplomacy. *Third*, critiques of the practice of secret diplomacy. *Fourth*, challenges facing secret diplomacy in the global dynamics of the 21st century (Constantinou et al., 2016).

Thailand's foreign policy towards Myanmar's 2021 coup was predominantly oriented towards quiet diplomacy, emphasizing bilateral engagement rather than open confrontation. This approach is designed to stabilize bilateral relations and

promote the peace process in Myanmar while adjusting to the complexity of ASEAN dynamics and collective responses.

ASEAN's limitations in addressing the crisis in Myanmar have weakened its central role in the region and diminished its credibility in upholding human rights. In response, Thailand, under the leadership of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, implemented quiet diplomacy on November 14, 2021, to mitigate the impact of the coup, taking into account its geographical proximity to Myanmar. This cautious approach aims to de-escalate the conflict to maintain national stability, especially since the 2,401 km border is a crucial point for various problems, such as illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and other social issues. Thailand acts as a mediator by building diplomatic communication with Myanmar to ensure the stability of the border area and economic sector. By utilizing the historical relationship between the military elites of both countries, Thailand seeks to encourage Myanmar's policies to be more strategic and value-based. This approach is analyzed using K. J. Holsti's foreign policy theory, which emphasizes the importance of national security in foreign policy formulation. Compared to other ASEAN countries' strategies, Thailand's approach is more effective because it avoids excessive or confrontational responses (Kaat et al., 2024).

Under Chan-o-cha's leadership, Thailand implemented a quiet diplomacy strategy in establishing communication with the Myanmar military junta after the 2021 coup. As a leader with a military background, Chan-o-cha utilized the bilateral economic relationship between Thailand and Myanmar to encourage the Tatmadaw to reform by providing incentives through increased trade and investment cooperation. Besides aiming to protect its national interests, this diplomatic approach also played a role in representing ASEAN to warn the Tatmadaw of the consequences of the coup. Thailand sought to position itself as a mediator in the conflict to maintain political and economic stability in the region. Despite criticism that this approach has the potential to strengthen the legitimacy of the junta government, quiet diplomacy is

considered to have significance in maintaining bilateral relations and strengthening ASEAN solidarity. In addition, this strategy also reflects the principle of non-intervention upheld by ASEAN. Therefore, Thailand is expected to become a model for other ASEAN member states in formulating a more effective and sustainable diplomatic approach in dealing with the crisis in Myanmar (Kaat et al., 2024).

The quiet diplomacy policy implemented by Thailand under the leadership of Chan-o-cha represents a non-confrontational diplomacy strategy in responding to Myanmar's political crisis post-2021 coup. This policy is designed to maintain and protect Thailand's national interests, which include border security, socio-economic stability, and the continuity of bilateral trade and investment relations with Myanmar. This approach is based on the realist perspective in international relations, which emphasizes the dominance of national interests and economic ties with Myanmar to build trust, ensure regional stability, and maintain Thailand's strategic position within ASEAN.

Although this policy has been criticized for giving legitimacy to the Tatmadaw, Thailand still seeks to play its role as an ASEAN mediator to maintain regional stability. In its implementation, Thailand avoids direct involvement or excessive public response, so this policy is considered more effective than the approach taken by Western countries. The quiet diplomacy strategy allows for more open two-way communication between Thailand and the Tatmadaw while maintaining Thailand's domestic credibility and stability in dealing with sensitive issues in the realm of international relations (Kaat et al., 2024).

Quiet diplomacy is often conducted behind closed doors or in secrecy, with four main factors highlighting its urgency. *First*, negotiations that take place in secret have the potential to produce decisions that are detrimental to parties not involved in the negotiation process. *Second*, the secrecy aspect can be used to safeguard the interests of certain individuals or groups. *Third*, in a democratic government system,

information disclosure is essential so that people can assess the policies taken by their leaders. *Fourth*, the practice of secret diplomacy can hinder the accumulation of knowledge from previous successes and failures, thus limiting the improvement of diplomacy effectiveness in the future.

Myanmar-Thailand Diplomatic Relations

Diplomatic relations between Thailand and Myanmar have a long history, influenced by geographical factors, war history, borders, and regional political and security dynamics. From the 1980s to the 2000s, Myanmar's internal conflicts pushed refugees into Thailand, which became a security issue for both countries. Thailand became a base for Myanmar insurgent groups, such as the Karen and Kachin ethnic armies, which often led to tensions. The Thai government is also worried about drug smuggling from Myanmar, especially in the Golden Triangle region, known as a center for heroin and methamphetamine production.

In the 1990s, diplomatic relations improved with increased economic and security cooperation. Thailand supported Myanmar's entry into ASEAN in 1997, which strengthened bilateral relations in addition to the two countries cooperating on border security, trade, and countering drug trafficking. Then, the issue of the Rohingya ethnic influx due to the crisis since 2021 caused new tensions because Rohingya refugees used Thailand as a transit route to third countries. Thailand is careful in addressing this issue to maintain good relations with Myanmar, but still accepts refugees on a humanitarian basis. Thailand and Myanmar continue to work on improving military and security cooperation, including joint border patrols and combating drug trafficking.

Thailand also mediated Myanmar's conflict after the 2021 military coup, albeit with a more diplomatic approach than other ASEAN countries. Thailand and Myanmar's security relationship has had its ups and downs throughout history, from

royal rivalry and border conflicts to cooperation in the modern era. Despite challenges such as refugee issues, drug trafficking, and insurgent groups, the two countries continue to maintain pragmatic diplomatic relations for regional stability.

CONCLUSION

Myanmar's military coup on February 1, 2021, has created significant impacts not only for Myanmar but also for neighboring countries, especially Thailand. The situation has triggered a humanitarian crisis involving massive refugee flows, cross-border security challenges, and detrimental economic impacts on both countries. Thailand, as a country that shares a direct border with Myanmar, faces challenges in managing refugee flows, increasing drug trafficking, and maintaining socio-economic stability in the border region.

In dealing with this situation, Thailand adopted a pragmatic diplomatic approach, including the "Quiet Diplomacy" policy that aims to maintain bilateral relations with Myanmar while seeking to ease tensions. Although this approach has been criticized for giving legitimacy to the military junta, Thailand still strives to play a mediating role in the conflict and maintain regional stability. From a security perspective, Myanmar's military coup worsened the situation on the border, with increased concerns of drug smuggling and intelligence operations conducted by the Tatmadaw in Thailand's territory. In addition, the economic impact of political instability in Myanmar has also affected trade relations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdulraheem, M. I., Adebawale, A. A. (2021). COVID-19 Pandemic's Impacts on Nigerian Educational System and Social-Economic Activities. *European Journal of Science, Innovation and Technology*, 1(3), 28–38.
- Ashadi, W. (2022). Kudeta Junta Militer Myanmar Terhadap Aung San Suu Kyi 2021. *Dauliyah: Journal of Islamic and International Affairs*, 7(2), 138–164. <https://doi.org/10.21111/dauliyah.v7i2.9316>

-
- Bainus, A., & Rachman, J. B. (2018). Kepentingan Nasional dalam Hubungan Internasional. *Intermestic: Journal of International Studies*, 2(2), 109–115. <https://doi.org/10.24198/intermestic.v2n2.1>
- Bakry, U. S. (2017). *Dasar-Dasar Hubungan Internasional*. Kencana.
- Bayu, M., Aji, P., & Yogyakarta, U. M. (2022). Kudeta Militer Myanmar.
- Bell, D. (2017). Political Realism and International Relations. *Philosophy Compass*, 12(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12403>
- Constantinou, C. M., Kerr, P., & Sharp, P. (2016). *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research Design: Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Mixed*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Dugis, V. (2016). *Teori Hubungan Internasional: Perspektif-Perspektif Klasik*. Cakra Studi Global Strategis.
- Hakim, F. N., Hasanah, T. A., & Indrasari, A. F. P. (2023). Pengaruh Kudeta Militer Myanmar Terhadap Stabilitas Kawasan ASEAN Pada Tahun 2021. *Review of International Relations*, 4(2), 143–155. <https://doi.org/10.24252/rir.v4i2.32655>
- Iqbal, F. M., & Dwiprigitaningtias, I. (2021). Kudeta Militer Myanmar Dalam Perspektif Hukum Internasional. *Jurnal Dialektika Hukum*, 3(1), 113–129. <https://doi.org/10.36859/jdh.v3i1.541>
- Immanuel, J., Sudirman, A., & Hakiki, F. (2024). Sistem Pertahanan Israel dalam Menghadapi Perkembangan Keamanan Nasional. *BHUVANA: Journal of Global Studies*, 2(1), 98–122. <https://doi.org/10.59408/bjgs.v2i1.131>
- Jittiang, B., Sirijintana, W., Wangpuchakane, T. (2022). Ad Hoc and As Usual: Thai Government's Responses to the Myanmar Crisis Since the 2021 Coup. Asia Pacific Centre - Responsibility to Protect. https://r2pasiapacific.org/files/8231/2022_Thai_response_myanmar_crisis.pdf
- Kaat, C. B., Seba, R. O. C., Nau, N. U. W. (2024). Kebijakan Luar Negeri Prayut Chan O Cha Terkait Kudeta Myanmar. *Action Research Literate*, 8(9), 2504–2517. <https://doi.org/10.46799/ar.v8i9.611>
- Karmilawaty, R. S., & Janvy, C. (2024). Agresivitas Kebijakan Luar Negeri Tiongkok dalam Sengketa Wilayah dengan Filipina di Pulau Thitu. *BHUVANA: Journal of Global Studies*, 2(2), 202–223. <https://doi.org/10.59408/bjgs.v2i2.51>
- Kobayashi, J., Aritaka, N., Nozaki, I., Tabata, A., & Noda, S. (2021). COVID-19 control during a humanitarian crisis; the need for emergency response at the Thai-Myanmar border as an alternative channel. *Tropical Medicine and Health*, 49(33), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41182-021-00323-1>
- Longley, R. (2021). What Is a Coup d'Etat? Definition and Examples. *ThoughtCo*.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-coup-d-etat-4694507>

- Mas' oed, M. (1990). *Ilmu Hubungan Internasional: Disiplin dan Metodologi*. LP3ES.
- Muhammad, A., & Sahide, A. (2022). ASEAN's Response to the Myanmar Military Coup: From Non-Intervention to Responsibility to Protect. *Revista UNISCI*, 2022(59), 43–58. <https://doi.org/10.31439/unisci-140>
- Saryono. (2010). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Alfabeta.
- Sullivan, D. P. (2021). Dire Consequences: Addressing the Humanitarian Fallout from Myanmar's Coup. *Refugees International*. <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/dire-consequences-addressing-the-humanitarian-fallout-from-myanmars-coup/>
- Susanto, G. H., Seba, R. O. C., & de Fretes, C. H. J. (2023). Analisis Terjadinya Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia Pasca Kudeta Myanmar Tahun 2021. *Jurnal Impresi Indonesia (JII)*, 2(5), 450–458. <https://doi.org/10.58344/jii.v2i5.2482>
- Syahdani, M., Maharsi, H. C., & Zellatifanny, C. M. (2024). Neorealism and Digital Transformation in Russia-Ukraine War: A More Cynical Perspective Towards Unjust War?. *BHUVANA: Journal of Global Studies*, 2(1), 123–149. <https://doi.org/10.59408/bjgs.v2i1.145>
- Yuniarti, A. (2024). Challenges Facing the ASEAN Political and Security due to the 2021 Myanmar Military Coup: The Role of ASEAN Centrality. *SINERGI: Journal of Strategic Studies & International Affairs*, 4(1), 65–84. <https://doi.org/10.17576/sinergi.0401.2024.05>