



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**AUTHORITARIANISM AS A DRIVER OF U.S. FOREIGN  
POLICY: THE CASES OF MYANMAR, VIETNAM, AND  
NORTH KOREA**

by

Rang Lee

December 2016

Thesis Co-Advisor:  
Thesis Co-Advisor:

Tristan Mabry  
Wade Huntley

**Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.**

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY</b>	<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> December 2016	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's thesis		
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> AUTHORITARIANISM AS A DRIVER OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: THE CASES OF MYANMAR, VIETNAM, AND NORTH KOREA			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Rang Lee				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  What is the significance of authoritarianism to U.S. foreign policy? Promoting democracy is a key element of U.S. foreign policy, and Washington conventionally criticizes authoritarian regimes. At the same time, the United States traditionally praises authoritarian regimes that allow pluralism. But these attitudes may or may not correlate with improved foreign relations. To what extent is the softening of authoritarian rule responsible for improved foreign relations as opposed to other factors? This thesis compares U.S. foreign relations with three authoritarian states: Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea. The cases represent varying degrees of authoritarian rule and varying levels of cooperation with Washington. Findings from this thesis highlight the significance of authoritarian rule as a driver of U.S. foreign policy.				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> authoritarianism, U.S. foreign policy, Myanmar, Vietnam, North Korea, U.S.-Myanmar relations, U.S.-Vietnam relations, U.S.-North Korea relations, Freedom House, strategic interest			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 125	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

**Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.**

**AUTHORITARIANISM AS A DRIVER OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: THE  
CASES OF MYANMAR, VIETNAM, AND NORTH KOREA**

Rang Lee  
Captain, Republic of Korea Army  
B.A., Korea Military Academy, 2009

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(FAR EAST, SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE PACIFIC)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
December 2016**

Approved by: Tristan Mabry, Ph.D.  
Co-Advisor

Wade Huntley, Ph.D.  
Co-Advisor

Mohammed M. Hafez, Ph.D.  
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## **ABSTRACT**

What is the significance of authoritarianism to U.S. foreign policy? Promoting democracy is a key element of U.S. foreign policy, and Washington conventionally criticizes authoritarian regimes. At the same time, the United States traditionally praises authoritarian regimes that allow pluralism. But these attitudes may or may not correlate with improved foreign relations. To what extent is the softening of authoritarian rule responsible for improved foreign relations as opposed to other factors? This thesis compares U.S. foreign relations with three authoritarian states: Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea. The cases represent varying degrees of authoritarian rule and varying levels of cooperation with Washington. Findings from this thesis highlight the significance of authoritarian rule as a driver of U.S. foreign policy.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.	Basis of U.S. Foreign Policy .....	2
2.	U.S. Relationship with Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea.....	3
3.	About Authoritarianism.....	8
<b>D.</b>	<b>POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN.....</b>	<b>14</b>
1.	Quantify the Independent Variable .....	14
2.	Quantify the Dependent Variable.....	15
3.	Analyze the Correlation .....	16
<b>F.</b>	<b>THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE.....</b>	<b>16</b>
 <b>II.</b>	 <b>THE CASE OF MYANMAR.....</b>	 <b>19</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>LEVEL OF AUTHORITARIANISM.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>CORRELATION BETWEEN AUTHORITARIANISM AND U.S. RELATIONS WITH MYANMAR.....</b>	<b>22</b>
1.	Political Ties .....	22
2.	Economic Ties.....	28
3.	Military Ties .....	31
<b>C.</b>	<b>EXPLANATION BEYOND AUTHORITARIANISM .....</b>	<b>33</b>
1.	Causal Direction.....	34
2.	Strategic Background .....	36
<b>D.</b>	<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>46</b>
 <b>III.</b>	 <b>THE CASE OF VIETNAM.....</b>	 <b>49</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>LEVEL OF AUTHORITARIANISM.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>CORRELATION BETWEEN AUTHORITARIANISM AND U.S. RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM .....</b>	<b>53</b>
1.	Political Ties .....	53
2.	Economic Ties.....	59
3.	Military Ties .....	62
<b>C.</b>	<b>EXPLANATION BEYOND AUTHORITARIANISM .....</b>	<b>67</b>
1.	Causal Direction.....	67
2.	Strategic Background .....	69

D.	SUMMARY .....	81
IV.	CONCLUSION .....	83
A.	COMPARING TWO CASES .....	83
B.	THE CASE OF NORTH KOREA .....	84
1.	Level of Authoritarianism.....	84
2.	Variation of U.S.–North Korea Relations.....	86
C.	RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE .....	90
D.	LIMITS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....	91
	APPENDIX A. MYANMARESE DATA .....	93
	APPENDIX B. VIETNAMESE DATA .....	95
	APPENDIX C. NORTH KOREAN DATA .....	97
	LIST OF REFERENCES.....	99
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	109

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Variation of freedom rating in Myanmar.....	22
Figure 2.	U.S.–Myanmar political ties .....	28
Figure 3.	U.S.–Myanmar economic ties.....	31
Figure 4.	U.S.–Myanmar military ties.....	33
Figure 5.	U.S.–Myanmar relations with freedom rating .....	36
Figure 6.	Variation of freedom rating in Vietnam.....	53
Figure 7.	U.S.–Vietnam political ties .....	59
Figure 8.	U.S.–Vietnam economic ties.....	62
Figure 9.	U.S.–Vietnam military ties .....	67
Figure 10.	U.S.–Vietnamese relations with freedom rating .....	69

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	U.S.–Myanmar summit visits .....	23
Table 2.	U.S.–Myanmar strategic interests depending on periods.....	44
Table 3.	U.S.–Vietnam summit visits .....	55
Table 4.	U.S.–Vietnam strategic interests depending on periods .....	79

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BSPP	Burma Socialist Programme Party
BTA	Bilateral Trade Agreement
CPC	Country of Particular Concern
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
EAS	East Asia Summit
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FON	Freedom of Navigation
IMET	International Military Education and Training
MFN	Most Favored Nation
MIA	Missing in Action
NDU	National Defense University
NLD	National League for Democracy
NTR	Normal Trade Relations
PNTR	Permanent Normal Trade Relation
POW	Prisoners of War
SCS	South China Sea
SEA	Southeast Asia
SLOC	Sea Line of Communication
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
TPP	Trans Pacific Partnership
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
VCP	Vietnamese Communist Party
WTO	World Trade Organization

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

What is the significance of authoritarianism to U.S. foreign policy? Promoting democracy is a key element of U.S. foreign policy, and Washington conventionally criticizes authoritarian regimes. At the same time, the United States traditionally praises authoritarian regimes that allow pluralism. But these attitudes may or may not correlate with improved foreign relations. But to what extent is the softening of authoritarian rule responsible for improved foreign relations as opposed to other factors? This thesis will compare U.S. foreign relations with three authoritarian states: Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea. The cases represent varying degrees of authoritarian rule and varying levels of cooperation with Washington. Findings from this thesis will illuminate the significance of authoritarian rule as a driver of U.S. foreign policy.

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

Research for this thesis will help to clarify how much the tendencies of U.S. foreign policy toward authoritarian states depend on the softening of authoritarianism. Even though the United States pursues spreading democracy, having diplomatic relations with authoritarian states is possible in certain environments. That means authoritarianism is not a sufficient condition for the United States to sever normal diplomatic relations. Mapping this gap is the purpose of this thesis. There might be various essential preconditions of the order of priority that facilitate the relationships. If the degree of authoritarianism is revealed concretely, the reader can better predict the relationship between the United States and the authoritarian state.

Another significance of the research is that the study tests how much the United States values democracy over other things. The U.S. National Security Strategy, which presents the direction of government operations, depicts democracy as a U.S. interest and also says that “Even when we are focused on interests such as counterterrorism, nonproliferation, or enhancing economic ties, we will always seek in parallel to expand

individual rights and opportunities through our bilateral engagement.”<sup>1</sup> In this regard, testing some cases will verify how the United States puts these words into practice. By examining some cases, this thesis evaluates how the United States considers the value of democracy in specific conditions compared to other values.

## **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The Literature review illustrates the basis of U.S. foreign policy and concept of authoritarianism.

### **1. Basis of U.S. Foreign Policy**

Periodically, the U.S. administration publishes a National Security Strategy, which is the foundation of U.S. policy. This document depicts the direction of the United States: what the national interests are, and how to protect U.S. security. Not only does the document indicate national strategy, but it also includes the values that the United States pursues. One typical example of an important value is democracy. All U.S. administrations include support for promoting democracy. In this context, the reader can see some values collide with each other, even though all the values are needed for the state.

In some cases, for example, the United States has good relations with other states despite the state being a non-democratic regime. In other cases, the United States insists on democracy before having normal relations with a state. Yet, no studies cover the relations or the influence between the level of authoritarianism and the U.S. relationship with Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea. A well-known commentary offering one explanation for this difference is Jeane Kirkpatrick’s article, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” which urges U.S. foreign policy to seek realistic demands on America’s allies.<sup>2</sup> But this piece represented policy advocacy rather than analytic research, is now quite dated, and is also lacking attention to U.S. relations with Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea.

---

<sup>1</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2010), 38, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Jeane Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships’ Double Standards,” *Commentary* 68, no. 5 (November 1979), 34.

## **2. U.S. Relationship with Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea**

Indeed, as shown in this section, no studies cover the influence of the level of authoritarianism on the U.S. relationships with Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea. This section examines the pre-existing research regarding U.S. foreign policy to each of these states.

### ***a. Myanmar***

Research on the U.S.–Myanmar relationship presents various types of analyses: 1) U.S. foreign policy toward Myanmar, 2) the balance of power in the Asian region between China and the United States, 3) and the strategic importance of Myanmar. First, in U.S. foreign policy toward Myanmar, the Congressional Research Service periodically covers the roles and impacts of U.S. foreign policy to the U.S.–Myanmar relationship. By tracing the process of transition, researchers introduce various assessments regarding both the United States' actions and reactions toward Myanmar.

The most recent research is the *U.S. Policy Towards Burma: Issues for the 113th Congress*.<sup>3</sup> In this report, the author focuses on two years of the second Obama Administration and analyzes U.S. policies. The author characterizes these policies during 2011–12 as: 1) more aggressive engagement with domestic affairs in Myanmar, and 2) determining whether to lift economic sanctions. For example, a debate addressed whether the pace of easing sanctions was appropriate. At the end of the report, the author proposed that these significant political aspects of Myanmar should be monitored: 1) President Thein Sein's vision, 2) military leadership on political reform, and 3) ethnic conflict.<sup>4</sup> The United States has a cautious stance regarding actual change, not only institutional changes, but also practical changes such as efforts to improve human rights.

---

<sup>3</sup> Michael F. Martin, *U.S. Policy Towards Burma: Issues for the 113th Congress* (CRS Report No. R43035) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013b), 1. <https://archive-it.org/collections/1078?q=R43035&show=ArchivedPages&go=Go>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

This report indicates that the contemporary U.S.–Myanmar relationship at least in part depends on Myanmar’s transition to a democratic regime.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned previously, an important policy is that of economic sanctions. Since these sanctions hindered the development of Myanmar and cut international ties, the economic sanctions are the core factor in the relationship. Some researchers think the economic sanctions were positive, leading the democratic transition from an authoritarian state. Others think that the economic sanctions worsened Myanmar’s situation regarding a military junta or human rights because the sanctions would not influence elites directly.<sup>6</sup> One expert on Myanmar, Leon T. Hadar, doubts the effect of the sanctions and argues that “U.S. unilateral sanctions against Burma have not achieved the goal of ousting the authoritarian government from power. Instead, they had harmful effects on U.S. diplomatic and economic interests and on the economic and political well-being of the Burmese population.”<sup>7</sup> Since the sanctions that were enacted with the 8888 uprising by the military coup originated from human rights problems, the process of easing those sanctions would be a good indicator of the relationship.<sup>8</sup>

Second, another line of research regarding the U.S.–Myanmar relationship examines competition between the United States and China. From Myanmar’s perspective, China is not necessarily friendly any more. President Thein Sein worried about Myanmar’s gradual subordination to China.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the Myanmarese thought that Beijing neglected the conservation of the regional society of Myanmar and pushes emigrants around. Therefore, Naypyidaw concluded that one of the ways to resolve these problems was through normalization with Western society and

---

<sup>5</sup> David I. Steinberg, “The United States and Myanmar: A ‘Boutique Issue’?” *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2010): 177. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2346.2010.00874.x.

<sup>6</sup> David I. Steinberg, “Burma/Myanmar and the Dilemmas of U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 21, no. 2 (1999b): 283.

<sup>7</sup> Leon T. Hadar, “Burma: U.S. Foreign Policy as Morality Play,” *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 411.

<sup>8</sup> Norman G. Owen, *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005), 504. The 8888 uprising was a democratic contention that occurred on August 8, 1988 in Yangon.

<sup>9</sup> Maung Aung Myoe, *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw: Myanmar’s China Policy since 1948* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011), 131.

democratization and reform.<sup>10</sup> From the United States perspective, China was a potential challenger that wanted to become a hegemon after the end of the Cold War. Thus, the Obama administration proposed the Asia Rebalance Policy to check and block a rising China. Geographically, Myanmar would provide China access to the Indian Ocean without passing through the Strait of Malacca.<sup>11</sup> For these reasons, improving the relationship between the United States and Myanmar enhanced the U.S. strategic position.<sup>12</sup>

These are examples of recent studies that pay attention to the practical context of foreign policy and put less weight on the effects of the level of authoritarianism on the relationship between states.

**b. Vietnam**

On May 23, President Obama announced fully lifting the embargo in Vietnam.<sup>13</sup> A study on the U.S.–Vietnam relationship can be roughly categorized into three sections: 1) economic ties, 2) strategic ties, and 3) human rights. First, economic ties conspicuously demonstrate the U.S.–Vietnam relationship. Both states made significant efforts to create an interest in the Asia Pacific region through the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement negotiations.<sup>14</sup> Also, foreign direct investment – the inward and outward flow investment and stock – has gradually increased since 2007.<sup>15</sup> Even though the United States incessantly urged action on human rights, U.S. economic ties continuously developed. In this context, what is the correlation between

---

<sup>10</sup> Jun Young Jang, “Changes and Challenges of Myanmar-China Relations: Balance of Power and Strategic Hedging,” *Southeast Asian Research* 24, no. 3 (2014): 96.

<sup>11</sup> Myoe, *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw*, 106.

<sup>12</sup> Staff Report, “Myanmar and the U.S.: Stumbling Toward a Critical Relationship,” *Defense & Foreign Affairs’ Strategic Policy*, January 2013, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Gardiner Harris, “Vietnam Arms Embargo to be Fully Lifted, Obama Says in Hanoi,” *New York Times*, May 23, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Mark E. Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2014: Current Issues and Implications for U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. R40208) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 1.

<sup>15</sup> “UNCTADstat - Table View - Foreign Direct Investment: Inward and Outward Flows and Stock, Annual, 1980–2014,” accessed May 12, 2016, <http://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableView/tableView.aspx>.

human rights. which are the basis of democracy. and economic interests that represent a pragmatic approach?

Second, another study of the U.S.–Vietnam relationship is an analysis of strategic ties. After the Cold War, despite no change in Vietnam’s regime, U.S.–Vietnam relations share issues for strategic gains. From the Vietnamese position, checking the Chinese military threat is needed. From the U.S. position, reconciling the fates of soldiers missing in action is an additional issue.<sup>16</sup> After the normalization of relations in 1995, the United States and Vietnam steadily increased their strategic relationship according to international circumstances. Especially concerned about a rising China in the middle of the 2000s, the United States and Vietnam shared a common strategic interest—the South China Sea territorial dispute between China and Vietnam and the competition for regional hegemony between the United States and China. In 2013, the United States and Vietnam announced a “comprehensive partnership,” which shared concerns regarding China.<sup>17</sup>

In this manner, most research studies observe other aspects of U.S.–Vietnam relations. Thus, measuring the impact of the level of authoritarianism in this relationship will be meaningful to better understanding the full range of factors driving the relationship.

### *c. North Korea*

Most studies on the U.S.–North Korea relationship focus on illicit activities, especially nuclear proliferation. Since North Korea has continuously and directly threatened the United States, the priority of the relationship between them cannot help focusing on military issues. Another study concerning their relationship takes note of economic sanctions. As a result of North Korea’s unreasonable activities, the United Nations imposed diverse sanctions. On this point, some scholars argue that economic sanctions can change the stance of North Korea. Others contend that economic sanctions

---

<sup>16</sup> John William Jr Little, “Vietnam in U.S. Foreign Policy: An Association for the Strategic Balance in Southeast Asia” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1991), 120, 124, 130.

<sup>17</sup> Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2014: Current Issues and Implications for U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. R40208), 1

are not enough to change the direction of North Korea. Studies typically do not concentrate on authoritarianism as a factor in the U.S.–North Korea relationship.

First, scholars take note of the nuclear weapons program when analyzing the U.S.–North Korea relationship. Since the 1990s, Pyongyang began developing nuclear weapons. The United States has aimed for North Korea’s denuclearization through bilateral or multilateral negotiation, but North Korea has conducted five nuclear tests—in 2006, 2009, 2013, and 2016—and a series of long-range missile or rocket launches since 1998.<sup>18</sup> One study, *U.S. Policy toward the Korean Peninsula*, introduces four U.S. policy options regarding the nuclear issue: acquiescence, manage and contain, rollback, and regime change.<sup>19</sup> At the end of the study, the research contends that denuclearizing is the purpose that the United States should continuously pursue. Victor D. Cha and David Kang, who are North Korea experts, also deal with the nuclear issues of North Korea and argue that the United States should engage more actively after the first North Korean nuclear test.<sup>20</sup> In the same vein, Taehyung Ahn also suggests that U.S. policy should abandon the “strategic patience” and apply “constructive engagement.”<sup>21</sup> Given that North Korea consistently threatens regional security, concerns should focus on nuclear weapons, and matters of authoritarianism should take a back seat.

Second, the article *North Korea: Legislative Basis for U.S. Economic Sanctions* illustrates the U.S.–North Korea relationship. The author argues that, on account of North Korea’s diverse activities, U.S. economic sanctions bring about “minimal trade and

---

<sup>18</sup> Emma Chanlett-Avery, Ian E. Rinehart, and Mary Beth D. Nikitin, *North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation* (CRS Report No. R41259) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016), 1.

<sup>19</sup> Charles L. Pritchard, Scott A. Snyder and John H. Tilelli, *U. S. Policy Toward the Korean Peninsula: Independent Task Force Report* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2014), 11.

<sup>20</sup> Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Taehyung Ahn, “Patience Or Lethargy?: U.S. Policy Toward North Korea Under the Obama Administration,” *North Korean Review* 8, no. 1 (2012), 1. doi://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.3172/NKR.8.1.67.

foreign aid, arms sales and transfer, barrier of assets.”<sup>22</sup> Then, the author highlights the role of the U.S. Congress. Even though the President leads foreign policy, Congress holds the authority related to the appropriation of the budget that enables the policy according to U.S. “political and strategic interests.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, the U.S.–North Korea relationship is a reflection of the legislative action of the U.S. Congress. In short, these sorts of studies concentrate on comprehensive North Korean activities and the U.S. relationship.

Evaluating the role of authoritarianism in the U.S.–North Korea relationship is more difficult than in the Vietnam and Myanmar cases because, unlike those cases, North Korean totalitarianism has been stark and unyielding. That reality likely explains the relative absence of attention to this topic in the literature on U.S.–North Korea relations. However, the common mention in many analyses of how “regime change” in North Korea might transform the relationship indicates the potentially important role that unwavering authoritarianism plays in keeping that relationship frozen. This thesis will seek to evaluate that role.

### **3. About Authoritarianism**

This section of the literature review discusses types of authoritarianism and criteria for gauging authoritarianism.

#### ***a. Broad Classification***

Before dealing with the degree of softening authoritarianism, the concept of authoritarianism must be defined and classified by level. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, who revised the classification of authoritarianism from tri-partite to penta-partite, argue that “The existing tripartite regime classification has not only become less useful to

---

<sup>22</sup> Dianne E. Rennack, *North Korea: Legislative Basis for U.S. Economic Sanctions* (CRS Report No. R41438) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016), 1. The activities include weapons proliferation, regional disruptions, terrorism, narcotics trafficking, undemocratic governance, and illicit activities in international markets, including money laundering, counterfeiting of goods and currency, and bulk cash smuggling.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



democratic theorists and practitioners than it once was, it has also become an obstacle.”<sup>24</sup> Hence, Linz and Stepan reformulated the regime classification as follows: democratic, totalitarian, authoritarian, post-totalitarian, and sultanistic regime. Also, the authors elaborate the concept of the newly proposed classifications by comparing four characteristics: pluralism, ideology, mobilization, and leadership.

At this point, defining totalitarianism and post-totalitarianism is needed. Linz and Stepan list characteristics of totalitarianism as follows:

If a regime has eliminated almost all pre-existing political, economic, and social pluralism, has a unified, articulated, guiding, utopian ideology, has intensive and extensive mobilization, and has a leadership that rules, often charismatically, with undefined limits and great unpredictability and vulnerability for elites and non-elites alike, then it seems to us that it still makes historical and conceptual sense to call this a regime with strong totalitarian tendencies.<sup>25</sup>

The authors also derive another typology, post-totalitarianism, and highlight differences compared to other types of regimes. One of the features of post-totalitarianism is “restricted pluralism.”<sup>26</sup> It might have a second economy and a parallel society; whereas totalitarianism has an economy planned by the state and recognizes state led organizations or groups only.<sup>27</sup> Another difference of post-totalitarianism compared to totalitarianism is the degree of emphasis on ideology. Whereas totalitarianism emphasizes a “holistic conception of humanity and society,” post-totalitarianism underscores “programmatic consensus.”<sup>28</sup> In mobilization, totalitarianism does not care about the private life of people, while post-totalitarianism has reduced the frequency of mobilization to an individual: the leader. The last difference is adopting an “internal democracy” in order for the leader to avoid security problems.

---

<sup>24</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, “Modern Non-Democratic Regimes,” in *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 39.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

One advantage of Linz and Stepan's research outcome is that the readers can easily apply the typology to contemporary states. On the other hand, not all states fit the characteristic criteria neatly, making it hard to determine exactly where the political systems of some states fit within the criteria.

***b. Competitive Authoritarianism***

In the post-Cold War era, the types of political systems were not limited to democracy, authoritarian, and totalitarian. Various sorts of political systems fell in the gray area between democracy and authoritarianism. In this context in 2002, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way introduced the notion of competitive authoritarianism, which compared full-scale authoritarianism to full-scale democracy. Competitive authoritarianism is located midway between these political systems. As Linz and Stepan mentioned, Levitsky and Way also agreed with the need to recognize hybrid political systems to characterize many contemporary states, especially in the post-Cold War era. Approximately a decade later, the authors explained *competitive authoritarianism* in more detail in their book, and they complement the research and define the notion explicitly, as follows.

Competitive authoritarian regimes are civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents' abuse of the state place them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents. Such regimes are competitive in that opposition parties use democratic institutions to contest seriously for power, but they are not democratic because the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents. Competition is thus real but unfair.<sup>29</sup>

Then, the authors compare democratic, competitive authoritarianism, and full authoritarian by three criteria: the "status of core democratic institutions (elections, civil liberties)," the "status of opposition," and the "level of uncertainty."<sup>30</sup> Levitsky and Way emphasize the meaning of this newly designed subtype of authoritarianism: "Competitive

---

<sup>29</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

authoritarianism does not easily fit existing subtypes of authoritarianism in large part because these regimes are noncompetitive.”<sup>31</sup> For this reason, Levitsky and Way’s argument can offer a good criterion to classify the level of hybrid authoritarianism. By adding competitive authoritarianism to the pre-existing typology, the reader can analyze authoritarian states more precisely.

**c.        *Democratic Authoritarianism***

Similar to competitive authoritarianism, democratic authoritarianism also pays attention to the democratic components in the authoritarian regime, especially institutions. Examples include parties and elections.<sup>32</sup> Dawn Brancati, suggests that democratic authoritarianism uses institutions nominally so as to “strengthen authoritarian regime” and “forestall democratization.”<sup>33</sup> Authoritarian regimes employ five mechanisms to protect their regimes: “signaling, information acquisition, patronage distribution, credible commitment, and monitoring.”<sup>34</sup> The problem with this article, in the overall perspective, is that the border between competitive authoritarianism and democratic authoritarianism is vague. These concepts might need to be merged or explicitly separated.

**d.        *Sultanism***

Another description of an authoritarian regime is sultanism, which is already dealt with in Linz and Stepan’s work. In Linz and Stepan’s article, the authors quote Weber’s description, “Sultanism tends to arise whenever traditional domination develops an administration and a military force which are purely personal instruments of the master.... Where domination ... operates primarily on the basis of discretion, it will be called sultanism.”<sup>35</sup> In addition, the authors state, “The essence of sultanism is unrestrained personal rulership. This personal rulership is unconstrained by ideology, rational-legal

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>32</sup> Dawn Brancati, “Democratic Authoritarianism: Origins and Effects,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 17, no. 1 (2014): 314. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-052013-115248.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Linz and Stepan, *Modern Non-Democratic Regimes*, 51.

norms, or any balance of power.” That means the most important factor when governing the state is just personal presence.

Jason Brownlee concentrates on another aspect of sultanism. The author pays attention to the process of power succession within sultanism because he thinks, “Hereditary succession among republic-style autocracies was unheralded by earlier studies of authoritarianism and remains unexplained in the hybrid regimes literature.”<sup>36</sup> The author analyzes 258 autocrats in post-World War II who ruled for more than three years, and he examines a correlation among party, dictators, and successor. In the end, Brownlee concludes, “Sons will succeed fathers whose power predates the party’s.”<sup>37</sup> The author insists that sultanism is distinct from other types of authoritarianism, with different features from the existing typology.

*e. One-Party Rule*

Similar to other types of regimes, one characteristic to classify an authoritarian regime is one-party rule. Benjamin Smith describes characteristics of one-party rule and initial conditions for the consolidation of authoritarianism. Then, the author argues, “Authoritarianism ought to do so judiciously, investigating not only the institutional appearances of regime types but also their social and political underpinnings.”<sup>38</sup> One of largest countries with one-party rule is China, which at the present time is perhaps the most important country after the United States.

The other works of Beatriz Magaloni and Ruth Kricheli describe the one-party regime as the most commonplace and stable type of authoritarianism.<sup>39</sup> The authors raise questions, including “Why are one-party dictatorships more stable than are others? Why do they grow more and experience fewer violent threats?” Then they suggest four points: 1) autocrats’ capability to survive challenges from both other elites and masses, 2) the

---

<sup>36</sup> Jason Brownlee, “Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies,” *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (2007), 595.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 628.

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Smith, “Life of the Party: The Origins of Regime Breakdown and Persistence under Single-Party Rule,” *World Politics* 57, no. 3 (2005): 429.

<sup>39</sup> Beatriz Magaloni and Ruth Kricheli, “Political Order and One-Party Rule,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. 1 (05/01; 2016/05, 2010): 123. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.031908.220529.

regime's ability to survive unchanged, 3) the difference between electoral authoritarianism and democracy, and 4) international forces that diffuse the single-party rule.<sup>40</sup> At the end of the research, they do not solve the question, even though they found some characteristics of one-party rule.

As the authors said, one-party rule provides the most stable authoritarian regime and is the most prevalent type at the present time, but many questions remain unanswered. In tandem with researching one-party rule, studying "global forces" that affect the one-party rule's decision is also necessary.<sup>41</sup> Thus, one-party rule is a definite type of authoritarian regime, which should be involved in the research range of authoritarianism.

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

The literature review summarizes information about authoritarianism and the U.S. relationships with the three states of concern in this thesis; however, former studies have not directly demonstrated the influence of authoritarianism on these relationships. To investigate that linkage, this thesis examines how the level of authoritarianism in other countries affects the U.S. relationship with those countries. The independent variable is the level of authoritarianism in a state, and the dependent variable is the U.S. relationship with that state.

The thesis evaluates the hypothesis that countries with low levels of authoritarianism are more likely to have a good relationship with the United States than countries with high levels of authoritarianism. If the research finds that a low level of authoritarianism is associated with a good U.S. relationship with the opposite state, the analysis will further examine whether changes in authoritarianism *precede* or *follow* changes in U.S. relations. On this basis, the thesis will seek to develop explanations for the relationship.

Alternatively, if the research finds that there is no relation between authoritarianism and the U.S. relationships with Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea, the analysis will examine why other reasons may outrank the value of democracy.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Despite the United States considering democracy as essential, other specific issues or strategic circumstances may outrank the value of democracy. Analyzing these situations will provide a good standard and prioritize the values in various environments.

## **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The methodology of this paper employs statistical analysis and comparative case studies. With proxy scales that indicate the softening of authoritarianism and the U.S. relationship with three states, the thesis can accurately depict the relationship and acquire persuasive power. The selection of the three states rather than one has the effect of reducing the possibility of leaning to one side; also, the selection improves credibility.

The states—Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea—in the Asia-Pacific region are important based on the “Rebalancing to Asia” policy of the United States. Among them, Southeast Asia has been famous for sustaining authoritarian regimes, and North Korea, needless to say, is notorious as a rogue state. By comparing these three cases, the research can approach the prime concern of the United States. Consequently, these methodologies provide empirical evidence.

### **1. Quantify the Independent Variable**

First of all, to measure the level of authoritarianism, the thesis uses the level of freedom, which is offered by the Freedom House organization.<sup>42</sup> The scales represent the degree of freedom. Political rights and civil liberties determine the *freedom rating*, expressed as a seven-point scale, from one (most free) to seven (least free), and in this thesis, the proxy scale is applied inversely for intuitive understanding: from one (least free) to seven (most free). The thesis utilizes the scales from the years of 1975 to 2016. By doing so, the independent variable becomes visible; and the thesis finds the inflection points and analyzes them, which indicates meaningful points of change.

---

<sup>42</sup> “Freedom in the World,” Freedom House, accessed May 13, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016>.

Freedom House provides an annual report on the *freedom rate* of each state based on both political rights and civil liberties.<sup>43</sup> By examining the countries using the same standard, students can compare each state's level of *freedom rating* and trace a specific state's variation. Freedom House proposes that political rights are determined by three subcategories: 1) "electoral process," 2) "political pluralism and participation," and 3) "functioning of government."<sup>44</sup> Each category has multiple questions that define the specific country's status.<sup>45</sup> The civil liberties also have subcategories, which contain 1) "freedom of expression and belief," 2) "associational and organizational rights," 3) "rule of law," and 4) "personal autonomy and individual rights," and each subcategory also has several questions.<sup>46</sup> The paper also concentrates on the aforementioned standards for the analysis of specific points. Freedom House produced the numerical rating with an in-house team and external analysts. Approximately 110 experts participated in the 2016 edition, and they used a diverse range of sources. That means the freedom rating has good validity to measure the level of authoritarianism as a proxy scale.

## **2. Quantify the Dependent Variable**

To measure the U.S. relationship with Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea, the thesis uses proxy scales that can represent the relationship: political ties, economic ties, and military ties. First, to measure the political ties, the thesis uses the number of visits of national guests and the existence of an embassy. In the number of visits of national guests, the thesis adds the number of visits by the U.S. President and the U.S. Secretary of State and the number of visits by foreign leaders to the United States. Plus, the existence of an embassy represents the relationship between states. The meaning of national guest visits is broad, but generally it represents the significance of the relationship between two states. The degree is expressed numerically from one to seven like the scale of the freedom rating.

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Second, to measure economic ties, the thesis uses the sum of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Myanmar's case and the sum of the amount of trade volume in the cases of Vietnam and North Korea. Each case does not have enough information from 1975 to 2016, thus a different proxy scale is used. To fill this gap, the thesis is paired with the qualitative analysis. FDI reflects appropriate economic ties, including psychological aspects of investors. The sum of trade volume also well expresses the outcome of the economic relations. Even though the proxy comes from different indexes, both proxies have no problems showing the economic ties. The economic ties range from one to seven.

Third, to measure military ties, the thesis uses the changing amounts of military assistance, which is provided annually by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).<sup>47</sup> The statistics show the sum of aid and stand for the formal institutionalized extent to which the United States and related states cooperate. Since the United States employs budget depending on priority, the variation in the sums represents the significance of the relationship. The military ties also range from one to seven.

### **3. Analyze the Correlation**

After the creation of proxy scales, the thesis compares and analyzes the correlation between the level of authoritarianism and U.S. relations—political, economic, and military ties—with Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea. If the proxy and context of their ties would not explain the correlation, the thesis will further investigate the reason for U.S. relations with opposite states beyond the authoritarianism explanation.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE**

Following the introduction (Chapter I), Chapters II and III explain the cases of Myanmar and Vietnam, respectively. Each case study defines the state's regime type based on the characteristics of authoritarianism and analyzes the correlation between the level of authoritarianism and relations between the United States and each of the two countries, Myanmar and Vietnam. Then, each chapter makes a conclusion about each

---

<sup>47</sup> "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2014," USAID, accessed May 12, 2016, <https://explorer.usaid.gov/reports-greenbook.html>.



state. In Chapter IV, the thesis compares the cases of Myanmar and Vietnam and concludes with the findings in this research. Additionally, the chapter examines the North Korea case briefly. Finally, the thesis outlines the relevance, importance, and limitations of the work, and presents opportunities for future research.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## **II. THE CASE OF MYANMAR**

For the purpose of this thesis, this chapter investigates how much authoritarianism helps to explain U.S. foreign policy in the Myanmar case. It is going to look in detail at the Freedom House ranking in relation to authoritarianism in Myanmar. Then, the chapter examines how U.S. foreign policy has evolved in history in terms of these three variables—political, economic, and military ties—and how much authoritarianism affected these relations. At the end, the chapter considers the strength of these correlations and what it says about cause and characteristic. The analysis also looks at strategic factors as a potential explanation for the lack of correlation in these variables. In the case of Myanmar, these factors could include 1) the level of authoritarianism, 2) the correlation between authoritarianism and U.S. relations with Myanmar, 3) the explanation beyond the authoritarianism, and 4) the conclusion.

In the first section, the thesis traces the variation of authoritarianism from 1975 to 2016 and explains the reason why the deviated inflection occurred at that time. In the second section, the correlation between authoritarianism and U.S. relations with Myanmar are analyzed in terms of political, economic, and military ties. The third section investigates the reasons for the absence of correlation between two variables. The section includes the causal direction, which reflects the comprehensive analysis of authoritarianism and U.S.–Myanmar overall ties: political, economic, and military. Furthermore, the discussion regarding strategic circumstances illuminates the context of the U.S.–Myanmar relationship with respect to strategic interests that provide potential explanations for aspects that could not be explained by the authoritarian factor. Finally, the conclusion section synthesizes U.S. foreign policy toward Myanmar.

### **A. LEVEL OF AUTHORITARIANISM**

Myanmar is a country in a dynamic regime transition these days. Right after independence in 1948, Myanmar operated as a parliamentary system, which was unruly. General Ne Win staged a coup in 1962, and began the long journey of the military junta. Under Ne Win's misrule, Myanmar's overall capacity gradually decreased, and that led

the people to rebellion and another coup. In the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)/State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) era, pluralism was regarded as a threat that would harm solidarity of the state.<sup>48</sup> The military suppressed the ethnic and religious minorities. The famous example is the Rohingya Muslim community, which differs from Burman Buddhists.<sup>49</sup> In the political arena, the military rebuffed the result of the general election in 1990. General elections held in 2010 and 2015 were more free and fair, but also excluded minority groups. Nevertheless, the degree of authoritarianism gradually decreased.

The Myanmar level of authoritarianism had seven inflection points that have sharply changed in research periods: 1978, 1983, 1988, 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016. Myanmar had suffered from a military junta since 1962 because of the military coup by General Ne Win. Meanwhile, the freedom of Myanmar gradually decreased: no elections took place; no pluralism for religious or ethnic groups was allowed; Burmese Ways to Socialism became mandatory; and industries became nationalized. Even though Myanmar established bicameralism in 1948 and achieved independence from the British, political rights and civil liberties went from bad to worse.

Ne Win's Burmese Ways to Socialism, which pursued harmony between socialism and Burmese Buddhism, exacerbated the economic situation, and thus it was proved to be an illusion. In 1988, the 8888 uprising occurred in Rangoon University to protest these policy failures. Students, monks, and many people protested against the government, and civil liberties were suppressed as a result of the protest. General Saw Maung, however, staged a coup and brutally mistreated the people, and the freedom rating was degraded again in 1989.

In 1990, the military junta held a general election with the judgment that the military party could win and earn legitimacy through the election, but the National League for Democracy (NLD) defeated the SLORC. Even though the SLORC was sure of itself at the election, it reacted to defeat by refusing to accept the results. Because of

---

<sup>48</sup> David I. Steinberg, "Burma/Myanmar and the Dilemmas of U.S. Foreign Policy," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 21, no. 2 (Aug, 1999a): 292–3. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798457>.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

this action, the military ignored the democratic procedure, and the level of authoritarianism did not change despite the general election.

In 2010, a general election took place for the first time in two decades. Through the solidarity of a quasi-military party's victory, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) wanted to invalidate the 1990 general election. But the main opposition party, the NLD, had a politician who was branded as a political prisoner, including the leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and was not allowed to participate in the election. Furthermore, the election did not admit participation of specific ethnic minorities, such as the Rohingya, most of whom are Muslims. For this reason, the general election in 2010 could not develop political rights despite their implementation over the previous two decades in Myanmar.

In 2011, the parliament recognized the human rights issue for the first time in decades, and some lawmakers ultimately created the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission.<sup>50</sup> Also, the government released political prisoners several times, and Myanmar's Ministry of Information stopped inspections of all publications.<sup>51</sup> President Thein Sein ordered the Commander-in-Chief General to stop aggressive operations on the Kachin Independence Army and instructed the ceasefire.<sup>52</sup> The parliament held a by-election, and the NLD participated in 2012.<sup>53</sup> In this manner, the Myanmar government made an effort to enhance political rights and civil liberties. In 2015, the general election resulted in a win by the NLD, and the first civilian government was established since 1962.

This evolution of authoritarianism in Myanmar is well represented by the Freedom House ratings over this period, depicted in Figure 1.

---

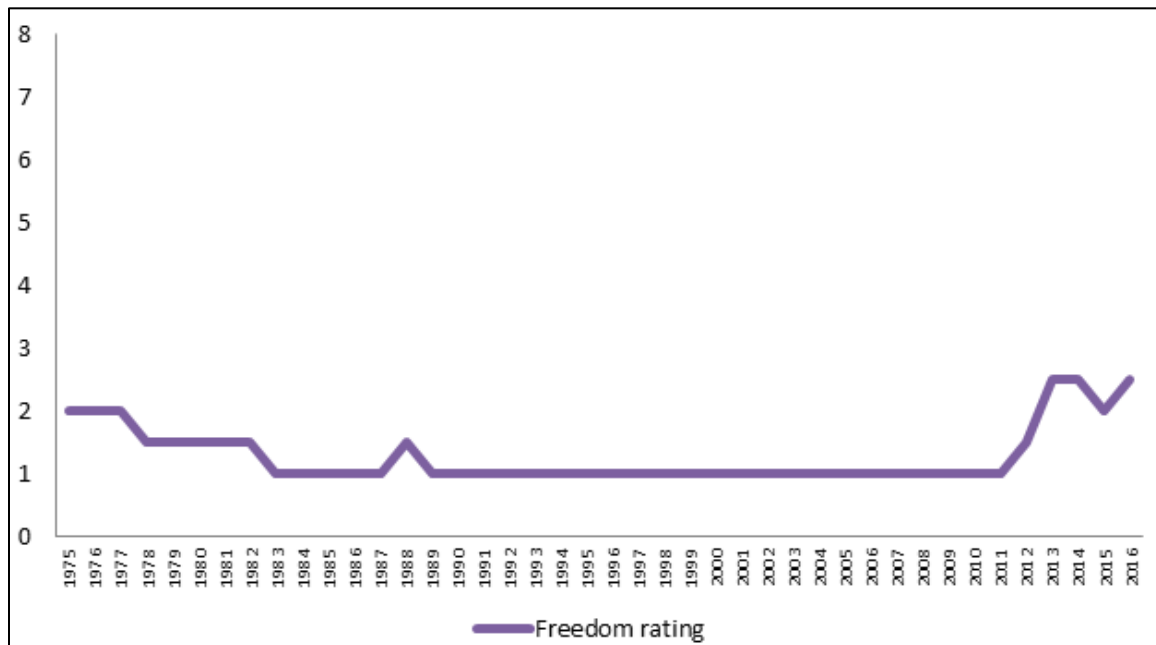
<sup>50</sup> "Freedom in the World,"; Michael F. Martin, *Burma's Political Prisoners and U.S. Sanctions* (CRS Report No. R42363) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013a).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.; "Freedom in the World."

Figure 1. Variation of freedom rating in Myanmar<sup>54</sup>



## B. CORRELATION BETWEEN AUTHORITARIANISM AND U.S. RELATIONS WITH MYANMAR

The variation of U.S.–Myanmar relations is made up of political, economic, and military ties. The extent of each tie is illustrated with a graph. Political ties involve components, such as the existence of an ambassador and the number of national summit visits. Economic ties are defined by the amount of FDI. Military ties are expressed by the amount of military aid from the United States. Because the proxy index could not include a comprehensive assessment, qualitative analysis is added in following paragraph.

### 1. Political Ties

The U.S.–Myanmar political ties consist of both summit visits and the presence of the ambassador. Table 1 shows both countries' summit travel to the other state. The United States contains the Secretary of State category, which is regarded as summit level, and Myanmar also contains the visit of Aung San Suu Kyi, who is the de facto leader of Myanmar. The presence of the U.S. ambassador to Myanmar has a symbolic meaning,

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

insofar as both states have diplomatic relations within normal channels. From 1990 to 2012, U.S. *chargés d'affaires* had substituted for the mission of the ambassador.

Table 1. U.S.–Myanmar summit visits<sup>55</sup>

State	Date	Name
The United States	September 30–December 2, 2011	Hillary Clinton
	November 19, 2012	Barack Obama
	November 19, 2012	Hillary Clinton
	August 9–10, 2014	John Kerry
	November 12–14, 2014	Barack Obama
	May 22, 2016	John Kerry
Myanmar	May 19–21, 2013	Thein Sein
	September 14–15, 2016	Dew Aung San Suu Kyi

For the first time in almost six decades—Secretary of State John Foster Dulles visited Myanmar in 1955—Secretary Clinton visited Myanmar in 2011. She met with President Thein Sein, who was the former military authority and now the reformer of the Myanmar regime, and Aung San Suu Kyi, who was epitome of the Myanmar democratic journey. President Barack Obama also mentioned that the Secretary trip was part of the policy, U.S. Rebalancing in Asia.<sup>56</sup> In this context, the trip could be interpreted as a point of contact between U.S. foreign policy to broader engagement in the Asia-Pacific region and promotion of support for democratic reform, as the United States always emphasized.

In 2012, President Obama visited Myanmar for the first time in U.S. presidential history. He visited Rangoon University and exhibited the U.S. inclination to support Myanmar innovation, saying that “I’ve come to keep my promise and extend the hand

<sup>55</sup> “Burma - Visits by Foreign Heads of States,” accessed May 10, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits>; “Burma - Travels of the Secretary of State,” accessed May 10, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/burma>; “Burma - Travels of the President,” accessed May 10, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/burma>.

<sup>56</sup> Jason Burke, “Hillary Clinton Begins Burma Visit,” *Guardian*, last modified November 30, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/30/hillary-clinton-burma-visit-reform-hopes>.

of friendship.”<sup>57</sup> In 2013, President Thein Sein visited Washington, the first time a Myanmar president had done so since 1966.<sup>58</sup> President Thein Sein talked with President Obama regarding the ongoing transformation, sharing the necessities to do more work for democracy, and appealing to “the assistance and understanding of the international community.”<sup>59</sup> In 2014, President Obama went to Myanmar to attend the East Asian Summit plenary and the U.S.–ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations ) session. During this travel, President Obama discussed the role of Parliament in reform with members of the Myanmar Parliament and civil society.<sup>60</sup> Of course, he met with President Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi, and he said that “There is a need for a stronger rule of law, for elections that are free, fair and inclusive, and for continued constitutional changes that will move Burma more fully towards a civilian government.”<sup>61</sup> Through several meetings between the summits, their political and diplomatic ties increasingly developed. In this way, both presidents created historical moments, clearing the legacy of the old days.

After the launch of democratic reform, the Secretary of State played a role to advance the transition. Different from the summit-level meeting, Secretary John Kerry dealt with the specific issue more concretely. In 2014, Secretary Kerry visited Myanmar to attend several ministerial meetings, such as the East Asia Summit, U.S.–ASEAN, the Lower Mekong Initiative, Friends of the Lower Mekong Initiative, and the ASEAN Regional Forum.<sup>62</sup> During his second visit in 2016, he praised the inauguration of the first civilian government and addressed the ethnic minority, Rohingya issues, the role of

---

<sup>57</sup> “Remarks by President Obama at the University of Yangon,” The White House, last modified November 19, 2012, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/11/19/remarks-president-obama-university-yangon>.

<sup>58</sup> Ewen MacAskill, “Thein Sein Becomes First Burmese President to Visit U.S. since 1966,” *Guardian*, last modified May 20, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/20/thein-sein-burma-visit-us-obama>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> “The President’s Trip to China, Burma and Australia | the White House,” The White House, accessed October 14, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy/asia-trip-2014>.

<sup>61</sup> “The President Wraps Up Trip in Burma, Heads to Australia,” The White House, last modified November 15, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/11/15/president-wraps-trip-burma-heads-australia>.

<sup>62</sup> “Secretary of State John Kerry’s Travel to Burma, Australia, Solomon Islands, and Hawaii,” U.S. Department of State, last modified August 2, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/t/pa/prs/ps/2014/230154.htm>.



the military in politics, and the nuclear program with North Korea.<sup>63</sup> Then, the Secretary expressed his satisfaction with Myanmar's steps on North Korean issues.<sup>64</sup> U.S.–Myanmar political ties have increased after President Obama announced his grand policy, “Pivot to Asia.” He created the agenda regarding U.S. foreign policy in his tenure, and the overall approach to Myanmar's policy extended the “Pivot to Asia.”

Political ties closely resemble the *freedom rating* of Myanmar in Figure 1. In 1989, the degree of ties fell from four to one. Then in 2011, it went up again, and in 2012 and 2014, it recorded the highest level. First of all, in 1988–1990, as a result of the 8888 uprising, in which the military suppressed the peaceful pro-democracy demonstration with an indiscriminate use of force, Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest by the government: the military junta.<sup>65</sup> Then, General Saw Maung and Brigadier General Khin Nyunt formed a party, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).<sup>66</sup> The promised elections in September 1988 did not take place, so Myanmar political rights decreased at that time.<sup>67</sup>

Even though in 1990 the SLORC held an election to solidify the SLORC's base and win legitimacy from the people, they barred Aung San Suu Kyi from attending an election as a candidate, since she had a British family member and had been arrested for antigovernment demonstrations in 1988.<sup>68</sup> As a result, the SLORC rejected handing over power to the NLD to form a new government and constitution.<sup>69</sup> After that, from 1990 to 2011, the political ties measured almost zero. To check political regression in Myanmar,

---

<sup>63</sup> Davide E. Sanger, “John Kerry and Aung San Suu Kyi: A Milestone Meeting in Myanmar, Tempered by Questions,” *New York Times*, May 22, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/23/world/asia/john-kerry-myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/23/world/asia/john-kerry-myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi.html?_r=0).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Tin Maung Maung Than, “Myanmar: Preoccupation with Regime Survival, National Unity, and Stability,” in *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998a), 406.

<sup>66</sup> “Freedom in the World.”

<sup>67</sup> Owen, *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History*, 504.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

the U.S. government degraded the status of diplomatic representation to *charge d'affaires*, which has a lower diplomatic rank than ambassador.<sup>70</sup>

Additionally, the United States stopped assistance programs and blocked economic trade with Myanmar in the international arena. Visa restrictions on Myanmar officials and families also were imposed.<sup>71</sup> In the international domain, the United States exerted its political power to suppress Myanmar's international position, such as its relationship with the ASEAN and the European Union (EU).<sup>72</sup> As the United States intended, Myanmar could not exercise political leverage, and the EU imposed economic sanctions against Myanmar, involving the "arms embargo" and "visa restrictions."<sup>73</sup> In Congress, a bipartisan coalition isolated the Myanmar regime through "resolutions, amendments, and bills."<sup>74</sup>

Since 2011, the U.S.–Myanmar relationship entered a new phase. After President Thein Sein took power, Myanmar political rights improved through various actions. On January 5, 2012, the Myanmar government amended the law regarding party registration in order for Suu Kyi to run for election; in addition, the government set free political prisoners.<sup>75</sup> Through these political advancements, Myanmar citizens and parties could see future possibilities.<sup>76</sup> In return for these improvements, the EU suspended most sanctions.<sup>77</sup>

The United States also improved relations, but in a measured fashion. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and President Obama visited Myanmar, but during his visit President Obama cited "prisoners of conscience" issues in pushing for more improvement of political rights.<sup>78</sup> These overtures happened in what Martin calls an "action-for-action"

---

<sup>70</sup> Hadar, *Burma: U.S. Foreign Policy as Morality Play*, 414.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Kyaw Yin Hlaing, "Understanding Recent Political Changes in Myanmar," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 34, no. 2 (2012): 207.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Martin, *Burma's Political Prisoners and U.S. Sanctions*, 1.

strategy, which was a reactive and prudent strategy that ensured progress.<sup>79</sup> Eventually, President Obama announced that the United States and Myanmar would normalize the diplomatic relationship by raising the status of representative to that of an ambassador.<sup>80</sup>

In 2013, President Thein Sein visited the United States for a working visit. President Thein Sein discussed various issues with President Obama.<sup>81</sup> In the conference, they shared the status quo and a blueprint regarding the reform of Myanmar. For example, President Thein Sein revealed some issues: political prisoners, institutionalization of political reforms, and ethnic conflicts. President Obama responded with Muslim communities' problems, USAID, and the U.S. role in ASEAN in refocusing the Asia Pacific region.<sup>82</sup> As a result in 2014, President Obama visited the U.S.–ASEAN Mekong Initiative, the Regional forum, and the East Asia Summit (EAS) meeting in Myanmar.

Overall, both political ties and the level of authoritarianism have a correlation. Generally, Figure 2 shows that political ties preceded the changes in the level of authoritarianism by taking an action to facilitate the progress of authoritarianism. Based on signs of potential reform in the Myanmar political regime, such as the 2008 amendment and the 2010 general election, the United States seized the opportunity to promote the dynamics of democratic transition. This engagement proceeded with an “action-for-action” strategy.<sup>83</sup> After the launch of democratic transition, its political ties and softening authoritarianism created a synergistic effect, without the assessment of who triggered the transition.

This evolution of U.S.–Myanmar political ties is rated and depicted in Figure 2.

---

<sup>79</sup> Martin, *U.S. Policy Towards Burma: Issues for the 113th Congress*, 1.

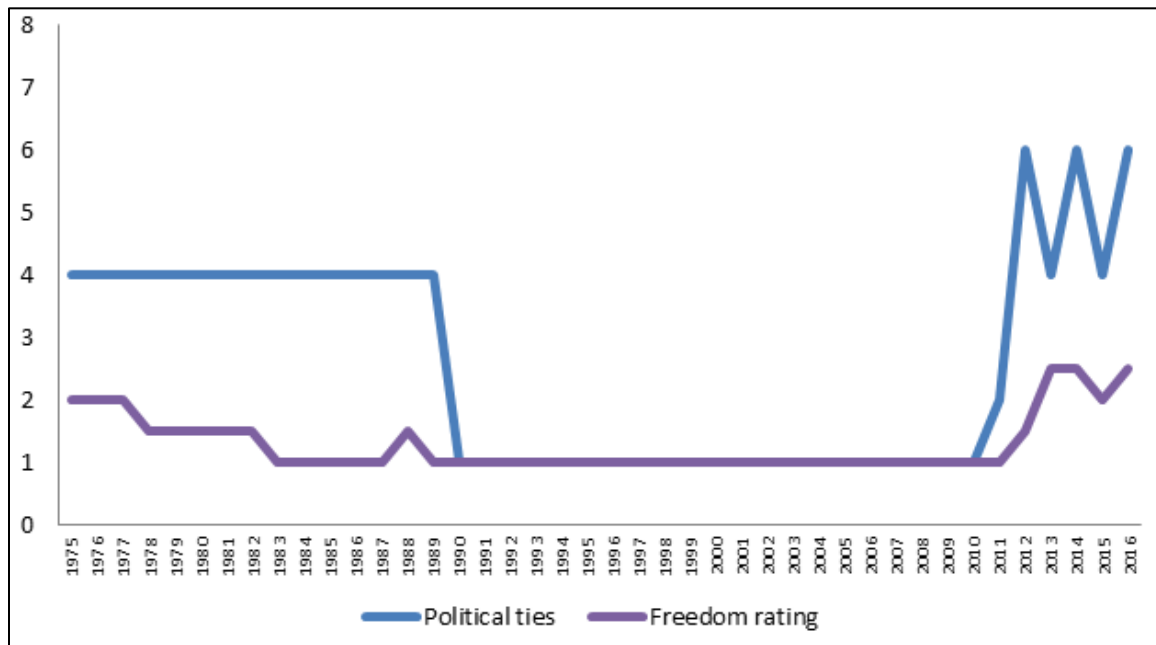
<sup>80</sup> Hlaing, *Understanding Recent Political Changes in Myanmar*, 208.

<sup>81</sup> “Remarks by President Obama and President Thein Sein of Myanmar After Bilateral Meeting,” The White House, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/20/remarks-president-obama-and-president-thein-sein-myanmar-after-bilateral>.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Martin, *U.S. Policy Towards Burma: Issues for the 113th Congress*, 1.

Figure 2. U.S.–Myanmar political ties<sup>84</sup>



## 2. Economic Ties

Economic ties reflect FDI amounts from 1975 to 2014. The amounts calculated on a seven-point scale are easy to compare with the level of authoritarianism. The economic ties change with the imposition of economic sanctions. One surprising finding is that FDI amounts used to increase whenever the United States added sanctions. This is because businesses invested in Myanmar before the sanctions came into effect. Even though that fluctuation was just temporary, the business relations differed because of the political stance, especially in 1997 and 2003. Other than these cases, 2007 and 2008 sanctions also created a fluctuation in FDI amounts.

The United States began an economic sanctions program in 1997 by reason of the “repression of democratic opposition.”<sup>85</sup> Through several periods, the United States strengthened the sanctions on the military junta and on the specific person who was

<sup>84</sup> The White House, *The President’s Trip to China, Burma and Australia* | the White House; Office of the Historian, *Burma - Visits by Foreign Heads of States*; Office of the Historian, *Burma - Travels of the Secretary of State*; Office of the Historian, *Burma - Travels of the President*.

<sup>85</sup> Office of Foreign Assets Control, *Burma Sanctions Program* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Treasury).

responsible for various violations of human rights. After the normalization of U.S.–Myanmar relations, economic sanctions were eased, revising the sanctions step-by-step in 2012, 2013, and 2014.<sup>86</sup> Economic sanctions were the tool of an accelerating transition. On May 22, 2016, just before the sanction program ended, Secretary Kerry and State Counsellor Suu Kyi agreed with the opinion that U.S. sanctions would not be harmful if Myanmar pursued an honest and righteous.<sup>87</sup> Before long, Present Obama ordered the termination of sanctions on October 7, 2016, for the first time in 20 years.<sup>88</sup>

From 1975 to 2010, two sudden increases occurred, in 1997 and 2003. After the military coup in 1988, the United States had continuously condemned Myanmar and took actions to correct its brutal dictatorship. For example, Congress required the president to apply sanctions against Myanmar by passing the Customs and Trade Act. Furthermore, in 1992, the Senate withheld the nomination of an ambassador to Myanmar.<sup>89</sup> In 1995 and 1996, Congress tried to pass severe restrictions on Myanmar, but President Bill Clinton deferred his decision.<sup>90</sup> In 1997, the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act was amended by the Feinstein-Cohen Act, which supported the President’s discretionary authority to sanction Burma.<sup>91</sup> In this manner, the Clinton administration took various actions to dispatch a special envoy to Rangoon, and it brought about the release of political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>92</sup>

Yet, Congress wanted to apply pressure through the Feinstein-Cohen amendment. Even though the President imposed a ban, supported by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, sanctions generated little enthusiasm because of their effects on U.S. companies and the U.S.–ASEAN relationship.<sup>93</sup> As a result in 1997, foreign direct investment

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 3–4.

<sup>87</sup> Sanger, *John Kerry and Aung San Suu Kyi: A Milestone Meeting in Myanmar, Tempered by Questions*

<sup>88</sup> “Burma Sanctions - Sanctions Program Ended as of 10/7/2016,” U.S. Department of Treasury, last modified October 7, 2016, <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/pages/burma.aspx>.

<sup>89</sup> Hadar, *Burma: U.S. Foreign Policy as Morality Play*, 415.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 416.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

temporarily increased because businesses anticipated that if a ban applied to new investments, they would lose an opportunity to invest in Myanmar. The White House excluded pre-existing investments as a concession to businesses.<sup>94</sup> In the end, the amount of contracts totaled \$339 million, or 16 times more than the sum of 1995 and 1996.<sup>95</sup> Eventually, FDI increased compared to previous years without economic sanctions.

In 2003, Aung San Suu Kyi was rearrested, and the government suppressed Suu Kyi's associates; as a result, the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act became active.<sup>96</sup> In 2007 and 2008, the United States added sanctions because of the 2007 Saffron Revolution.<sup>97</sup> Whenever the United States imposed sanctions, FDI increased as a reaction before the sanction took effect. In 2011, after the general election, the outlook that other countries expected Myanmar's regime to change had grown. Consequently, FDI rose to an all-time high since 1975. In conclusion, the line between economic ties and authoritarianism blurred, except at a critical point such as in 2010 when the military junta transferred power to civilians.

Figure 3 demonstrates that the variation in authoritarianism does not have much to do with economic ties. Rather, economic ties could reflect the economic sentiments of the investor, assessing the government's economic policies. At times when the government imposed economic sanctions, foreign businesses rushed to invest in Myanmar before new sanctions came into force. Contrary to political goals, economic ties had the opposite effect before applying sanctions. The years 1997 and 2003 explicitly show the tendency that involved a preemptive investment by businesses. Nevertheless, expectations of democratic transition in Myanmar recorded the highest FDI amounts in 2010. This phenomenon demonstrates that a Myanmarese democratic transition could be favorable for the economic arena. Economic ties exhibit greater sensitivity in reactions by business because the businesses exist to seek profit and should respond with a comprehensive judgment that reflects future opportunities.

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Larry A. Niksch, *Burma-U.S. Relations* (CRS Report No. RL33479) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007), 2.

<sup>97</sup> Office of Foreign Assets Control, *Burma Sanctions Program*

This evolution of U.S.–Myanmar political ties is scaled and depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3. U.S.–Myanmar economic ties<sup>98</sup>



### 3. Military Ties

The military ties reflect the amounts of military assistance by the United States. Before the United States severed the connection with Myanmar in 1990, Myanmar soldiers learned U.S. military principles through the International Military Education and Training (IMET).<sup>99</sup> Also, the United States provided some light helicopters and transport aircrafts for the International Narcotics Control Program.<sup>100</sup> From 1975 to 1982, the U.S. government supported Myanmar police anti-narcotics operations, providing 28 helicopters and 7 transport aircraft. The military-to-military ties were severed in 1988

<sup>98</sup> “Freedom in the World.”; UNCTADstat, *UNCTADstat - Table View - Foreign Direct Investment: Inward and Outward Flows and Stock, Annual, 1980–2014*.

<sup>99</sup> “Rekindling Military-to-Military Ties between the U.S. and Myanmar,” Huffington Post, last modified May 17, 2016, file:///Users/ranglee/Desktop/Thesis/us-relationship/myanmar/Rekindling%20Military-to-Military%20Ties%20Between%20the%20U.S.%20and%20Myanmar.html.

<sup>100</sup> “Trade Registers,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, accessed May 12, 2016, [http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade\\_register.php](http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php).

because of the 8888 uprising.<sup>101</sup> After that, the U.S.–Myanmar military relationship almost did not exist, and the arms embargo continued.<sup>102</sup> In 2005, the Bush administration temporarily raised U.S. military assistance. The reason why the Bush administration abruptly raised the amount of military assistance was not clear, but at that time the U.S. government broadened its military ties with the Southeast Asia countries to conduct the war on terror.<sup>103</sup> In this manner, the military ties have sustained without considerable change.

After the restoration of a diplomatic relationship, the United States looked to improve the military-to-military relationship because Myanmar's military, so far, has had considerable influence in Myanmar.<sup>104</sup> President Obama urged the initiation of military-to-military dialogue even though Congress responded tepidly. When referring the *Tatmadaw*, the United States ambassador Derek Mitchell said, "We need to establish a regular dialogue, we need to get new ideas into that institution because they have been operating on old ideas that haven't seemed to work very well for the country."<sup>105</sup> Also, Congress, which is conservative about the military-to-military ties, recognized that U.S. officials should engage in shaping Myanmar's military outlook.<sup>106</sup> In this manner, understanding the significance of military-to-military cooperation has carefully increased after normalization.<sup>107</sup>

Overall, Myanmar's authoritarianism and the military ties have no significant correlations. Despite the significance of military cooperation, the improvement of

---

<sup>101</sup> Weiss, *Rekindling Military-to-Military Ties between the U.S. and Myanmar*.

<sup>102</sup> "Lawmakers Uneasy Over US-Myanmar Military Ties," Yahoo News, accessed June 11, 2016, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/lawmakers-uneasy-over-us-myanmar-military-ties-070904322--politics.html?ref=gs>.

<sup>103</sup> Alice Ba, "Systemic Neglect? A Reconsideration of U.S.-Southeast Asia Policy," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, no. 3 (2009): 376. doi:10.1355/cs31-3a. [http://www.academia.edu/6594496/Systemic\\_Neglect\\_A\\_Reconsideration\\_of\\_US\\_Southeast\\_Asia\\_Policy](http://www.academia.edu/6594496/Systemic_Neglect_A_Reconsideration_of_US_Southeast_Asia_Policy).

<sup>104</sup> "U.S. to Increase Military Engagement with Myanmar Military with Focus on Humanitarian Issues," *International Business Times*, accessed June 11, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.com/us-increase-military-engagement-myanmar-military-focus-humanitarian-issues-1368137>.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Phuong Nguyen, *Revisiting U.S. Military Ties with Myanmar*, cogitASIA, CSIS Asia Policy Blog. Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2014. <http://cogitasia.com/revisiting-u-s-military-ties-with-myanmar>.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



military ties requires more time. Since the topic of military cooperation is sensitive to both countries, especially to Myanmar, which draws its identity in response to external threat, as it did during the colonial period and Cold War, enhancing military ties requires mutual understanding.

This evolution of U.S.–Myanmar political ties is scaled and depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4. U.S.–Myanmar military ties<sup>108</sup>



### C. EXPLANATION BEYOND AUTHORITARIANISM

This section explains the reasons why the proxy scale does not include or exceed the authoritarianism perspective. The section consists of the 1) causal direction part, which illustrates the comprehensive correlation among four variables—the level of authoritarianism, U.S.–Myanmar political ties, economic ties, and military ties—and the factors that are not contained in the graph; and the 2) strategic background part follows that involves both states’ interests according to the passage of time.

<sup>108</sup> “Freedom in the World,”; “U.S. Overseas Loans and Grant (GREENBOOK),” USAID, accessed August 23, 2016, <https://explorer.usaid.gov/reports-greenbook.html>.

## 1. Causal Direction

So far, this chapter has examined the correlation between the level of authoritarianism and the U.S.–Myanmar relationship. In some cases, obvious correlation exists, and the others could not clearly show the correlation. In this section, the overall correlation among the four variables is investigated, not just the correlation between the level of authoritarianism and U.S.–Myanmar relations. Furthermore, it explains the part that the figure could not capture.

First of all, in the explanation of political ties, Figure 2 shows that the level of authoritarianism follows the political ties. But, the thesis needs to revise this analysis because the problem is that the *freedom rating* could not express the intentions or triggers, which were subtle changes that became the huge bedrock of democratization. More specifically, the Myanmar constitutional reform in 2008 was part of the Seven Step Roadmap to Democracy. Also, the general election in 2010 resulted in the military handing over its power to civilian government for the first time since 1962, albeit the leader Thein Sein was a former military man. Indeed, these movements became that the backdrop for Secretary of State Clinton's visit in 2011. That means the United States acknowledged the possibility of the Myanmar government's transition to democracy, and it seized the opportunity to facilitate and support the transition procedure through political, institutional, and financial ways. In conclusion, a more detailed approach illustrates that political ties follow changes in authoritarianism. The *freedom rating* is a lagging indicator of those changes which also reflects reinforcement by U.S. reinforcement of early triggers and subtle changes.

The second finding from the economic explanation is that businesses are sensitive to government economic policy and have the capability to read international circumstances. As the economic ties section has shown, the variation in U.S.–Myanmar economic ties was the outcome that came from the comprehensive assessment of the potential market. Something to notice here is what factors affect the assessment of businesses. First and foremost, governmental economic policy influenced the decision of businesses to invest in Myanmar. Examples include the sanctions in 1997 and 2003. The Clinton administration had exchanged its opinion about the economic sanctions by

Congress because President Clinton had a negative view of economic sanctions.<sup>109</sup> In this process, the government determined the main target of sanctions would be new investments, and businesses decided to engage in preemptive investment before the sanctions became effective.

Additionally, businesses have a capability to read the flow of the international situation. Although explicit economic policy did not exist in 2010, the year of the general election, the amount of FDI that year soared. This occurrence could be regarded as a sign that the business sector interpreted the Myanmarese election as having positive effects on the business environment. Even though the business investor would have had to pass complex procedures, which would authorize its status and might include a special tariff that could result in financial loss, the amount of FDI verified that these businesses thought the Myanmarese transition was a good sign of changes in the economic area. In these two instances, the conclusion can be drawn that the business sector responded sensitively to economic policy and future prospects, especially the factor that could influence the economic environment: authoritarianism in Myanmar.

In the military sphere, the conservative Congress has responded cautiously, observing the transition more specifically. Also, Congress strictly influences military ties because of the significance directly linked to security issues. So far, military ties have undergone no critical changes in the U.S.–Myanmar relationship. Even though in 2005, military assistance temporarily rose, the degree—\$3,842,000—was not significant. Military ties are made based on trustworthy evidence that could verify the transition, rather than as a prompt response to the potential change in authoritarianism.

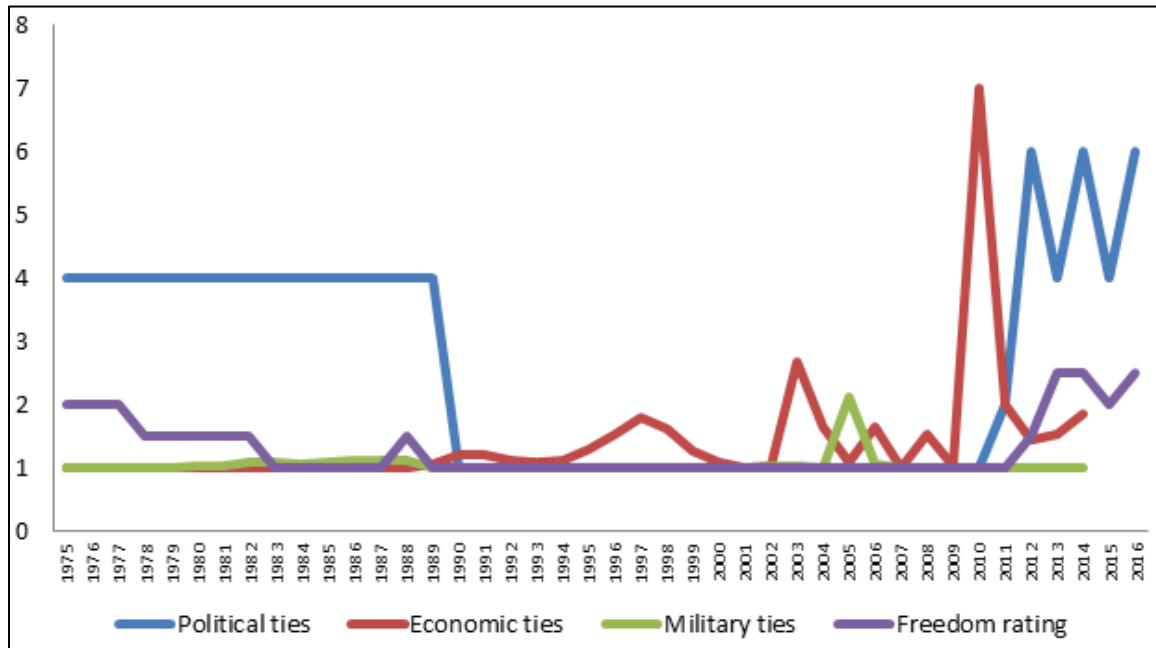
In conclusion, the changes in authoritarianism and political and economic ties have a strong and relatively nimble correlation. Political ties follow the initial change of authoritarianism and create interactions between each other. Economic ties preemptively respond right before the softening of authoritarianism, and military ties react conservatively, confirming the explicit changes. What is notable is the timing of how each tie responds with the variation in authoritarianism.

---

<sup>109</sup> Hadar, *Burma: U.S. Foreign Policy as Morality Play*, 416.

The evolution of U.S.–Myanmar ties is scaled and depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5. U.S.–Myanmar relations with freedom rating<sup>110</sup>



## 2. Strategic Background

The strategic background traces both the United States’ and Myanmar’s strategic interests, considering the international situation. Then, this section looks at how strategic interests could complement the authoritarian explanation.

### a. U.S. Strategic Interests

According to David Steinberg, who is a famous scholar of Myanmar, the United States thought of the Myanmar issue as a “boutique foreign policy”; that is, relatively small but substantially important because the Myanmar issues involve high moral values, like human rights or democracy, which are crucial interests of the United States.<sup>111</sup> Even

<sup>110</sup> “Freedom in the World”; Office of the Historian, *Burma - Travels of the President*; Office of the Historian, *Burma - Travels of the Secretary of State*; UNCTADstat, *UNCTADstat - Table View - Foreign Direct Investment: Inward and Outward Flows and Stock, Annual, 1980–2014*; Office of the Historian, *Burma - Visits by Foreign Heads of States*; USAID, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grant (GREENBOOK)*.

<sup>111</sup> David I. Steinberg, “Myanmar and U.S. Policy: Platitudes, Progress, and Potential Problems,” *Georgetown Journal of Asian Affairs* (2014), 116, <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/712756>.

though the high moral issues have been sustained since 1962, when General Ne Win took power, the priority of Myanmar to U.S. foreign policy has varied depending on the U.S. recognition of the situation. In this section, the strategic context is classified as follows: 1) 1975–1988: Cold War system, 2) 1988–2011: promoting values, and 3) 2011–present: pivot to Asia.

(1) Ideological War, 1975–1988

In this period, the Cold War system shaped U.S. interests in Myanmar.<sup>112</sup> First and foremost, U.S. interests were a geostrategic benefit. At that time, Myanmar was subject to concerns over the domino effect of socialism in Southeast Asia, so the United States paid attention to its the geostrategic location, which is located between China and India and the center of the ASEAN states.<sup>113</sup> Also, the United States used to employ Myanmar as a place to intervene in the Chinese Civil War and support the Kuomintang.<sup>114</sup> In this way, ideological conflicts all over the world also affected the region, especially after the Vietnam War. Another U.S. interest is the human rights issue. The United States provided a new road project to Mandalay, focusing on basic human needs until the coup occurred in 1988.<sup>115</sup> Lastly, Myanmar resources were the part of U.S. interests. Abundant natural resources, such as oil, gas, and gems, and a cheap workforce could become accessible to U.S. interests.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, the geostrategic interest dominated U.S. foreign policy compared to the other factors in those days because of its lack of effectiveness.

(2) Pursuit of Values, 1988–2011

From 1988 to 2011, the United States focused on moral issues to protect human rights and to promote democracy. In 1988, Yangon University students started to protest,

---

<sup>112</sup> David I. Steinberg, “Burma-Myanmar: The U.S.-Burmese Relationship and Its Vicissitudes,” *Center for Global Development* (2006), <http://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/archive/doc/shortofthegoal/chap7.pdf>, 224.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 227; Alain Guilloux, “Myanmar: Analyzing Problems of Transition and Intervention,” *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 4 (December 1, 2010), doi:10.1080/13569775.2010.523938., 385.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>115</sup> Steinberg, *Burma-Myanmar: The U.S.-Burmese Relationship and Its Vicissitudes*, 224.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 225–6.

criticizing the government's poor policy, the Burmese Way to Socialism, which created catastrophic poverty in the nation. During the protests, General Saw Maung staged a coup, killing the people brutally. The United States severed foreign aid and imposed an arms embargo immediately, and then in 1997, added sanctions as punishment. In 2003, the U.S. Congress passed the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 to draw a response from the SPDC, which consistently abused Myanmarese citizens.<sup>117</sup>

Another crucial interest was promoting democracy. Even though the NLD won the election in 1990, the SPDC did not admit the outcome. The United States negotiated with the SPDC promising that if the SPDC handed over the regime to the NLD, honoring the election outcome, the United States would consider lifting sanctions and providing economic assistance, but the SPDC did not change.<sup>118</sup> The United States concentrated on Aung San Suu Kyi, who was the leader of the NLD and suffered from detention because of her democratization movement, sustaining a personal relationship with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.<sup>119</sup> Suu Kyi leveraged human rights to improve Myanmar's position on human rights and the promotion of democracy.

Other than that, fighting drugs and a linkage with ASEAN composed U.S. interests because narcotics were tangible problems, prohibiting people from normal lives, and engaging with ASEAN could enlarge problem solving or economic benefits through multilateral cooperation.<sup>120</sup> After 9/11, additionally, the United States could gain intelligence information from Myanmar and access airspace, when operating in the Middle East.<sup>121</sup> It was important to the United States to search terrorist cells around Southeast Asia.<sup>122</sup> Notwithstanding, these interests were recognized much less than values-centered issues, promoting democracy and human rights politically.

---

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>118</sup> Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar and the Dilemmas of U.S. Foreign Policy*, 301.

<sup>119</sup> David I. Steinberg, "Myanmar: Reconciliation - Progress in the Process?" *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2003 (2003): 174, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/400083>.

<sup>120</sup> "Guidelines for U.S. Policy in Southeast Asia," The Heritage Foundation, accessed October 2016, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2007/03/guidelines-for-us-policy-in-southeast-asia>.

<sup>121</sup> Steinberg, *Burma-Myanmar: The U.S.-Burmese Relationship and Its Vicissitudes*, 230.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 230.

### (3) “Pivot to Asia,” 2011–Present

Since 2011 to the present, the United States has noted the geostrategic importance of Myanmar again under the “Pivot to Asia” policy in order to spend less in the Middle East and enhance interests in the Asia-Pacific region. With the start of the global finance crisis in 2007, the United States suffered from financial difficulties, and at the same time, China’s growth was relatively magnified.<sup>123</sup> Because the United States thought the Asia-Pacific region an area of such importance from a long-term perspective, the United States thought some actions should be followed, and Myanmar is an appropriate place for exercising these actions.

By engaging more actively in Myanmar, the United States can preserve its diplomatic leverage in the Southeast Asia region. Since China has exploited Myanmar for oil, gas, and electric power and has tried to hedge its potential danger around the Strait of Malacca by accessing the Indian Ocean through Myanmar, the United States can use this strategically.<sup>124</sup> If the United States competes with China in the same fields, it could check China effectively and maintain its presence in the region.

Another U.S. interest in Myanmar is the possibility of economic development. Unlike before, Myanmar’s transition from a military junta to a democracy has facilitated U.S.–Myanmar relations. To respond to Myanmar’s regime transition, the United States lifted its economic sanctions gradually and terminated the sanctions as of October 7, 2016.<sup>125</sup> As mentioned earlier, since Myanmar has abundant natural resources, lifting economic sanctions and supporting democratic transition clearly has created positive effects on U.S. investments.<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Kenneth Lieberthal and Wang Jisi, “Addressing U.S.-China Strategic Distrust,” *John L. Thornton China Center at Brookings*, no. 4 (March 2012): 21–22, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0330\\_china\\_lieberthal.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0330_china_lieberthal.pdf).

<sup>124</sup> Aung Myoe, *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw: Myanmar’s China Policy since 1948*, 106.; Steinberg, *Burma-Myanmar: The U.S.-Burmese Relationship and Its Vicissitudes*, 228.

<sup>125</sup> U.S. Department of Treasury, *Burma Sanctions - SANCTIONS PROGRAM ENDED AS OF 10/7/2016*.

<sup>126</sup> Lynn Kuok, “Promoting Peace in Myanmar: U.S. Interests and Role,” *Center for Strategic & International Studies* (May 2014), [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/140428\\_Kuok\\_PeaceMyanmar\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/140428_Kuok_PeaceMyanmar_Web.pdf), 4.

Moreover, the United States sees an opportunity to sever relations between Myanmar and North Korea. Such a severing could contribute to U.S. policy toward North Korea, and to improving regional stability.<sup>127</sup> President Thein Sein promised that Myanmar would cut ties with North Korea following the United Nations Security Council resolutions. In this manner, recent U.S. interest in Myanmar has a more significant meaning in a long-term perspective to preserve U.S. presence in the region.

***b. Myanmar Strategic Interests***

Myanmar's interests have changed depending on the goal of regime. Different from U.S. interests, Myanmar's interests are located in domestic affairs. As a developing nation, the international situation substantially affected Myanmar's national prestige. In order to avoid this challenge, the best way to keep its sovereignty, as a weak state, was by announcing non-aligned movement and not having diplomatic relations with great powers. In this way, Myanmar could avoid becoming a victim of the Cold War. Given this situation, Myanmar's strategic context is divided into two phases: 1) survival by military junta, and 2) survival by balance.

**(1) Survival by Military Junta, 1975–2010**

The military junta period could be separated into the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and the SLORC/SPDC.

**BSPP (1975–1988)**

First and foremost, the most important interest of Myanmar was to protect the regime. Right after obtaining independence and during the Cold War, Myanmar experienced a turbulent period without a solid regime.<sup>128</sup> General Ne Win staged a coup in 1962 and ruled the state with the “Burmese way to socialism,” pursuing isolationism and neutralism.<sup>129</sup> In this period, the Myanmar's external situation and its lack of power

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>128</sup> Tin Maung Maung Than, “Myanmar: Preoccupation with Regime Survival, National Unity, and Stability,” in *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998b), 390.

<sup>129</sup> Guilloux, *Myanmar: Analyzing Problems of Transition and Intervention*, 383.



shaped the perception that there were no reliable friendly states, and Myanmar should keep its sovereignty to itself. With this preoccupation, misrule exacerbated the overall economic situation and internal stability, and in 1988, another coup happened.

### **SLORC/SPDC (1988–2010)**

The SLORC learned the lesson from the BSPP's misrule that allowing diverse opinions could create dangers to the survival of the regime. Thus, as shown in the 1988 coup, state leadership regarded the military as an important guardian of the regime. According to the Myanmar Constitution, the government emphasized the military role in the nation as follows:

Our Three Main National Causes: non-disintegration of the Union; non-disintegration of national solidarity; perpetuation of sovereignty. We reject any scheme to break up the Tatmadaw [Burmese armed forces]. No matter who tries to divide us, we will always remain united. Anyone who tries to break up the Tatmadaw is our enemy.”<sup>130</sup>

Another Myanmar interest was strengthening solidarity to protect regime security. Military leaders assumed that pluralism created instability and harmed national unity.<sup>131</sup> Thus, the military controlled various possibilities in all its bearings. Military leaders did not admit minority groups, typically ethnic and religious groups. Not only that, but the military did not grant crucial power to minority groups, as it thought the minorities were naturally inferior.<sup>132</sup> From the ethnic and religious perspective, for example, the military believed that Burman Buddhist culture was the center and formed a state, which was the ethnic and religious majority and had legitimacy as it was.<sup>133</sup> The persecution of the Rohingya, most of whom were Muslim, extended the assumption that Burman Buddhists were at the center. The military also did not accept multiparty competition, rejecting election results in 1990.

Following the solidarity issues, the military perceived that rising Chinese influence would become problematic in retaining the regime's autonomy. During the

---

<sup>130</sup> Than, *Myanmar: Preoccupation with Regime Survival, National Unity, and Stability*, 390.

<sup>131</sup> Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar and the Dilemmas of U.S. Foreign Policy*, 292–3.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

severe economic sanctions by the West, the EU and the United States, most investment and economic assistance came from China, and the implicit precondition was that China would not interfere with Myanmar's internal affairs. They formed good relations, using the term, *Pauk-Phaw*, which meant kinfolk.<sup>134</sup> Yet, in accordance with greater Myanmar's economic dependency on China, the military feared China's potential influence.<sup>135</sup> As a result, Myanmar tried to create a balance with China, by accepting the United States.<sup>136</sup>

## (2) Survival by Balance, 2010–Present

From 2010, the period could be classified by the USDP, a quasi-civilian government, and the NLD, the first-civilian government.

### **USDP (2010–2016)**

In 2010, Myanmar had a general election for the first time since 1990. Even though the election was not a completely free and fair election, the military smoothly handed over power to a civilian government. This transition has caused some to assess why the military accepted the transition, and these speculations reflected Myanmar's interests at this time. Broadly, three arguments exist: 1) just following the “Seven Step Roadmap to Democracy,” 2) pursuing economic development, and 3) hedging dangers from too much dependence on China.

In 2003, the military proposed the “Seven Step Roadmap to Democracy.”<sup>137</sup> The military planned this process to achieve democracy. The 2010 election was the dramatic and significant moment of that plan. With the carrot and stick of U.S. policy, domestic and international situations would lead the military to determine the moment of transition for their interests.

---

<sup>134</sup> Aung Myoe, *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw: Myanmar's China Policy since 1948*, 110.

<sup>135</sup> Steinberg, *Burma-Myanmar: The U.S.-Burmese Relationship and Its Vicissitudes*, 236.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>137</sup> Billy Tea, “China and Myanmar Strategic Interests, Strategies and the Road Ahead,” *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* 26 (September 2010): 12. [http://www.ipcs.org/pdf\\_file/issue/RP26-Billy-Sino-Myanmar.pdf](http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/RP26-Billy-Sino-Myanmar.pdf), 12.

With the transition, the possibility of economic development arose, because the United States and Western countries offered the conditions to lift the sanctions and provide economic assistance. Although Myanmar used to have the wealthiest country status in Southeast Asia, the isolation policy and economic sanctions weakened their overall national power. To Myanmar, the transition would be a chance to attract Western investment based on cheap labor, geographical advantage, and ample natural resources.

From 1966 to 2005, China provided US\$138.7 million to Myanmar.<sup>138</sup> Some conflicts between the United States and China could be a burden on Myanmar, and simultaneously some could be an opportunity to hedge its dependent status by making itself more attractive to both countries. After President Obama announced the “Pivot to Asia” policy, Myanmar’s strategic importance seized the spotlight again, and Myanmar had more flexible options for those reasons.

#### **NLD (2016–Present)**

In this period, the strategic orientation of Myanmar has not been obvious due to the short time. Yet, most scholars have paid attention to the progress of the regime transition. Even though the NLD won the election, Myanmarese democracy was not sufficiently developed and institutionalized. So far, so many decisions have leaned to one person, Aung San Suu Kyi, and the world noted each determination. In this period, all movements could be an important milestone and a chance for Myanmar’s political and economic advancement, depending on how the government tries to maximize its performance.

In addition, Myanmar’s stance should consider the U.S.–China competition not only to sustain its autonomy but also to develop its own country. Though both states agree to the need for Myanmar’s “stability and development,” a sense of suspicion about intentions has necessarily created a competitive environment.<sup>139</sup> From the Chinese perspective, Myanmar’s diversifying international relations, especially with the United

---

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>139</sup> “Myanmar in U.S.-China Relations,” Stimson Center, accessed October 12, 2016, 3, <http://www.stimson.org/content/myanmar-us-china-relations-0>.

States, could be thought of as ungrateful treatment.<sup>140</sup> Yet, for the development of Myanmar, particularly to strengthen intellectual capacity and human resources from a long-term perspective, promoting relation with the United States is essential.<sup>141</sup> For these reasons, Myanmar needs careful diplomacy not to lose both the great powers' attention.

**c. Analysis / Conclusion**

As mentioned previously, the United States and Myanmar have had different strategic interests, depending on what kind of situation they were in. From 1975 to 1988, U.S. strategic interests in the region were part of an ideological context, and Myanmar's interest was in maintaining its sovereignty and autonomy. Both states had an interest in the context of international structure, which was shaped by the Cold War and the post-imperialistic environment. The United States saw Myanmar as a front battlefield of ideological war.

Table 2. U.S.–Myanmar strategic interests depending on periods

Period	U.S. interests	Period	Myanmar interest
1975–1988	Confrontation with Communism	1975–1988	Myanmar's Autonomy
1988–2011	Human Rights and Democracy	1988–2011	Solidarity through Military
2011–present	Influence Increment in Southeast Asia (SEA)	2011–present	Maintenance of diplomatic balance between the United States and China

Even though there were tangible interests, such as resources and labor, in which the United States could share, those interests were relatively insignificant compared to strategic interests. At the same time, Myanmar did not want to be included in either camp and just hoped to secure its autonomy without external assistance. Ultimately, Myanmar

<sup>140</sup> Jürgen Haacke, "Myanmar: Now a Site for Sino-U.S. Geopolitical Competition?" *The London School of Economics and Political Science* 2016, no. 13 (2012): 58 <http://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/publications/reports/pdf/sr015/sr015-seasia-haacke-.pdf>.

<sup>141</sup> Karl D. Jackson, "Myanmar Awakening and U.S. National Interests," *Testimony Prepared for the Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations* (April 26, 2012), 4, <http://web.jhu.edu/administration/gca/government/federal/PDFs/MyanmartestimonyApril2012.pdf>.

supported the non-alignment movement and sought to constrain the international society not to intervene its internal affairs. In this way, each state pursued different directions.

From 1988 to the late 2000s, their strategic interests came face-to-face. On the one hand, the United States emphasized human rights and democratization, opposing the massacre in 1988 and requiring peaceful hand over the regime to accept the election outcome in 1990. On the other hand, *Tatmadaw* rejected admitting pluralism in Myanmar society because they assumed that pluralism would cause regime instability and harm Myanmar solidarity. As a result, the United States imposed economic sanctions on Myanmar, and Myanmar leaned toward Chinese support.

Yet, in the middle of 2000s, something changed in the Myanmar military. The military announced the Seven Step Roadmap to Democracy and it followed the procedure step-by-step. No official intentions were revealed, but some arguments proposed that Myanmar's military sought to create balance in the relationship with China.

Since 2011, therefore, the United States and Myanmar have had converging strategic interests. The United States has wanted to increase its presence in the region, checking the Chinese influence. Myanmar has desired to create diplomatic balance between China and the United States. Eventually, these shared strategic interests have created a synergistic effect in their relationship. The United States has applied the "calibrated engagement strategy" to achieve further reform and given incentives whenever Myanmar took a positive step.<sup>142</sup> Myanmar has gradually promoted political and economic reforms such as a free and fair election in 2015.

In short, during the periods of this research, these two countries' strategic interests have not been compatible for a long time. Yet, in accordance with changes in the international situation, their national interests also changed, and commonality in their national interests has also increased. Such changes have facilitated their relations and, finally, overcome previous obstacles.

---

<sup>142</sup> "U.S. Relations with Burma," U.S. Department of State, accessed October 13, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35910.htm>.

#### D. SUMMARY

Through the case of Myanmar, the thesis examines to what extent authoritarianism affects U.S. foreign policy. Since 1975 to 2016 the extent of Myanmar authoritarianism has been softened. The Myanmar political rights and civil rights have increased with the development of the election process, and the softening is ongoing. The United States has responded to the Myanmar changes by lifting sanctions. Ultimately, the softening of authoritarianism promotes U.S.–Myanmar relations.

In Myanmar changes to authoritarianism, the *freedom rating* increased from one to two and a half in 2012. Based on the “Seven Step Roadmap to Democracy,” the government revised the constitution in 2008. Then, the government held a general election in 2010. At that time, the NLD did not join the election because it bore in mind the 1990 fraudulent election that the military carried out. Even though the 2010 election was not perfectly free and fair, the military handed over the reins of government to a quasi-civilian government. After seeing the military keep the promise, the NLD joined the by-election in 2012 and general election in 2015. Ultimately, the NLD achieved a civilian government in 2016. During this process, the Myanmar level of authoritarianism was reduced.

Following the softening of authoritarianism in Myanmar, the U.S. government responded to the Myanmar government’s performance. The United States and the EU gradually lifted economic sanctions and increased investment in Myanmar. As well as the U.S. government’s attention, President Obama promoted the personal relationship with Aung San Suu Kyi and respected her endeavors, devoting her life to democratization. Not all softening authoritarianism drew the promotion in their relationship, but all promotions came from the softening of authoritarianism. That was a pre-condition of the progress of their relationship.

In addition to Myanmar’s softening authoritarianism, the strategic context also influenced the improvement of the relationship. U.S. grand strategy, represented by the “Pivot to Asia,” created a synergy effect to both states’ movement. In contrast to the pre-

Obama administration, the United States has paid more attention to Southeast Asia, and the Myanmar effort to democratize attracted the U.S. government's interest. In the U.S. position, promoting relations had ripple effects in the region. The effect assisted the United States to sustain its leverage in the region. From the Myanmar perspective, this change in relations could reduce Myanmar's dependence on China and correct the balance to sustain its autonomy. In this regard, both states' shared strategic interests to promote their relationship.

In conclusion, this chapter finds that U.S. foreign policy toward Myanmar builds on the changes to authoritarianism, and both states' strategic environments facilitate their relations. Earnest U.S. engagement of Myanmar started with the situation in which both states shared strategic interests, but could not have progressed without the relaxation of authoritarianism.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



### **III. THE CASE OF VIETNAM**

For the purpose of this thesis, this chapter investigates how much authoritarianism helps to explain U.S. foreign policy in the case of Vietnam. This chapter looks in detail at the Freedom House ratings as to authoritarianism in Vietnam. Then, the chapter details how U.S. foreign policy has evolved historically in terms of these three variables—political, economic, and military ties—and how much authoritarianism affects these relations. At the end, the chapter considers the strength of these correlations and what they say about cause, and looks at strategic factors as a potential explanation for the lack of correlation in these variables. The case of Vietnam consists of these categories: 1) the level of authoritarianism, 2) the correlation between authoritarianism and U.S. relations with Vietnam, 3) explanations beyond authoritarianism, and 4) the conclusion.

In the first section, the chapter traces the variation in authoritarianism from 1975 to 2016 and explains the reason that the deviated inflection occurred at that time. In the second section, the correlation between authoritarianism and U.S. relations with Vietnam would be analyzed in terms of political, economic, and military ties. The third section investigates the reasons for the absence of correlation between two variables. The section includes the causal direction, which reflects the comprehensive analysis of authoritarianism and U.S.–Vietnam overall ties: political, economic, and military. Plus, the discussion regarding strategic circumstances illuminates the context of the U.S.–Vietnam relationship with respect to strategic interests that provide potential explanations for the part that could not be explained by authoritarian factor. Finally, the conclusion section synthesizes the U.S. foreign policy toward Vietnam.

#### **A. LEVEL OF AUTHORITARIANISM**

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has sustained a one-party rule regime since the reunification between the Republic of South Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Above all, Vietnam has had restricted political rights. Basically, Vietnam has no electoral process by the people. As a socialist state, the Communist Party of Vietnam

(CPV) constitutes only “state-recognized political party.”<sup>143</sup> In the CPV, the Politburo and the Central Committee dominate the unicameral National Assembly.<sup>144</sup> Instead, although the people have the right to vote, the National Assembly elects the president.<sup>145</sup> In this way, the CPV monopolizes political power in Vietnam. For example, Lê Thanh Tùng, who engaged in a reformist political coalition, and other dissidents were imprisoned because of “propaganda against the state.”<sup>146</sup> Since the operations of the CPV and decision-making processes are not transparent, the people cannot reflect their opinion effectively.<sup>147</sup> These issues well show that CPV does not allow political pluralism or participation.

In addition, Vietnam lacks a guarantee of civil rights. The central government controls the media and restricts the freedom of expression or belief.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, the government does not guarantee fair rule of law or personal autonomy.<sup>149</sup> In 1999, for instance, a law on journalists was enacted that restrains them from damaging activities through articles, though the coverage handles factual content.<sup>150</sup> Other than that, the CPV controls the anonymity of the people on the Internet and the foreign media in public places. Religious and academic freedoms also are objects of regulation. All religious agents need to register with a “party-controlled supervisory body” for religious activities.<sup>151</sup> In the academic arena, scholars cannot express opinions concerning anti-government policies and should align their perspective with the CPV’s.<sup>152</sup> The CPV constrains “freedoms of association and assembly.”<sup>153</sup> The only labor federation is the

---

<sup>143</sup> “Vietnam | Country Report | Freedom in the World | 2016,” Freedom House, accessed October 1, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/vietnam>.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, which involves all trade unions as mandatory.<sup>154</sup> In this manner, Vietnamese civil rights have many limitations.

In 1982, the level of authoritarianism decreased for the first time since 1975 because of some improvement in 1981. This came from the decision allowing the autonomy of state-owned enterprises (SOE) by the Council of Ministers and Decree 100/CT/TW.<sup>155</sup> This autonomy allowed SOEs to determine how much to produce, barter, and finance. The movement heralded further reforms. In the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) Political Bureau, for example, diverse discussions occurred respecting the effectiveness of SOEs.<sup>156</sup> According to Gerard Clarke, who wrote *The Social Challenge of Reform*, the VCP Central Committee announced “an end to managing the economy mainly with administrative orders and a switch to a period of correctly perceiving and applying the objective laws,” for the effective operation of SOEs.<sup>157</sup> Through this change, Vietnamese enterprises and people could obtain more personal autonomy and rights without inefficient exploitation of the SOEs.

In addition, Decree 100/CT/TW increased civil rights by providing an opportunity to have “co-operatives paddy fields” and “unused land” for a housing lot.<sup>158</sup> The Central Committee guaranteed these fields on condition of “production contracts.”<sup>159</sup> Even though the policy did not succeed because of short-term allocation and instability for peasants, the attempt could practice legalization and derive economic reforms in 1986.<sup>160</sup> These two changes, which were signs of reform, introduced the concept of private property to the people.

Similarly, in 1987, the *doi moi* of the Sixth Party Congress in December 1986 renovated overall Vietnamese institutions to ameliorate problems from centralized

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Gerard Clarke, “The Social Challenges of Reform: Restructuring State-Owned Enterprises in Vietnam,” in *Rethinking Vietnam*, ed. Duncan McCargo (New York: Routledge, 2004), 93; Tran Thi Thu Trang, “Vietnam’s Ruler Transformation,” in *Rethinking Vietnam*, ed. Duncan McCargo (New York: Routledge, 2004), 113.

<sup>156</sup> Clarke, *The Social Challenges of Reform: Restructuring State-Owned Enterprises in Vietnam*, 93.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Trang, *Vietnam’s Ruler Transformation*, 113.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

governance.<sup>161</sup> The reform had several ripple effects across the overall society: the end of cooperative farming, which brought huge changes to rural areas and farmers; the education and health policies for basic human rights; minority and women's issues; the start of creation of private organizations.<sup>162</sup> In these ways, the reform, *doi moi*, improved civil rights in a variety of aspects.

From 2000 to 2001, Vietnamese civil rights rose, through the liberalizing use of the Internet, Western media, and human rights improvement, releasing political prisoners.<sup>163</sup> In the cities, the range of choice about Western media and Internet access had been widened.<sup>164</sup> The government released 12,000 political or religious prisoners.<sup>165</sup> In 2006, broadened freedom of religion promoted civil rights. Vietnamese government admitted open religious celebration, and priests could travel in the country.<sup>166</sup> Religious prisoners decreased in number from 45 to 6, and a new religious decree alleviated regulations, allowing "charitable activities" and freedom of travel for the clergy.<sup>167</sup> Hence, the freedom rating differed from the level it had maintained since the 1980s.

In sum, the Vietnamese level of authoritarianism has had six inflections in 1982, 1985, 1987, 1989, 2001, and 2006. The degrees of these changes were small. In political rights, especially, there were almost never changes due to maintenance of one-party rule, which came from the Leninist principle, "democratic centralism," resisting multipartism. But the changes in 2001 and 2006 were institutional improvements, not transitory acts, creating a lasting, if marginal, impact.

This evolution of authoritarianism in Vietnam is represented by the Freedom House ratings over this period, depicted in Figure 6.

---

<sup>161</sup> Duncan McCargo, *Rethinking Vietnam* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 5; Marie-Eve Blanc, "An Emerging Civil Society?: Local Associations Working on HIV/AIDS," in *Rethinking Vietnam*, ed. Duncan McCargo (New York: Routledge, 2004), 158, 161.

<sup>163</sup> "Vietnam | Country Report | Freedom in the World | 2001," Freedom House, accessed October 1, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2001/vietnam>.

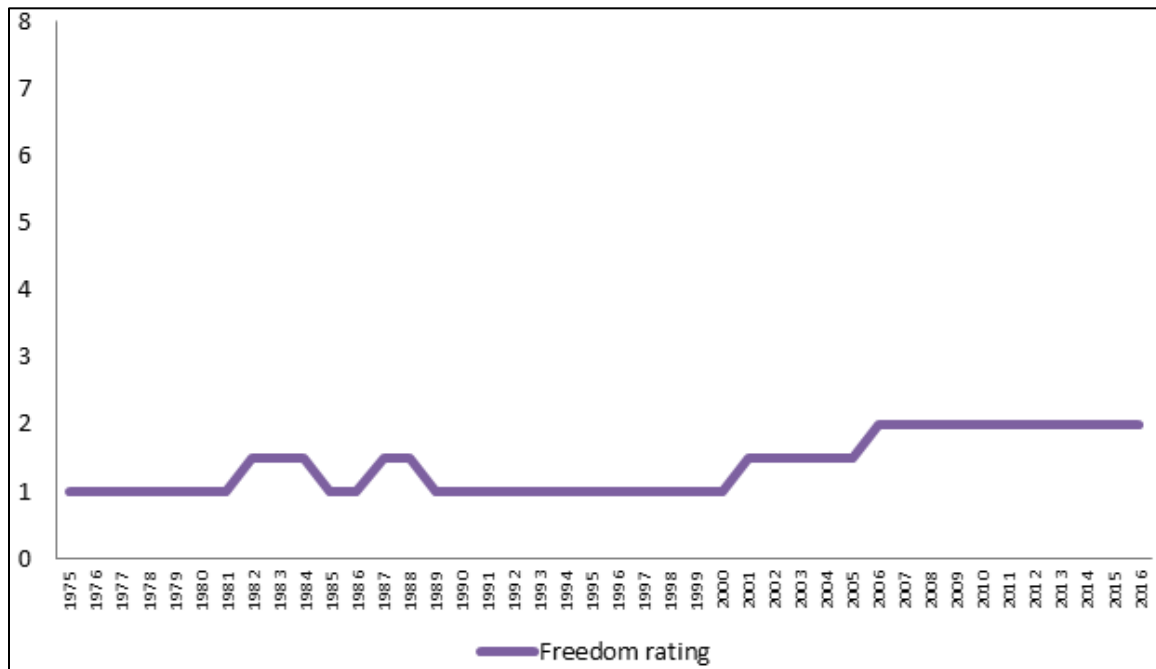
<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> "Vietnam | Country Report | Freedom in the World | 2006," Freedom House, accessed October 1, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2006/vietnam>.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

Figure 6. Variation of freedom rating in Vietnam<sup>168</sup>



## B. CORRELATION BETWEEN AUTHORITARIANISM AND U.S. RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM

The variation in U.S.–Vietnam relations is composed of political, economic, and military ties. The weight of each tie is shown with a graph. Political ties involve components, specifically, the existence of an ambassador and the number of national summit visits. Economic ties are defined by the amount of trade volume, and military ties are expressed as the amount of military aid provided by the United States. Because the proxy index could not include comprehensive assessment, qualitative analysis is added.

### 1. Political Ties

- (1) From 1975 to 1995: Rupture of Political Ties and the Beginning of New Relationship

From 1975 to 1995, the United States and Vietnam had very few political ties. After achieving normalization in 1995, though, political ties grew quickly. In 1995, the United States reopened the U.S. Embassy in Ho Chi Minh City and restored full

<sup>168</sup> “Freedom in the World.”

diplomatic ties in 1997, appointing an ambassador as a representative. Secretary of State Albright visited Ho Chi Minh City and laid the groundwork for new U.S.–Vietnam relations, emphasizing the resolution of war legacies and their future economic and political ties.<sup>169</sup> These two prominent issues, reopening the embassy and the visits of the Secretary of State, raised political ties dramatically.<sup>170</sup>

(2) From 1995 to 2011: Engagement and Enlargement

Subsequent U.S.–Vietnam relations have seen continual fluctuation. Considering the few political ties before 1995, this fluctuation could be interpreted as resulting from active communication and the procedure for each administration to adjust for its needs. In 2000, both states' presidents, Bill Clinton and Tran Duc Luong, visited each other, and both visits were the first visit since the Vietnam War. The visits had a historical symbol beyond the working achievements. Both summits tried to ease war legacies like Agent Orange, Prisoners Of War (POW)/Missing In Action (MIA), and human right issues. These topics of discussion were already dealt with in working-level meetings; however, a summit-level conference had ripple effects nationwide. Through the visit of Clinton, for example, their overall ties gained an extended opportunity such as promoting “new trade,” “education,” and “science and technology exchanges.”<sup>171</sup>

---

<sup>169</sup> Steven Erlanger, “Albright Lays Cornerstone for Diplomacy with Vietnam,” *New York Times* June 29, 1997, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/06/29/world/albright-lays-cornerstone-for-diplomacy-with-vietnam.html>.

<sup>170</sup> The scores in Figure 6. U.S.-Vietnam political ties are calculated by the following two standards: 1) if the ambassador exists, it would be scored 7 or scored 1. 2) If the summit visits were not made, it would be scored 1 or gain 2 points whenever there were visits. Then, the two scores would be averaged. For example, in 1997, there were two summit visits and an ambassador existed. So, the year is assigned 7 points by the first criterion, and 3 points (=1+1times X 2points). In sum, the average becomes 5 points.

<sup>171</sup> Freedom House, *Vietnam / Country Report / Freedom in the World / 2001*.

Table 3. U.S.–Vietnam summit visits<sup>172</sup>

State	Date	Name
The United States	August 5–7, 1995	Warren Minor Christopher
	June 26–29, 1997	Madeleine Korbel Albright
	September 6–8, 1999	Madeleine Korbel Albright
	November 16–19, 2000	William J. Clinton
	July 24–27, 2001	Colin Luther Powell
	November 15–20, 2006	Condoleezza Rice
	November 17–20, 2006	George W. Bush
	July 21–23, 2010	Hillary Rodham Clinton
	October 29–30, 2010	Hillary Rodham Clinton
	July 10–11, 2012	Hillary Rodham Clinton
	December 14–17, 2013	John Forbes Kerry
	August 6–8, 2015	John Forbes Kerry
	May 22–25, 2016	John Forbes Kerry
	May 23–25, 2016	Barack Obama
Vietnam	September 6, 2000	President Tran Duc Luong
	June 21, 2005	Prime Minister Phan Van Khai
	June 20–22, 2007	President Nguyen Minh Triet
	June 22–25, 2008	Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung
	April 12–13, 2010	Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung
	November 10–13, 2011	President Truong Tan Sang
	July 24–25, 2013	President Truong Tan Sang

Similar improvement of relations occurred between two states from 2005 to 2008 by annual summit meetings.<sup>173</sup> Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai visited Washington as the first Vietnamese prime minister to visit since the Vietnam War, and President Bush also visited Vietnam to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

<sup>172</sup> “Vietnam - Travels of the President - Travels,” U.S. Department of State, accessed November 17, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/vietnam>; “Vietnam - Visits by Foreign Leaders,” accessed November 17, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits/vietnam>.

<sup>173</sup> Mark E. Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2010: Current Issues and Implications for U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. R40208) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010), 10.

(APEC) Leaders' Meeting in 2006. Following 2007 and 2008, both states' summits also had top-level conferences. Through these reciprocated visits, both governments announced a joint statement, stating an "intention to bring bilateral relations to a higher plane" and made an agreement as to a "bilateral International Military Education Training (IMET) program" and "U.S. adoptions of Vietnamese children."<sup>174</sup> In 2008, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and President Bush derived "political-military talks," "the launch of bilateral investment treaty negotiation," "the Generalized System of Payments program," "the launch of a high-level bilateral Education Task Force," "an agreement in principle to introduce a Peace Corps program in Vietnam," and "the announcement of new initiatives on adoptions, nuclear safety, aviation, climate change, food safety."<sup>175</sup> Secretary of State Clinton had a meeting with the lower Mekong countries, including the Vietnamese foreign minister. They discussed an outline of the next U.S.–Lower Mekong Ministerial Meeting in 2010.<sup>176</sup>

The year 2010 saw the highest political ties since 1975. Both states' presidents had a meeting in the Nuclear Security Summit. The Secretary of State visited twice for cooperation in the Lower Mekong Initiative and signing a President's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief.<sup>177</sup> Even though is bilateral meeting was not planned for, their widened agenda increased the point of contact, and naturally they could share greater understanding. In this way, having frequent summit conferences created various branches that enabled them to engage and enlarge their bilateral relations.

### (3) From 2011 to Present: Deepening and Widening

During this period, their bilateral relations became wider and deeper. If the previous period established the foundation by talking about common issues and institutionalizing their relations; from 2011, both administrations had an in-depth

---

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> "Tour of Ngoc Lam Pagoda and Signing of PEPFAR Agreement," U.S. Department of State, accessed October 2, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/07/145038.htm>.; "Remarks at the ASEAN-U.S. Ministerial Meeting," U.S. Department of State, accessed October 2, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/07/145046.htm>.



discussion about current issues based on the achievement as to engagement and enlargement. Since President Obama adopted the “Pivot to Asia” grand strategy, in particular, their relations had more potential possibilities.

To enhance U.S. interest in the Asia-Pacific region under the “Pivot to Asia” policy, more efforts should increase more cooperation, especially with Vietnam. Secretary Clinton stressed that the United States held a core interest in the South China Sea.<sup>178</sup> In 2013 and 2015, Secretary John Kerry visited Vietnam and made an agreement for Fulbright Economic Teaching Program Participants and action for climate changes in Mekong.<sup>179</sup> Then, President Obama and Truong Tan Sang launched a comprehensive partnership in December 2013.<sup>180</sup> Lastly in 2016, President Obama announced a full lifting of the arms embargo to Vietnam.<sup>181</sup> In this manner, from 2011, under the Obama administration, bilateral relations have been deepened and widened, forming diverse connections.

Political ties and authoritarianism have significant correlations. The sequencing indicates that the level of authoritarianism did not drive their political ties; rather, striking changes in authoritarianism occurred whenever their political ties improved, especially, after both summits. Specifically, when U.S. President Bill Clinton visited Vietnam in 2000, the level of authoritarianism became weaker and the freedom rate of Vietnam rose from one to one and a half. Through the President’s visit, their “trade,” “education,” and “technology exchanges” became more active.<sup>182</sup> Before the U.S. Presidential visit, Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong also visited New York and shared opinions in the

---

<sup>178</sup> ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, “Timeline: U.S.-Vietnam Relations,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 32, no. 3 (December 2010): 353, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/412803>.

<sup>179</sup> “Remarks to Ho Chi Minh City Business Community and Fulbright Economic Teaching Program Participants,” U.S. Department of State, accessed October 2, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/12/218721.htm>.; “Remarks on Climate Change and the Environment,” U.S. Department of State, accessed October 2, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/12/218726.htm>.

<sup>180</sup> “U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership,” U.S. Department of State, accessed October 2, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218734.htm>.

<sup>181</sup> Harris, *Vietnam Arms Embargo to be Fully Lifted, Obama Says in Hanoi*.

<sup>182</sup> Freedom House, *Vietnam / Country Report / Freedom in the World / 2001*.

UN Millenium Summit.<sup>183</sup> In the year 2000, when both presidents visited each other, the Vietnamese government released about 12,000 political and religious prisoners and allowed the use of the Internet more freely, including Western media.

In 2006, when U.S. President Bush visited Vietnam, the level of authoritarianism also decreased, based on softening religious regulation.<sup>184</sup> As well as the Presidential visit, various preparations enabled the Vietnamese government to lessen its authoritarianism. For example, in September 2004, the Bush administration listed Vietnam as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC), which might induce economic sanctions by the United States on the basis of the U.S. Religious Freedom Act.<sup>185</sup> In response to U.S. pressure, Hanoi decided to allow Protestants in the Central Highlands to use “house churches” in February 2005.<sup>186</sup> In 2005, U.S. Ambassador Michael Marine also pressed Vietnam, saying that obvious human rights and religious freedoms should be preserved for both governments to continue a good relationship.<sup>187</sup> Eventually, the Vietnamese government consented to the religious freedom improvement, and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom lifted Vietnam from the CPC list in September 2006.<sup>188</sup>

In this way, political efforts at a working level facilitated the reduction of authoritarianism, and meetings between both government summits decisively affected the level of authoritarianism. The aforementioned cases show that authoritarianism was not a sole driver of U.S.–Vietnam relations; rather, the U.S. foreign policy to reduce authoritarianism more effectively improved their relations and alleviated the level of authoritarianism of Vietnam. Given the premise that not only did both governments have

---

<sup>183</sup> “Vietnam - Visits by Foreign Leaders - Department History - Office of the Historian,” U.S. Department of State, accessed September 5, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits/vietnam>.

<sup>184</sup> Freedom House, *Vietnam / Country Report / Freedom in the World / 2006*.

<sup>185</sup> Frederick Z. Brown, “Rapprochement between Vietnam and the United States,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 32, no. 3 (December 2010): 323, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/412801>.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

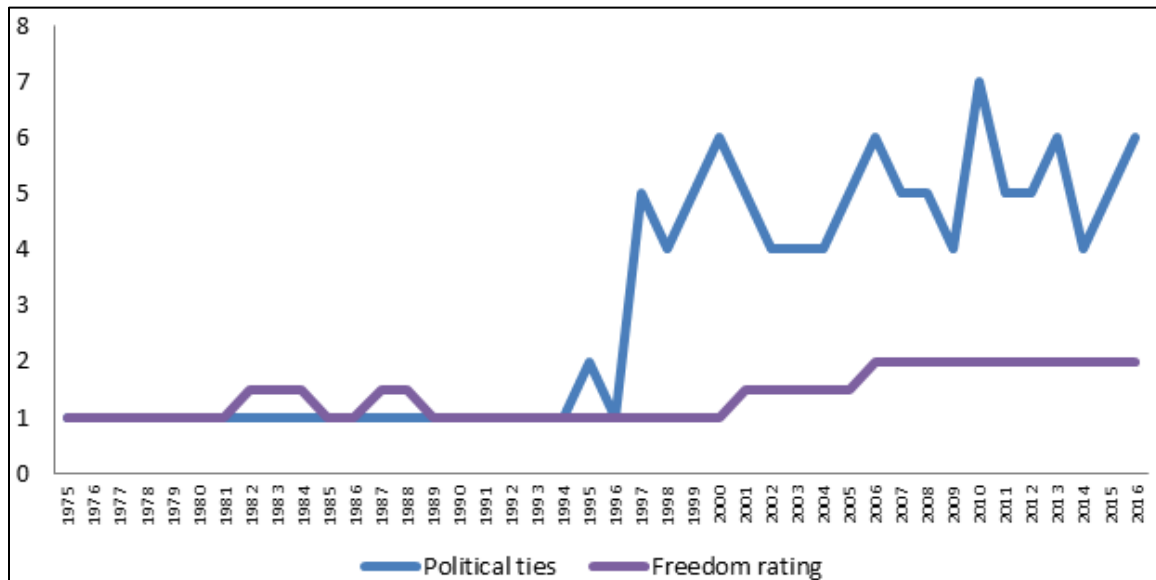
<sup>187</sup> Mark E. Manyin, *The Vietnam-U.S. Normalization Process* (CRS Report No. IB98033) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2005), 9.

<sup>188</sup> Brown, *Rapprochement between Vietnam and the United States*, 324.

desires to achieve a fruitful outcome through the summit meeting, but also the summit meeting was not a common opportunity for both countries, various and enormous efforts to create a positive environment at the summit meeting was natural, before and after. Thus, both governments achieved the desired result in 2000 and 2006, fostering a free religious environment in Vietnam, granting the Permanent Normal Trade Relation (PNTR) status, and removing Vietnam from CPC list under the U.S. Religious Freedom Act.<sup>189</sup> The presidential trip could be interpreted as a national protocol event, not a simple trip, and entailed various effects before and after having the meeting.

This evolution of the U.S.–Vietnam political relationship is depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7. U.S.–Vietnam political ties<sup>190</sup>



## 2. Economic Ties

From 1975 to 2001, U.S.–Vietnam economic ties were negligible. Since the end of the war, Vietnam suffered from economic sanctions imposed by the United States until

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 323–4.

<sup>190</sup> “Freedom in the World”; Office of the Historian, *Vietnam - Travels of the President - Travels*; Office of the Historian, *Vietnam - Visits by Foreign Leaders*.

President Bill Clinton lifted the sanctions.<sup>191</sup> Even though the United States had lifted economic sanctions on Vietnam in 1994, little changed until 2001. In 2001, both countries made an agreement, the bilateral trade agreement (BTA), in which Vietnam gained conditional Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status and conditional Normal Trade Relations (NTR).<sup>192</sup>

From 2002 to 2008, U.S.–Vietnam economic relations saw sustained growth, and the global market penetrated the Vietnam market. After Vietnam obtained the conditional NTR status and implemented BTA in 2001, trade volume increased rapidly. In 2006, Vietnam acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the United States granted PNTR status to Vietnam.<sup>193</sup> From 2002 to 2008, the trade balance between the United States and Vietnam gradually increased. Right after the BTA and conditional NTR in 2001, the total trade volume sharply increased by 107 percent and 96 percent compared to prior years in 2002 and 2003, respectively.<sup>194</sup>

Since 2009 the Vietnamese economy has taken one more step toward globalization. In 2008, the global economic crisis hit the Vietnamese economy, and thus, Vietnam exports to the United States decreased 4.7 percent in 2009.<sup>195</sup> Yet following the end of the crisis, the rate of the trade volume increase became steeper than previously. During this period, the United States and Vietnam have gone further in terms of treaties. Both states joined the TPP, a regional trade agreement, and signed the agreement on February 4, 2016.<sup>196</sup> Also, Vietnam consulted the United States on a Generalized System

---

<sup>191</sup> Murray Hierbert, Gregory B. Poling, and Phuong Nguyen, *A New Era in U.S.-Vietnam Relations* (New York: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2014), 23.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.; Mark E. Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Economic and Trade Relations: Issues for the 114th Congress* (CRS Report No. R41550) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016), 1–2.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>194</sup> Mark E. Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Relations: Background and Issues for Congress* (CRS Report No. RL33316) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2008), 13.

<sup>195</sup> Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Economic and Trade Relations: Issues for the 114th Congress* (CRS Report No. R41550), 2.; Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2014: Current Issues and Implications for U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. R40208), 26.

<sup>196</sup> Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Economic and Trade Relations: Issues for the 114th Congress* (CRS Report No. R41550), 3.

of Preferences program and a Bilateral Investment Treaty.<sup>197</sup> In 2014, the United States took possession of the top export partner status with 19 percent distribution.<sup>198</sup>

The impact of the variation in authoritarianism on economic ties can be found in institutional improvements in economic fields. Even though distinguishing tangible effects in the trade volume graph is difficult, numerical analysis sufficiently verifies the effects of economic cooperation systematically. In 2001, both governments made an agreement of conditional MFN and a conditional NTR through the BTA, and in 2006, they also concluded the WTO and the PNTR. These institutional improvements were the most remarkable changes between the two countries since normalization was achieved with the lifting of economic sanctions. These numerical percentages support the correlation between changes in authoritarianism and economic ties, which were represented by the annual sum of bilateral trade.

Yet, the changes in trade volume did not immediately come from the softening of authoritarianism. A few stages affected trade volume as follows: the increased sum in annual trade volume resulted from the economic agreements between Vietnam and the United States government, and the economic agreements came from the process of negotiation to achieve political purposes, when both summits had a meeting. Most important in these stages, political purposes could be interpreted from diverse points of view. Such purposes could be enhancing economic ties, promoting democracy, or other reasons. The only identifiable discovery through analysis is that the variation in authoritarianism is not a driver of improvement of economic ties.

This evolution of the U.S.–Vietnam economic relationship is depicted in Figure 8.

---

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> “Vietnam: Trade Statistics,” Michigan State University, accessed August 23, 2016, <http://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/vietnam/tradestats>.

Figure 8. U.S.–Vietnam economic ties<sup>199</sup>



### 3. Military Ties

The military ties between the United States and Vietnam have developed slowly; especially, tangible results did not occur until after 2006. Figure 9 presents the amount of U.S. military assistance. Although the amount of military assistance does not reflect other aspects of U.S.–Vietnam military ties, such as the decision to lift the arms embargo and the existence of joint exercises, it is a tangible and countable index.<sup>200</sup> As shown in Figure 9, U.S.–Vietnam military ties can be divided into three phases: 1) 1975–2005, reflecting scarcely noticeable relations, 2) 2005–2012, reflecting cautiously increased relations and institutional settlement, and 3) 2013–present, proceeding with full-scale military cooperation.

In the first phase, from 1975 to 2005, no military assistance existed. The United States concentrated on issues of POWs and MIAs, making no other effort to enhance military ties. That was a secondary issue, as both sides had doubts about each other's

<sup>199</sup> “Freedom in the World”; “Trade in Goods with Vietnam,” The United States Census Bureau, accessed August 23, 2016, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5520.html#questions>.

<sup>200</sup> The RAND blog, May 25, 2016, <http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/05/why-has-obama-lifted-the-arms-sales-ban-on-vietnam.html>; Harris, *Vietnam Arms Embargo to be Fully Lifted, Obama Says in Hanoi*.

long-term intentions.<sup>201</sup> For most of this period, the global Cold War climate also restrained U.S. interests in engaging Vietnam. But as the end of the Cold War neared, there arose a process of progressively understanding mutual commonalities and differences, developing issues of common interest, and perceiving how to deal with issues.<sup>202</sup>

Various working-level contacts between states proceeded, such as those between “representatives of the U.S. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and the Vietnamese Defense Ministry’s External Relations Department.”<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, Vietnamese military officers participated in diverse events, which were provided by the United States, like the military education program, PACOM-hosted seminars, and multilateral conferences, which provide the opportunity to learn each other’s ways of thinking when they face various situations.<sup>204</sup> In 2003, especially, a visit to the United States by former Defense Minister Pham Van Tra accelerated the normalization process in their military relationships.<sup>205</sup> This visit had reciprocated the inclination of U.S. Secretary of Defense Cohen in 2000.<sup>206</sup> Then, he held talks with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and meetings with influential U.S. officials. Following his visit, several unprecedented mutual visits continued.<sup>207</sup> In November, for example, USS *Vandegrift*, a U.S. Navy vessel, entered the port in Ho Chi Minh City for the first time since 1975, which initiated regular U.S. Navy calls at Vietnamese ports, even though there were some restrictions depending on the type of vessel and frequency in a year.<sup>208</sup>

---

<sup>201</sup> Colonel William Jordan, Lewis M. Stern, and Walter Lohman, “U.S.-Vietnam Defense Relations: Investing in Strategic Alignment,” *The Heritage Foundation* (July 18, 2012), 2.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–5.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>206</sup> “Vietnamese Defense Minister’s Visit to the United States,” Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States, accessed August 21, 2016, <http://vietnamembassy-usa.org/relations/vietnamese-defense-ministers-visit-united-states>.

<sup>207</sup> Jordan, Stern, and Lohman, *U.S.-Vietnam Defense Relations: Investing in Strategic Alignment*, 6.

<sup>208</sup> ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, *Timeline: U.S.-Vietnam Relations*, 352.

From 2005 to 2012 (the second phase), U.S.–Vietnam military ties established an institutional settlement. In 2005, both countries signed onto the IMET program and non-lethal foreign military sales.<sup>209</sup> This agreement jump-started a tangible outcome of the military-to-military relationship. From 2005, the United States allocated \$50,000 to the IMET program for military assistance.<sup>210</sup> On the one hand, the amount was not huge compared to other segments of the U.S. budget; however, the moment was a decisive one and became a cornerstone that established more practical cooperation and expanded possibilities, which could handle the core issues in the military.<sup>211</sup>

With this turning point, diplomatic efforts joined the military-to-military process.<sup>212</sup> In 2008, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung visited Washington and agreed to the “Foreign Ministry-led political-military dialogue.”<sup>213</sup> Since then, Vietnam could anticipate strategic communication with U.S. think tanks.<sup>214</sup> Although the strategic level co-operation could guarantee a bilateral dialogue regarding “regional defense issues,” “military modernization,” and “strategic thinking and intention,” the Vietnamese were reluctant and questioned U.S. motives.<sup>215</sup> In this atmosphere, however, both countries had become accustomed to each other, reacting effectively and sharing a straightforward dialogue.<sup>216</sup>

From 2011 to 2012, the U.S. and Vietnam governments reinforced their military ties more systematically by institutionalizing their relationship more specifically.<sup>217</sup> In April 2011, for example, Defense Minister Phung Quang Thanh facilitated co-operation through institutional exchange between the U.S. National Defense University (NDU) and the Vietnamese National Defense Academy.<sup>218</sup> Also, Vice Minister Nguyen Chi Vinh

---

<sup>209</sup> Manyin, *The Vietnam-U.S. Normalization Process* (CRS Report No. IB98033), 10.; Jordan, Stern, and Lohman, *U.S.-Vietnam Defense Relations: Investing in Strategic Alignment*, 6.

<sup>210</sup> USAID, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grant (GREENBOOK)*.

<sup>211</sup> Jordan, Stern, and Lohman, *U.S.-Vietnam Defense Relations: Investing in Strategic Alignment*, 6.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*



made the same arrangement between the U.S. NDU National Strategic Studies and the Vietnamese Military Strategy Institute and the Institute for Foreign Defense Relations.<sup>219</sup> On top of that, the annual U.S.–Vietnam Political, Security, and Defense Dialogue, the U.S.–Vietnam Defense Policy Dialogue, and the U.S.–Vietnam Joint Statement stabilized the system for developing a “strategic partnership.”<sup>220</sup>

In the phase since 2012, both states have embraced full-scale cooperation. The amount of U.S. military assistance had been stalled until 2005, but by creating common issues and understanding from 2006 to 2012, they had institutionalized their relations for a more systemic co-operation. Since 2013, the amount has increased sharply and the governing issues also have rapidly developed. Especially, after adding the “foreign military financing” and “cooperative threat reduction” budget items, the amounts have gradually expanded.<sup>221</sup>

Since 2013, Chinese assertive actions, such as constructing artificial islands and declaring an Air Defense Identification Zone, have stirred up regional instabilities. Thus, other than military assistance, additional military ties have emerged such as the “Maritime security boost plan,” which was planned for regional security in the South China Sea (SCS), “Strengthening Vietnam’s Coast Guard,” which supports Vietnamese defense from Chinese encroachment.<sup>222</sup> Additionally, President Obama lifted the arms sales ban on lethal weapons on May 23, 2016, and on October 2, 2016, the U.S. Navy warship USS *John S. McCain* and submarine USS *Frank Cable* arrived at the strategic Cam Ranh Bay, marking the first U.S. naval visits there since the end of the Vietnam

---

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 7–8.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 8.; Carl Thayer, “Vietnam Gradually Warms Up to U.S. Military,” *Diplomat*, November 6, 2013.

<sup>221</sup> USAID, *U.S Overseas Loans and Grants (GREENBOOK)*.

<sup>222</sup> Prashanth Parameswaran, “U.S. Announces Maritime Security Boost for Southeast Asia,” *Diplomat*, September 19, 2015a; Prashanth Parameswaran, “U.S., Vietnam Eye Deeper Coast Guard Cooperation,” *Diplomat*, September 30, 2015b.

War.<sup>223</sup> In this manner, the China factor has advanced closer U.S.–Vietnam military ties.<sup>224</sup>

Similar to the correlation between authoritarianism and economic ties, authoritarianism did not directly affect U.S.–Vietnam military ties as a driver, rather U.S.–Vietnam political ties have immediately influenced their military ties. In 2001 when the level of authoritarianism decreased, their military ties did not change. Even though in 2005, when the degree of authoritarianism declined, their military ties entered a significant new phase by commencing the IMET program, analyzing their relation as cause and effect is not enough. Rather, it is more reasonable to understand that working-level cooperation for the moment and the political decision of President Bush had more impact on the military ties between the two countries.

The improvement under the Obama administration also can be interpreted as an extension of the same context in the previous example. Since 1984, the U.S. government has imposed the International Trafficking in Arms Regulations on Vietnam, which was known as an arms embargo.<sup>225</sup> After President Obama and Truong Tan Sang launched a comprehensive partnership in 2013, U.S. military assistance sharply increased.<sup>226</sup> Also, when President Obama visited Hanoi, he fully lifted the arms embargo and added some words, which pressed the Vietnamese human rights issue, he said, “As with all our defense partners, sales will need to still meet strict requirements, including those related to human rights.”<sup>227</sup> Like this, the correlation between authoritarianism and military ties has followed the political ties.

In this manner, there appears to be a direct correlation between authoritarianism and military ties. Military ties follow the changes of authoritarianism. In this process, the military ties have a tendency to react with the issue-based attention to solve the potential

---

<sup>223</sup> Harris, *Vietnam Arms Embargo to be Fully Lifted, Obama Says in Hanoi*; “1st U.S. Warships Port at Cam Ranh Bay since End of Vietnam War,” *Diplomat*, accessed October 7, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/10/1st-us-warships-port-at-cam-ranh-bay-since-end-of-vietnam-war/>.

<sup>224</sup> Hierbert, Poling, and Nguyen, *A New Era in U.S.-Vietnam Relations*, 16.

<sup>225</sup> “Obama’s Visit to Vietnam: A Turning Point?” *Diplomat*, accessed October 7, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/05/obamas-visit-to-vietnam-a-turning-point/>.

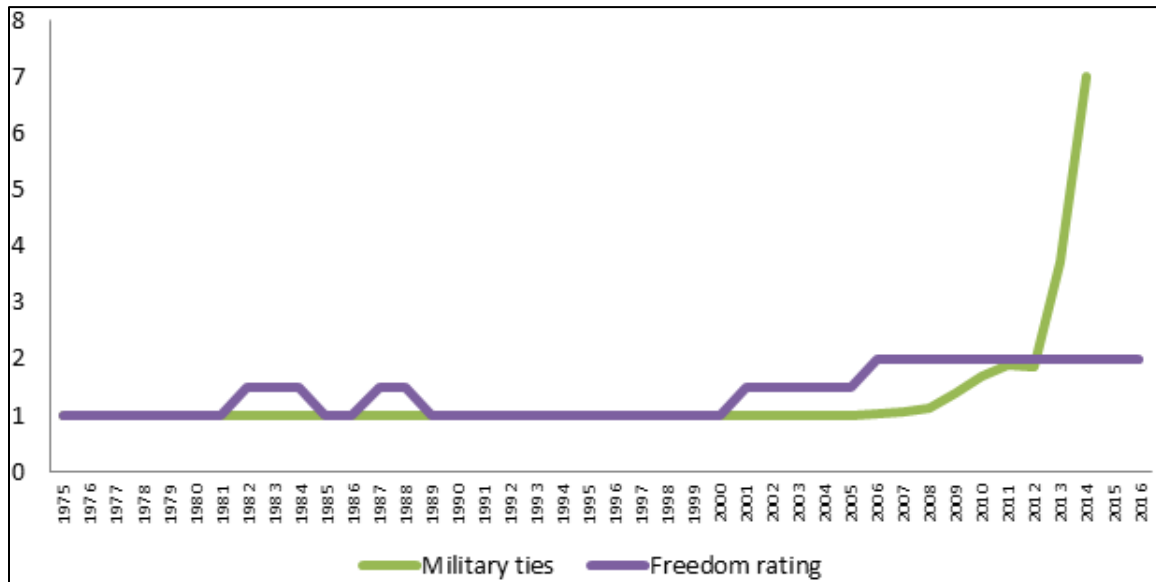
<sup>226</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership*.

<sup>227</sup> Thayer, *Obama’s Visit to Vietnam: A Turning Point?*

threat. For Vietnam, U.S. military ties followed decreased authoritarianism, while decreased authoritarianism made it easier to build military ties in response to mutual concerns about China.

This evolution of the U.S.–Vietnam military ties is depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9. U.S.–Vietnam military ties<sup>228</sup>



## C. EXPLANATION BEYOND AUTHORITARIANISM

This section scrutinizes the correlation that the proxy scale does not include or exceed from the point of authoritarianism view. The section is composed of the 1) causal direction part, which illustrates the comprehensive correlation among four variables—the level of authoritarianism, U.S.–Myanmar political ties, economic ties, and military ties—and the stories that are not contained in the graph; and the 2) strategic background part involves both states’ interests according to the passage of time.

### 1. Causal Direction

This chapter has looked at the correlation between the level of authoritarianism and the U.S.–Vietnamese relationship. Except for political ties, finding correlation is hard.

<sup>228</sup> “Freedom in the World”; USAID, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants (GREENBOOK)*.

This section examines the overall correlation among four variables, not just between the level of authoritarianism and U.S.–Vietnamese relations. Furthermore, it will explain aspects that the graph could not capture.

In terms of political ties, Figure 10 shows that political ties preceded the softening authoritarianism. Changes in authoritarianism existed in 2000 and 2006, and both years had high inflections of political ties, involving the U.S. President’s visit. Before the presidential visit, various working-level negotiations created the mood for the softening of authoritarianism. From the Vietnamese perspective, softening authoritarianism was a part of conditions necessary to enhance other ties: economic and military ties. Since Vietnam has many points of contact on which to cooperate with the United States and the United States also could obtain benefits from the cooperation, the VCP could work with the United States through only two events in softening authoritarianism: 2000 and 2006.

In the economic sphere, economic ties correlated with both political ties and the variation in authoritarianism. Basically, political ties elicit the improvement of both economic ties and softening authoritarianism. For this reason, enhancing economic ties occurred in a similar period and phase as the softening of authoritarianism. Even though the level of authoritarianism was reduced in 2001 and 2006, which saw an economic agreement, BTA and WTO, respectively, both improvements were not directly related with each other. However, economic ties and softening authoritarianism followed in the same period as a result of the improvement of political ties. In sum, economic ties followed the political ties and improved at a similar time with the softening of authoritarianism.

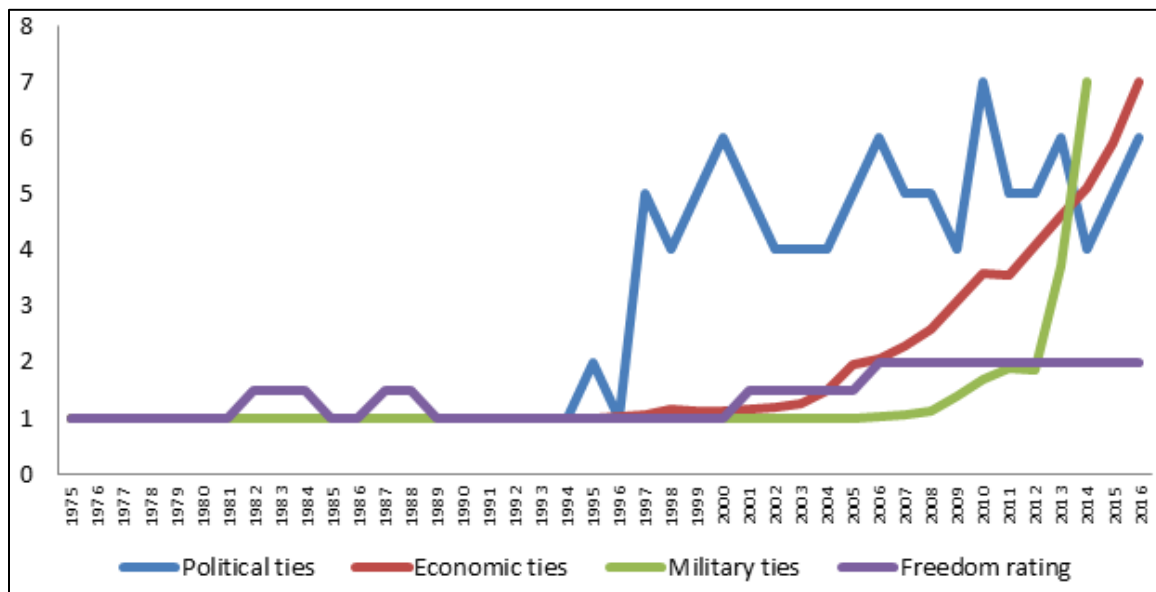
Growing military ties are the most conservative part and they are directly related with political ties, not with changes of authoritarianism. Fundamentally, until 2005 U.S.–Vietnam military ties did not exist. From the start of IMET, their military ties have cautiously developed. Gradually, they created institutions and understood each other. Until 2012, the amount of military assistance only slightly increased. After military assistance contained the “Cooperative threat reduction” item, the amount sharply increased 244 percent and 6057 percent in 2013 and 2014, respectively, compared to the

previous year.<sup>229</sup> This suggests that the United States engaged the military sphere to cope with maritime instabilities in the South China Sea territorial dispute. The following section discusses the extension of this assumption.

In conclusion, overall U.S.–Vietnamese relations and the level of authoritarianism follow the political ties. The case of Vietnam shows that softening of authoritarianism is not a precondition when the United States commences a normalized relation. But, in the process of enhancing relations, the United States pressured the VCP, referring to the softening of authoritarianism as a requirement. For this reason, economic ties and military ties improved simultaneously or later than the change in authoritarianism.

This evolution of U.S.–Vietnam ties is scaled and depicted in Figure 10.

Figure 10. U.S.–Vietnamese relations with freedom rating<sup>230</sup>



## 2. Strategic Background

The discussion of strategic interests traces both the United States’ and Vietnam’s strategic interests. Then, it analyzes how those strategic interests affect their relations.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.; “Freedom in the World”; Office of the Historian, *Vietnam - Travels of the President - Travels*; Office of the Historian, *Vietnam - Visits by Foreign Leaders*; U.S. Census Bureau Foreign Trade, *Trade in Goods with Vietnam*.

*a. U.S. Strategic Interests*

The U.S. foreign policy to Vietnam has been implemented as part of a regional strategy. In the Cold War era, the United States engaged in the Southeast Asia region because of the “Domino theory,” which described a phenomenon in which communism’s contagion would spread, and the United States should take action to block its spreading.<sup>231</sup> On the basis of this theory, the United States intervened in Vietnam to secure the democratic regime of South Vietnam. After the end of the war, the strategic interests could be categorized into the following periods: 1) wiping out the war legacy (1975–1995), 2) pursuing American values (1995–2011), and 3) implementing the “Pivot to Asia” (2011–present).

(1) Wipe out the War Legacy, 1975–1995

From the end of the Vietnam War until 1995, the United States had thought of the U.S.–Vietnam relationship from the perspective of the “Vietnam syndrome,” which included emotional, psychological, and political obstacles.<sup>232</sup> During the Cold War era, the United States regarded Vietnam as one of the axes of communism and confrontation, so both states had no explicit relations during that time. Yet after the collapse of the Soviet Union, from 1991 to 1995, the United States did not need to care about the ideology issue, and it just paid attention to the MIA/POWs issue.<sup>233</sup> To normalize relations with Vietnam, both states should resolve the war legacy, and the Reagan and Bush (41) administrations started negotiations in 1989 to 1995.<sup>234</sup> With the Cambodia peace settlement, the United States negotiated with Vietnam, providing \$1 million to support wounded persons.<sup>235</sup> By contrast efforts to resolve MIA/POW issues were more difficult.

---

<sup>231</sup> Peter T. Leeson and Andrea M. Dean, “The Democratic Domino Theory: An Empirical Investigation,” *American Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 3 (July 2009): 533, doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2009.00385.x.

<sup>232</sup> Brown, *Rapprochement between Vietnam and the United States*, 318.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 319.; Melvin E. Richmond, *United States National Interests in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*, 1996, 2, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA309571>.

<sup>234</sup> Brown, *Rapprochement between Vietnam and the United States*, 319.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

(2) Pursuit of American Values, 1995–2011

After the normalization and end of the war, the United States pursued American values, dealing with the Vietnam issue. First, the United States continuously worked with the Vietnamese government regarding MIA/POW issues; second, it demanded greater religious freedom and human rights and a diffuse liberal market system in Vietnam.<sup>236</sup> Three conditions supported the U.S. intention and confidence: 1) the Vietnamese economic reform *doi moi*, which reflected the need of economic development and recognized the defeat of the communist economic system; 2) the end of the Cold War, which suggested that ideological proxy war was unnecessary; and 3) normalization between two states, which connoted the settlement between states' debts outwardly and created progress for the future, albeit both countries held a political mistrust and popular sentiment.

The United States strove to improve religious freedom and human rights. Basically, the Vietnamese government believed that stability was a core need to secure its one-party regime. These examples of neighboring countries, such as Thailand's democracy that had frequent coups and the Philippines' chaotic domestic situation, caused Vietnam to consolidate its conservative regime.<sup>237</sup> For these reasons, Vietnam concluded that it should not allow political pluralism, which could undermine the solidarity of the government. Nevertheless, in this atmosphere in 2005 and 2006, the United States produced progress within Vietnam, which guaranteed the use of house churches.<sup>238</sup> With international concern, the United States sympathized with the Vietnamese internal movement, which was known as "Bloc 8406" that supported the organization of this political association."<sup>239</sup> At that time, the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security tried to suppress Bloc 8406; however, the international situation that should hold the APEC and EAS meeting repressed its anger.<sup>240</sup> In this way, the United States persistently required changes regarding religious freedom and human rights.

---

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

The other American value was economic prosperity through the liberal market system. The United States regarded an economy as a basis of “national growth,” “prosperity,” and “influence” through the liberal market economy.<sup>241</sup> To enhance economic relations with Vietnam, the U.S. and Vietnamese governments made a BTA in 2001 and liberalized service sectors.<sup>242</sup> Also, the United States demanded the “foreign ownership of securities firms” and “express delivery service.”<sup>243</sup> For Intellectual Property Rights, the United States managed the “U.S. Special 301 Watch List,” which prevented Vietnamese piracy on the Internet.<sup>244</sup> In 2008, both summits agreed to sign the Bilateral Investment Trade Agreement to promote foreign investment.<sup>245</sup> In this way, after normalization with Vietnam, the United States pursued its principles and expanded its values in Vietnam.

### (3) “Pivot to Asia,” 2011–Present

The U.S. interest in Vietnam gradually changed after 2008. The United States recognized China as a real threat. While the United States suffered from the global financial crisis, China enjoyed its rising status. After President Obama entered the White House, he proposed the “Pivot to Asia” strategy as a new foundation of U.S. grand strategy in the 21st century. Through this policy, the United States could obtain two representative effects in Vietnam as follows: 1) overcome economic stagnation, 2) secure Freedom of Navigation (FON) in the SCS.

First, by focusing on the Asia-Pacific region, the United States can earn economic benefits. In economics, Europe and the United States already shaped a stable economic structure. They had formed cohesive economic ties and reached a stable trajectory. So far, in Southeast-Asia, the United States had not had many economic ties with countries compared to other regions. If the United States forged economic ties in SEA, the country could find resolution by creating ties with a new emerging market: SEA. Among these

---

<sup>241</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy*, 15.

<sup>242</sup> Brown, *Rapprochement between Vietnam and the United States*, 325.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.



situations, the United States joined the TPP to institutionalize the ties with potential export markets. Also, the United States could enjoy the cheap workforce of Vietnam. It provided not only lower unit production costs but also dispersed to reduce the production facilities, which had leaned too much toward China.

To do this, securing a stable Sea Line of Communication (SLOC) in the SCS is a necessary condition. The SCS retains \$1.2 trillion U.S. trade volume per year based on the year of 2012, and it would have become larger after activating the TPP.<sup>246</sup> Without regional stability, companies would pay for more “insurance rates” and “longer transits,” this sort of destabilizing occurred in the SCS because of the maritime territorial dispute.<sup>247</sup> In the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) of 2010 in Hanoi, Secretary Hillary Clinton said that the SCS is an issue that is directly linked with U.S. interests.<sup>248</sup>

Second, based on the aforementioned necessity, the United States can secure FON in the SCS. Securing FON is one crucial interest of the United States.<sup>249</sup> FON is one of underlying principles regarding maritime affairs because the United States thought that FON had guaranteed its influence in the world both economically and militarily. As a hegemonic state, the United States created a virtual circle by securing sea power for its national interests. Basically, sea power protected the SLOC and protects trade, guaranteeing economic prosperity. In order to project the U.S. influence on others, in addition, the neutralization of the sea is a necessary condition because the United States could avoid opposition from others over territorial rights. In an extension of this logic, the United States has sought to secure FON and the neutrality of the SCS. In this way, the “Pivot to Asia” policy rearranged Vietnam’s strategic value to the United States.

#### ***b. Vietnam Strategic Interest***

Vietnamese collective memories were characterized by the conflict with external influences, and this perspective substantially influenced Vietnamese foreign policy.

---

<sup>246</sup> Glaser, *Armed Clash in the South China Sea*, 4.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Lee and Washburn, *The U.S. Strategy of Rebalancing to Asia: Asking to Fifteen U.S. Expert*, 143.

<sup>249</sup> “Armed Clash in the South China Sea,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed August 19, 2016, 3, [http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/armed-clash-south-china-sea/p27883?cid=rss-asia-armed\\_clash\\_in\\_the\\_south\\_china-041112](http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/armed-clash-south-china-sea/p27883?cid=rss-asia-armed_clash_in_the_south_china-041112).

During this time, Vietnam's most important issues were to regain security stability without war, and recover from its battle scars. After the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 1973, Vietnam continuously experienced various conflicts with neighboring countries. Vietnam continued the war until the fall of Saigon in 1975. From 1975 to 1989, the Vietnamese government fought with the Khmer Rouge regime, which caused the conflict with not only Cambodia but also China and the United States. In 1979, the Sino-Vietnamese war occurred since China felt uncomfortable about amicable relations between Vietnam and the Soviet Union because of a doctrinal divergence between China and the Soviet Union. Also, the Chinese government supported Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime, and it thought that the invasion was part of a challenge. In this way, Vietnam had experienced various conflicts with neighboring countries, and those conflicts created many casualties and much damage. Vietnamese strategic interests can be divided into three phases: 1) achieving stability as a socialist state (1975–1986), 2) pursuing practical progress and reform under *doi moi*, and 3) balancing its strategic stance.

(1) Stability as a Socialist Country, 1975–1986

After unification, the Vietnamese Communist Party confronted two major tasks: 1) securing communism in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, unified Vietnam, and 2) recovering from the battle scars. To establish communism securely within the nation, the VCP launched “the second battle of Saigon” in order to transplant socialism in South Vietnam. Since Le Duan, the General Secretary of the VCP bore in mind that the country should accomplish stable communism in unified Vietnam within a decade, unsubstantiated premature communist methods led the postwar recovery.<sup>250</sup> As a part of this policy line in 1978, the VCP nationalized industry and commerce, destroying the private trade.<sup>251</sup> In the agriculture sector, the VCP tried to establish collective farming in South Vietnam, but eventually, it proved to be an inefficient production method.<sup>252</sup> The

---

<sup>250</sup> Conrad Schirokauer and Donald N. Clark, *Modern East Asia: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2016), 457.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 458.

collective farming, rising rice prices, and bad weather conditions drove the farmers to fail.<sup>253</sup>

Since the spread and consolidation of communism preceded postwar recovery, the VCP did not manage the recovery efficiently. Lots of destruction of infrastructure, ruined villages, burned regions left by napalm and chemical bombings, and 3.5 million landmines were the visible battle scars that VCP must overcome.<sup>254</sup> At that time, the VCP spent about 40 percent of budget on the military, and this restricted the VCP's flexibilities and possibilities of development.<sup>255</sup> To attempt a breakthrough, Vietnam tried to reestablish its relations with the United States in 1977–78; however, the United States could not accept Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia and alignment with the Soviets.<sup>256</sup> At the end, the VCP realized that some reforms were needed. Thus, even though the VCP attempted to reconstruct the country with its communist methods, their unskillful management or systemic problems hindered the recovery.

## (2) Practical Interest rather than Ideology, 1986–2011

During this period, the VCP became more practical, rather than ideological. Among its practical interests was *doi moi*, which had a goal of economic liberalization.<sup>257</sup> The VCP realized that keeping their socialist ideological norms needed economic stability, and also, its previous socialistic economic system did not work. Before the VCP decided on *doi moi*, the Chinese Communist Party started economic reforms, and the Soviet Union also implemented *Perestroika and glasnost*, which means “restructuring and openness.”<sup>258</sup> In this way, the needs for economic reform emerged not only in Vietnam, but also in the first and second largest communist states.

---

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 457.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 458.

<sup>256</sup> HOANG ANH TUAN, “Rapprochement between Vietnam and the United States: A Response,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 32, no. 3 (2010): 345.

<sup>257</sup> Schirokauer and Clark, *Modern East Asia: A Brief History*, 458.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

Through *doi moi*, the VCP reduced the state's role in the economic arena.<sup>259</sup> The VCP promoted the free market system, reduced the control of industries, and expanded economic interchange with foreign states.<sup>260</sup> With *doi moi*, the VCP and the United States started "mutual confidence-building measures," and Vietnam accepted the plan to obtain political and economic benefits, the normalization and termination of sanctions.<sup>261</sup> In addition, Vietnam obtained \$1 million in support from the United States for wounded people to assist with prosthetics.<sup>262</sup> With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Vietnamese government changed its policy to accept U.S. requirements on MIA/POWs and negotiate for practical benefits.<sup>263</sup> The Vietnamese thought that its cooperative movement would create positive gestures from the United States.<sup>264</sup> Yet, the VCP's opaque national affairs management by an authoritarian one-party rule and unstable environment undermined its attraction for the foreign investors. So, in this period, the Vietnamese government just improved institutions to join the international economic system.

Concurrently, by enhancing the ties with the United States, the VCP improved its relations with neighboring countries in parallel: China and SEA countries.<sup>265</sup> By increasing ties with SEA countries, the VCP could join ASEAN as a regional member, not an enemy.<sup>266</sup> Also, the reconciliation with China provided regional stability and opportunity to concentrate on domestic development. Even though the territorial disputes were not solved in land and maritime and Chinese ambition needed be checked, the U.S. presence helped hedge against China. Thus, in this period, the VCP's practical purposes influenced its overall diplomatic decisions.

---

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Brown, *Rapprochement between Vietnam and the United States*, 319.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2014: Current Issues and Implications for U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. R40208), 4.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

### (3) Balancing China through Hedging, 2011–Present

Since 2011, the VCP's strategic interest has been in sustaining economic prosperity and creating political stability; however, its maritime territorial problem in the SCS with China has hindered regional stability. Vietnam has felt ambivalent toward China because of so many conflicts and cooperation historically. From the Vietnamese perspective, China is a presence not only with which to cooperate, but also to be checked for the protection of the Vietnamese autonomy. Enhancing ties with the United States was best way to offset the influence of China. Through this issue, the VCP could enhance its strategic value to the United States, and they could establish a joint stance.

After 2011, SCS territorial disputes have served to enhance Vietnamese status more independently by diversifying its diplomatic, trade, and military relations with neighboring countries, especially with the United States. Chinese assertive behavior gradually increased from this time. Before 2011, Vietnam had a tendency to lean toward China economically and politically because Western countries did not invest much in Vietnam. Since the United States pivoted to Asia, especially to Vietnam, its strategic and economic value has become greater.

Because of the VCP's efforts, the SCS dispute became an international issue; many neighboring countries became engaged, expressing their state's position. For example, Vietnam has intensified its diplomatic relations with ASEAN to cope with China's assertive policies. In July 2010 at ARF, Vietnam drew a multi-national diplomatic action from the conference.<sup>267</sup> Also, through agreements for oil and gas exploration with India in 2011, Vietnam aimed to check China in the SCS through India's diplomatic influence, which was adversarial due to China-Pakistan cooperation.<sup>268</sup> On the one hand, Vietnam strengthens its ties to the United States; on the other hand, it also emphasizes relations independent of the United States and China, saying that those

---

<sup>267</sup> "The China Factor in U.S.-Vietnam Relations," CNA Analysis & Solution, accessed August 22, 2016, [https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/PDF/DRM-2012-U-000184-FINAL.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2012-U-000184-FINAL.pdf).

<sup>268</sup> Leszek Buszynski, "The South China Sea: Oil, Maritime Claims, and U.S.-China Strategic Rivalry," *Washington Quarterly* (March 19, 2012): 143. doi:10.1080/0163660X.2012.666495. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0163660X.2012.666495?needAccess=true>.

relations are separate from each other.<sup>269</sup> By doing so, Vietnam broadened its point of contact with neighboring countries and maximized its national interests: 1) territorial sovereignty, 2) underground resources, 3) and fishery resources.

First and foremost, Vietnam has claimed its territorial sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly archipelagoes ever since WWII.<sup>270</sup> Vietnam has suffered from external threats for a long time, such as the dominant-subordinate relationship with China and warfare with not only France, but also the United States and China. As a result, Vietnamese people's collective memories are sensitive about sovereignty matters. In this context, China seized the Paracel archipelagoes in 1974 and the Johnson Reef in 1988 by force. In addition, China's large-scale reclamation projects and mounting naval power have threatened neighboring countries. Naturally, Vietnam thinks sustaining their territorial rights, just as they are, is its most significant interest.

Based on territorial rights, realistic interests of Vietnam are resources. In 1968, the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East announced the report that said the SCS retained enormous buried resources. According to this report, the SCS was one of the top four oil fields of the world, holding oil, gas, tin, and manganese.<sup>271</sup> Furthermore, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation reported that approximately 203 billion tons of oil deposits exist in the SCS, and compared the SCS to a "second Persian Gulf."<sup>272</sup> Even though the calculated amounts differ depending on the organization, the fact is that the SCS holds substantial economic value.

Another resource that Vietnam can exploit in the SCS is fishery resources. Seafood production is a substantial proportion of the food industry among Asians. In 2013, for instance, the "Marine Capture Production" in Asia recorded 68 percent of the world's capture, and the report showed that Asians consumed at least two times more seafood than Westerners. Vietnamese protein intake percentage from seafood is 11.5

---

<sup>269</sup> Bellacqua, *The China Factor in U.S.-Vietnam Relations*, 27.

<sup>270</sup> Buszynski, "The South China Sea: Oil, Maritime Claims, and U.S.-China Strategic Rivalry," *The Washington Quarterly*, 139.

<sup>271</sup> Taek-Yeon Kim, "U.S.-China Relations and South China Sea Conflict," *Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* 23, no. 2 (2016): 60–61. [http://iga.khu.ac.kr/kor/bbs/upload/iga\\_05\\_2942\\_1\\_20160714135407.pdf](http://iga.khu.ac.kr/kor/bbs/upload/iga_05_2942_1_20160714135407.pdf).

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

percent versus the United States' of 5 percent.<sup>273</sup> Also, the SCS includes 1.72 million vessels and 5.4 million people.<sup>274</sup> In China's case alone in 2013, the scale of the fishing industry was \$289 billion a year, and nearly 10,000 fish processing companies held 400,000 workers.<sup>275</sup> In this way, the SCS has potential capabilities that could stimulate the fishing industry tremendously.

*c. Analysis/Conclusion*

Following the deep conflict triggered in the Gulf of Tonkin, U.S.–Vietnam relations have taken a long time to recover. From the Vietnamese perspective, many brutal wounds of war, from the first to third Indochina Wars, formed a collective consciousness, which was negative and doubtful of Western society. Similarly, from the U.S. perspective, the Vietnam syndrome undermined U.S. interests in the Southeast Asia region because the United States was reluctant to intervene directly, reflecting U.S. public opinion. These historical legacies affected each other, whenever they interacted. As a result, both groups had a tendency not to engage with each other as much as possible, and their strategic interests did not overlap in the historical context. From 2011, however, their structural strategic context formed a different balance of power in the region, and Southeast Asia members started to adjust their position in accordance with their national interest.

Table 4. U.S.–Vietnam strategic interests depending on periods

Period	U.S. interests	Period	Vietnam interest
1975–1995	Wiping out war legacies	1975–1986	Stability as a socialist state
1995–2011	Pursuit of American values	1986–2011	Practical development
2011–present	Influence Increment in SEA	2011–present	Maintenance of diplomatic balance between the United States and China

<sup>273</sup> “Fish: The Overlooked Destabilizer in the South China Sea,” Stratfor, accessed September 22, 2016, [https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/fish-overlooked-destabilizer-south-china-sea?0=ip\\_login\\_no\\_cache=03260829883ee147bd0e6e8289ddf9b6](https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/fish-overlooked-destabilizer-south-china-sea?0=ip_login_no_cache=03260829883ee147bd0e6e8289ddf9b6).

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

During the first phase, both states had different strategic interests. The United States concentrated on the MIA/POW issues, which was significant to U.S. domestic politics and American pride. On the other hand, the VCP focused on the consolidation of its newly started communist party and recovery from the prolonged war. Their shared interest was solving a war legacy. For a U.S. MIA/POW and Vietnamese wounded person, both governments had limited cooperation. The United States provided aid for wounded people, and Vietnam shared MIA/POW information. Thus, both governments cooperated within a restrictive range when dealing with each other. They barely arrived at an agreement in 1995 under the name of normalization, but made no conspicuous changes.

In the second phase, they collaborated on more practical matters with extended ranges. Since 1986, the VCP tried to reform their economic lean toward a free market system, realizing that the communist economic system did not work. Their economic condition worsened, and they needed some leverage to tip the balance. These changes and the VCP's needs were the benefit to achieve the U.S. stance. The United States welcomed the VCP's pro-free market movements. They had shaped various bilateral agreements, which intensified their economic ties: the BTA and conditional NTR/MFN in 2001, the PNTR and WTO in 2006. In this way, their shared strategic points of contact created diverse economic cooperation.

With the global financial crisis in 2008, China became a truly rising threat that compelled the United States to consider measures to check China, and the Obama administration has shaped a strategic point of contact under the slogan, "Pivot to Asia" since the year 2011. To reduce its reliance on the Chinese labor market, the United States tried to find new investment markets. The United States increased the level of cooperation with Asian countries, and Vietnam attracted U.S. concerns based on its geographical position and a cheap labor force.

In addition, the territorial dispute in the SCS among part of the ASEAN states and China undermined regional peace and stability, U.S. allies and partners, and eventually, U.S. interests and international orders. Hence, the United States responded to the dispute not only autonomously, but also with bilateral and multilateral approaches with



neighboring countries. For example, the United States made efforts such as a realignment of maritime strategy and the FON operation periodically in the SCS, or providing aid and the maritime security boost plan to enhance capabilities of the joint cooperation system. In this way, the need to check China turned the pivot of the United States to Vietnam.

Similarly, Vietnam also had a strategic interest in checking China. Historically, Vietnam had been involved in Chinese culture for such a long time, and suffered from a dominant-subordinate relationship, and now also formed relations under the same regime type. On the other hand, they had territorial disputes around borders. Their subtle governance relations influenced forming an ambivalent mindset between them. From Vietnam's perspective, regional stability and the SLOC should be secured as a precondition for stable investments and trade. This perspective encourages the VCP to create checks and balances to China. So, the VCP hedges its dangers by enhancing ties with the United States. Overall ties have gradually increased during the second and third phases, especially in third phase, as security problems strengthened economic and military relations.

#### **D. SUMMARY**

This chapter examines the extent to which authoritarianism has affected U.S. foreign policy with Vietnam. Since 1975 to 2016, Vietnamese authoritarianism has not much softened. The VCP has sustained a one-party rule regime, and the Vietnamese still have restrictions on political and civil rights. Often, sporadic changes have occurred, but these changes were not enough to satisfy the Vietnamese. Nevertheless, the United States enhanced its ties gradually, and recently their overall ties have grown, including military ties. This case shows that the level of authoritarianism is not the only factor to influence U.S.–Vietnam relations.

Vietnamese authoritarianism has slightly changed from phase one to two. In 1999, the VCP relieved the extent of restrictions on Western media and released 12,000 political or religious prisoners. These issues increased the *freedom rating* in the following year. Similarly, in 2006, the Vietnamese government admitted open religious celebration and gave the freedom of travel to priests. Thus, the changes of Vietnamese

authoritarianism were limited in narrow civil liberties, and their political rights such as free elections and freedom of speech remain restricted by the VCP.

Although Vietnamese authoritarianism has not much improved, the United States has promoted its overall relations. After lifting the trade embargo in 1994, the United States gave Vietnam a PNTR and MFN status and concluded a BTA, WTO, and finally TPP. In 2014, the United States became a top export partner of Vietnam. Additionally, in a military respect, the United States has provided the IMET program since 2005, partially lifted the arms embargo in 2014, and fully lifted it in 2016. Vietnam also rewarded the U.S. for this action by permitting access in Cam Ranh Bay, which is a significant strategic port on the Indochinese peninsula, including South China Sea.

In conclusion, the Vietnamese case reveals that the level of authoritarianism has not applied as a driver of U.S.–Vietnam relations. Rather, political ties led overall ties and facilitated softening authoritarianism. This phenomenon illustrates that warmer U.S. foreign policy may proceed in some cases without softening authoritarianism. In the Vietnam case, this may or may not have involved the strategic decision to check China in the Asia-Pacific region. In general, the case shows that softening authoritarianism is not an absolute pre-condition to enhance the relationship.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

Until now, the thesis has examined Myanmar and Vietnam cases with respect to the influence of the level of authoritarianism in those countries and U.S. foreign policy. The cases have different complexions depending on political, economic, and military ties or states. In this chapter, the discussion 1) compares and contrasts the two cases depending on political, economic, and military ties regarding the similarities and differences exist; 2) presents the North Korea case in more abbreviated terms; 3) outlines the relevance and importance of the outcome of the research; and 4) proposes the direction of future research.

### **A. COMPARING TWO CASES**

In this section, the two case studies are explained from the political, economic, and military perspectives. Each classification has both similarities and differences. Political ties have an opposite correlation. The Myanmar case shows that changes in the level of authoritarianism affect U.S.–Myanmar political ties. Yet, the Vietnamese case illustrates the opposite tendency in which political ties, especially a U.S. presidential visit, precedes the change in the level of authoritarianism. From the economic perspective, the cases of both Myanmar and Vietnam show that the political ties precede the economic ties.

From the political perspective, the Myanmar and Vietnamese relation between level of authoritarianism and political ties differs. This may be because U.S.–Vietnam relations shared more interests besides the softening of authoritarianism, so the United States had motivations to start negotiations balancing reluctance to engage an authoritarianism regime. The strategic background suggests that the China factor facilitates U.S.–Vietnamese relations because Vietnam is a strategically important country that practically copes with conflicts with China.

In the economic area, both Myanmar and Vietnamese economic ties follow political changes. Both cases showed that the improvement of economic ties resulted from political actions. In Myanmar's case, economic sanctions, which consider

businesses' position, left room to enable investment before sanctions took effect, even though the governmental action was not intended to facilitate investment. The Vietnamese case also displays that U.S.–Vietnam political ties enhance economic outcomes. By concluding an economic treaty such as BTA or WTO, the VCP could create a background for economic growth. Both cases have progressed in different intentions and contexts, but it is clear that political ties induce the enhancement of economic ties. A difference in economic ties is the correlation with authoritarianism. In the Myanmar case, for the variation of economic ties, softening authoritarianism should precede the economic ties because that was the precondition that enabled easing the sanctions and enhancing political ties. However, in the Vietnam case, the correlation between authoritarianism and economic ties is vague. Economic ties and softening authoritarianism occurred as a result of political ties.

The characteristic of military ties is the most conservative tie, altering its changes at the end of overall ties compared to political and economic ties. In the case of Myanmar, academics and Congress debate whether or not U.S.–Myanmar military ties should improve. On the other hand, in the Vietnamese case, its military ties sharply went up from 2012, when the United States felt the threat of China to regional security. The United States determined that strengthening its military ties with Vietnam could enhance its presence in the Asia-Pacific region. In this manner, both military ties have a tendency that reflects a political purpose.

## **B. THE CASE OF NORTH KOREA**

For the purpose of this research, the North Korean case should be a part of the chapter; however, overall variations have not changed. Therefore, the thesis provides a more abbreviated examination of changes in both North Korean authoritarianism and U.S.–North Korean political, economic, and military ties.

### **1. Level of Authoritarianism**

North Korea is the most unique authoritarian regime in the world. Its regime could be described as a conflation of one-party rule and sultanism. Externally, the regime assumes a one-party rule; however, its internal inclination has a sultanistic propensity.

The North Korean single party, the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), has conducted all state affairs since 1949. During the 1960s, Kim Il-sung established and consolidated its sultanistic regime to prevent a power struggle by purging high-ranking party members and top military officers who were the closest figures to him.<sup>276</sup> Through several purges, Kim Il-sung became an "utmost political norm" himself.<sup>277</sup> Then, he looked for a successor.

Simultaneously, with the cessation of the power struggle possibilities, Kim's family hereditary succession started. First of all, Kim Il-sung appointed his close family members to important posts and institutionalized his leadership.<sup>278</sup> To institutionalize Kim Jong-il's power, for example, the KWP amended the constitution to elevate the status of Kim Jong-il.<sup>279</sup> Through these efforts, North Korea completed a sultanistic, family-centered, and monarchical system, removing conflicts that could occur between powerful men in the state.<sup>280</sup> In this way, the systemic dictatorship has become stable in North Korea.

Basically, the North Korean level of authoritarianism has had no changes from the worst *freedom rating*: one. North Korea has had a lack of political rights and has maintained a hereditary system. In 1994, Kim Jong-il inherited power from Kim Il-sung, and Kim Jong-un also succeeded his father in 2011. No electoral procedure exists to select a successor to the supreme position in the state. The Supreme People's Assembly legislators also have no process to become a member of parliament.<sup>281</sup> The KWP selects all the members, based on who has a sense of loyalty to the KWP.<sup>282</sup> An example of this includes the 2015 election, which recorded 99.97 percent turnout and all candidates

---

<sup>276</sup> Kihl-jae Ryoo, "Purges in the 1960s and the Rise of Sultanism in North Korea," *Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 1 (March 2004): 110. <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE01193972>.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Charles Armstrong, "One-Family Rule: North Korea's Hereditary Authoritarianism," *World Politics Review*, February 18, 2014, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13573/one-family-rule-north-korea-s-hereditary-authoritarianism>.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.; Andrew Marble, "Political Change in the DPRK," *Asia Policy*, no. 12 (July 2011): 133. [http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia\\_policy/Free/AP12\\_F\\_NKoreaQA.pdf](http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/Free/AP12_F_NKoreaQA.pdf).

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>281</sup> "North Korea | Country Report | Freedom in the World | 2016," Freedom House, accessed October 28, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/north-korea>.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

selected by the party.<sup>283</sup> Of course, political pluralism does not exist. In 2015 year, approximately 80,000 to 120,000 prisoners suffered in detention camps.<sup>284</sup>

Civil liberties also cannot be guaranteed. Fundamentally, the North Korean government restricts the flow of information. No private media are run; all publications are censored strictly; only a few officials and scholars use the Internet.<sup>285</sup> The regime fabricates a public environment for its “party speeches,” “propaganda banners,” and “communist-inspired culture.”<sup>286</sup> The freedom of religion does not exist, even though the constitution guarantees it.<sup>287</sup> In addition, academic freedom also does not exist. All curriculums must pass an inspection by the state.<sup>288</sup> North Korea has no independent judiciary. The absence of rule of law becomes an environment in which the state arbitrarily wields absolute power without hesitation.<sup>289</sup> North Korea is a communist country that ostensibly pursues equality, in the form of a social strata called *songbun*.<sup>290</sup> But North Korean citizens do not have freedom of movement, so deportation is common in North Korea.<sup>291</sup> In this way, North Korean civil liberties are virtually nonexistent.

## **2. Variation of U.S.–North Korea Relations**

The variation of U.S.–North Korea relations is composed of political, economic, and military ties. Political ties are reflected in the average between existence of an ambassador and the number of national summit visits. Economic ties contain the sum of trade volume, and military ties include the amount of military assistance provided by United States. To supply the gap of the proxy scale, this paper combines the qualitative analysis.

---

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ralph C. Hassig and Kongdan Oh, *The Hidden People of North Korea: Everyday Life in the Hermit Kingdom* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 133.

<sup>287</sup> Freedom House, *North Korea / Country Report / Freedom in the World / 2016*.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

*a. Political Ties*

Generally, the United States and North Korea have had no political ties since 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. First of all, both states do not have an embassy and ambassador who can represent the national position to each other. In the U.S. position, the United States has three representatives to work for North Korean affairs: “the U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy,” “the U.S. Special Envoy for North Korean Human Right Issues,” and “the Acting U.S. Special Envoy for the Six-Party Talks.”<sup>292</sup> North Korea also does not operate an embassy or have an ambassador in the United States. Instead, North Korea’s ambassador to the United Nation represents its diplomatic opinion indirectly.<sup>293</sup>

Both the United States and North Korea have almost never had summit visits except for U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Korbelt Albright’s visit to North Korea in 2000. Because of Secretary Albright’s visit, U.S.–North Korea political ties temporarily rose from one to two.<sup>294</sup> When Secretary Albright visited North Korea, she discussed with Kim Jong-il the missile program in North Korea, transparent nuclear facilities, normalization between the states, and an examination of the possibility of a presidential trip to Pyongyang.<sup>295</sup> Notable achievements existed that when Secretary Albright attended the 55th anniversary of the communist party, she interpreted Kim Jong-il’s intention that he desired to resolve the missile problems.<sup>296</sup>

In this way, U.S.–North Korea political ties created an expectation to solve the missile problems. However, the cancellation of the visit by President Clinton to North Korea dampened the relationship for both states. Nevertheless, Secretary Albright made

---

<sup>292</sup> “North Korea,” U.S. Department of State, accessed October 28, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> The score would be calculated by the average of existence of an ambassador and the number of summit visits. First, the existence of an ambassador would score seven, and the non-existence of an ambassador would score one. Because the United States has never had an ambassador in North Korea, the scores are one. In 2000, for the first and last time, the U.S. summit visited North Korea. The visit would gain a score of three. In sum, the average score is two.  $[(\text{nonexistence ambassador score one} + \text{one visit number score three}) / 2] = 2$

<sup>295</sup> “Albright Visits North Korea; Progress made on Missile Front,” Arms Control Association, accessed October 28, 2016, [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000\\_11/albrighttalks](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_11/albrighttalks).

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

an effort to accomplish a summit conference between President Clinton and Kim Jong-il in the days after the next President Bush was elected. However, the domestic environment for the next President imposed restraint on President Clinton.<sup>297</sup> In the end, President Clinton cancelled his visit 35 days before the visit was scheduled to occur.

***b. Economic Ties***

The U.S.–North Korea economic ties are almost zero since the Korean War based on the sum of trade volume between the United States and North Korea. From 1975 to 2015, the amount of trade recorded has been almost non-existent. Right after the Korean War occurred in 1950, the United States imposed an economic embargo.<sup>298</sup> As time went on, some embargoes were lifted, but other problems such as nuclear proliferation and missile development, human rights records, and cyber attacks created a different type of sanctions. As a result, their economic ties have been strained. The United States minimized its trade amount and limited it to essential goods like “food,” “medicine,” and “other humanitarian-related goods.”<sup>299</sup> Also, U.S. foreign aid and assets of suspicious individuals are in the control of the United States.<sup>300</sup>

In 2008, President Bush declared a national emergency based on the risk of fissile material proliferation by North Korea.<sup>301</sup> Then, the United States has managed “North Korea Sanctions Program” since the Trading with the Enemy Act ended in 2008.<sup>302</sup> Even though the United States lifted its terrorism designation of North Korea, the Department of Commerce and the Department of Treasury maintain North Korea with a dangerous

---

<sup>297</sup> Jane Perlez, “Clinton Trip to North Korea is Mired in Transition Politics,” *New York Times*, December 20, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/20/world/clinton-trip-to-north-korea-is-mired-in-transition-politics.html>.

<sup>298</sup> U.S. Department of State, *North Korea*.

<sup>299</sup> Rennack, *North Korea: Legislative Basis for U.S. Economic Sanctions* (CRS Report No. R41438), 4.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> “North Korea Sanctions Program,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, accessed October 28, 2016, 3, <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/nkorea.pdf>.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 3; “U.S. and EU Sanctions Against North Korea,” INVESTOPEDIA, accessed October 28, 2016, <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/021815/us-and-eu-sanctions-against-north-korea.asp>.



status.<sup>303</sup> For example, the Department of Commerce classifies North Korea as a “Country Group D,” which is the second most constrained country group for commerce.<sup>304</sup> If some businesses try to trade with North Korea, they must obtain a license that is issued from the Office of Foreign Assets Control.<sup>305</sup> Dianne E. Rennack, a specialist on North Korea, describes the limitation of the commerce with North Korea as follows:

The Office of Foreign Assets Control, within the Department of the Treasury, must approve any U.S. importation from North Korea, and weighs all requests in the context of proliferation, money laundering, counterfeiting, bulk cash smuggling, narcotics trafficking, or other illicit economic activity, and who in North Korea might profit. Any transfer involving the government of North Korea, any senior DPRK government official, or a DPRK person or entity designated as a Specially Designated National pursuant to any of the series of executive orders relating to North Korea, to a person under U.S. jurisdiction is prohibited.<sup>306</sup>

In this way, the United States restrains trade and commerce with North Korea because of North Korea’s various inappropriate behaviors. The economic sanctions take on the character of punishment, and the U.S. foreign policy tried to correct North Korea’s actions. So far, the North Korean elite have not considered any advice from international communities and are focused on the development of a weapon system, ignoring the people’s hardships. Naturally, economic ties between the states have drawn parallel lines and have deteriorated even more. Without North Korea changing its position, it seems that restoration of economic ties between the U.S. and North Korea would be difficult.

*c. Military Ties*

U.S.–North Korea military ties reflect the amount of U.S. military assistance provided to North Korea. Their military ties have been almost zero from 1975 to 2014. After the Korean War, the Truman administration imposed the Trading with the Enemy Act on North Korea, and it made commerce and arms sales with North Korea illegal. The

---

<sup>303</sup> Rennack, *North Korea: Legislative Basis for U.S. Economic Sanctions* (CRS Report No. R41438), 5.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Act remained in effect until June 27, 2008, when the Bush administration removed North Korea from the list of countries affected by the Act. Yet, shortly before lifting application of the Trading with the Enemy Act, President Bush issued executive order number 13466 on June 26, 2008, which caused the “North Korea Sanctions program.” This executive order declared a national emergency to block nuclear fissile material in the Korean Peninsula.<sup>307</sup>

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institution Arms Transfers Database, the United States sold 87 light helicopters, Hughes-500D/MD, in 1983.<sup>308</sup> Even though illegal arms trade occurred in 1983, this did not mean normal military ties between the two states. In this way, U.S.–North Korea military ties have no meaningful relation since the Korean War.

In this manner, the North Korean case has no changes in either the level of authoritarianism or U.S.–North Korea relations. Since the purpose of this research is examining the correlation among their variations, one of indices should have changes. For these reasons, this case just shows the status. Yet, the North Korea case suggests that beyond deep U.S. opposition to North Korean nuclear and missile development, sustained authoritarianism in North Korea may also be functioning as a significant inhibitor of the relations between the United States and North Korea.

### **C. RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE**

Through the thesis, the paper has scrutinized the correlation between authoritarianism and U.S. foreign policy to Myanmar, Vietnam, and North Korea. Overall, the cases suggest that diverse variables contribute to U.S. foreign policy, rather than having regularity and consistency depending on just one factor: the level of authoritarianism.

In the case of Myanmar regime transition, U.S. foreign policy followed the variation of authoritarianism and reacted with responsive attitudes. However, the extent

---

<sup>307</sup> Office of Foreign Assets Control, *North Korea Sanctions Program*, 3.

<sup>308</sup> “SIPRI Arms Transfers Database,” SIPRI, accessed October 29, 2016, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

of changes in U.S. foreign policy to Myanmar was not large compared to the Vietnamese case. On the contrary, in the Vietnamese case, the United States has improved its overall relations to one of the highest levels in the Southeast Asia region even though the Vietnamese authoritarianism did not fall as much as in Myanmar. These two conflicting cases suggest that even though the United States considers the softening of authoritarianism and promoting democracy as major interests, there might be other factors that enable the United States to positively engage beyond the softening of authoritarianism.

One of the findings in this research, especially in the Vietnam case, is that the U.S.–Vietnam political ties have driven the overall economic and military ties, including the softening of authoritarianism. In this context, if the cause and background of the increasing political ties were analyzed more minutely, the researchers could find more rational leverages that enhanced the U.S.–Vietnam relationship. This research hypothetically implies that if their strategic shared interests become high, the relations of U.S.–authoritarian states could improve regardless of the change or lack of change in authoritarianism. Yet, in this situation, the United States would not forget to push the opposite state to reduce the extent of authoritarianism as a condition.

#### **D. LIMITS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research shows the extent to which U.S. foreign policy considers the level of authoritarianism within a nation as a factor and the degree to which they are correlated. To test this relation, the research used a modified version of the *freedom rating* that represents the level of authoritarianism and a proxy scale that could reflect the U.S. political, economic, and military foreign policy to an authoritarian state. The shortcomings of the limited proxy scale used here can be improved in by future research. If the proxy scale contains more factors in the index, a more definitive outcome may be forthcoming.

To improve strategic interest research, developing ways that enable researchers to compare the extent of shared strategic interests would be promising. Such measurements would enable researchers to exhibit and compare the influence of strategic interest

relative to authoritarianism. Also, such comparison facilitates analyzing the extent of leverage between authoritarianism and strategic interests and provides the criterion to assess how much states have a shared interest and its effect on U.S. foreign policy beyond the consideration of an authoritarian regime.

## APPENDIX A. MYANMARESE DATA<sup>309</sup>

	Political ties			Economic ties		Military ties	
	VN	NDR	7S	FDI (million \$)	7S	MA (million \$)	7S
1975	0	O	4	3.31	1.00	0	1.00
1976	0	O	4	0	1.00	0	1.00
1977	0	O	4	0.06	1.00	0	1.00
1978	0	O	4	0	1.00	0	1.00
1979	0	O	4	0	1.00	0	1.00
1980	0	O	4	0.38	1.00	0.07	1.02
1981	0	O	4	0	1.00	0.07	1.02
1982	0	O	4	0	1.00	0.31	1.08
1983	0	O	4	-0.42	1.00	0.34	1.08
1984	0	O	4	0.78	1.00	0.22	1.06
1985	0	O	4	0	1.00	0.42	1.10
1986	0	O	4	0.14	1.00	0.48	1.12
1987	0	O	4	-1.54	1.00	0.54	1.13
1988	0	O	4	0	1.00	0.45	1.11
1989	0	O	4	56.00	1.05	0	1.00
1990	0	X	1	225.10	1.20	0	1.00
1991	0	X	1	235.10	1.21	0	1.00
1992	0	X	1	149.00	1.13	0	1.00
1993	0	X	1	91.70	1.08	0	1.00
1994	0	X	1	135.20	1.12	0	1.00
1995	0	X	1	317.60	1.29	0	1.00
1996	0	X	1	580.70	1.52	0	1.00
1997	0	X	1	878.80	1.79	0	1.00
1998	0	X	1	683.60	1.61	0	1.00
1999	0	X	1	304.00	1.27	0	1.00
2000	0	X	1	91.11	1.08	0	1.00
2001	0	X	1	15.29	1.01	0	1.00
2002	0	X	1	17.70	1.02	0.06	1.02
2003	0	X	1	1855.15	2.67	0.07	1.02
2004	0	X	1	729.93	1.66	0	1.00
2005	0	X	1	110.35	1.10	4.54	2.11
2006	0	X	1	724.24	1.65	0.20	1.05
2007	0	X	1	2.19	1.00	0	1.00
2008	0	X	1	603.42	1.54	0	1.00
2009	0	X	1	27.15	1.02	0	1.00
2010	0	X	1	6669.40	7.00	0	1.00
2011	1	X	2	1117.68	2.01	0	1.00
2012	2	O	6	496.87	1.45	0	1.00
2013	0	O	4	584.29	1.53	0	1.00
2014	2	O	6	946.22	1.85	0	1.00
2015	0	O	4	-	-	-	-
2016	2	O	6	-	-	-	-

Note: VN: Visit Number; NDR: Normal Diplomatic Relations; 7S: 7-point Scale; FDI: Foreign Direct Investment; MA: Military Assistance

<sup>309</sup> “Freedom in the World,” Office of the Historian, *Burma - Travels of the President*; Office of the Historian, *Burma - Travels of the Secretary of State*; UNCTADstat, *UNCTADstat - Table View - Foreign Direct Investment: Inward and Outward Flows and Stock, Annual, 1980–2014*; Office of the Historian, *Burma - Visits by Foreign Heads of States*; USAID, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants (GREENBOOK)*.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## APPENDIX B. VIETNAMESE DATA<sup>310</sup>

	Political ties			Economic ties		Military ties	
	VN	NDR	7S	TV (million\$)	7S	MA (million\$)	7S
1975	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1976	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1977	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1978	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1979	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1980	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1981	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1982	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1983	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1984	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1985	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1986	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1987	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1988	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1989	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1990	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1991	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1.00
1992	0	X	1	4.60	1.00	0	1.00
1993	0	X	1	7.00	1.00	0	1.00
1994	0	X	1	223.40	1.04	0	1.00
1995	1	X	2	451.30	1.07	0	1.00
1996	0	X	1	948.40	1.16	0	1.00
1997	1	O	5	675.10	1.11	0	1.00
1998	0	O	4	828.00	1.14	0	1.00
1999	1	O	5	899.90	1.15	0	1.00
2000	2	O	6	1188.80	1.20	0	1.00
2001	1	O	5	1513.60	1.25	0	1.00
2002	0	O	4	2974.80	1.49	0	1.00
2003	0	O	4	5878.60	1.97	0	1.00
2004	0	O	4	6380.80	2.05	0	1.00
2005	1	O	5	7824.40	2.29	0	1.00
2006	2	O	6	9667.00	2.59	0.13	1.03
2007	1	O	5	12535.90	3.07	0.30	1.07
2008	1	O	5	15690.50	3.59	0.52	1.13
2009	0	O	4	15385.00	3.54	1.58	1.39
2010	3	O	7	18573.40	4.07	2.77	1.68
2011	1	O	5	21803.00	4.60	3.63	1.89
2012	1	O	5	24890.60	5.11	3.55	1.87
2013	2	O	6	29687.80	5.90	11.17	3.73
2014	0	O	4	36348.50	7.00	24.55	7.00
2015	1	O	5	-	-	-	-
2016	2	O	6	-	-	-	-

Note: VN: Visit Number; NDR: Normal Diplomatic Relations; 7S: 7-point Scale; TV: Trade Volume Investment; MA: Military Assistance

<sup>310</sup> “Freedom in the World” Office of the Historian, *Vietnam - Travels of the President - Travels*; Office of the Historian, *Vietnam - Visits by Foreign Leaders*; U.S. Census Bureau Foreign Trade, *Trade in Goods with Vietnam*.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



## APPENDIX C. NORTH KOREAN DATA<sup>311</sup>

	Political ties			Economic ties		Military ties	
	VN	NDR	7S	TV(\$)	7S	MA(\$)	7S
1975	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1976	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1977	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1978	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1979	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1980	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1981	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1982	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1983	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1984	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1985	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1986	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1987	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1988	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1989	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1990	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1991	0	X	1	-	-	0	1
1992	0	X	1	0.1	1.00	0	1
1993	0	X	1	2	1.00	0	1
1994	0	X	1	0.2	1.00	0	1
1995	0	X	1	11.6	1.01	0	1
1996	0	X	1	0.5	1.00	0	1
1997	0	X	1	2.5	1.00	0	1
1998	0	X	1	4.4	1.00	0	1
1999	0	X	1	11.3	1.01	0	1
2000	1	X	2	2.8	1.00	0	1
2001	0	X	1	0.5	1.00	0	1
2002	0	X	1	25.2	1.04	0	1
2003	0	X	1	8	1.001	6,000	1
2004	0	X	1	25.3	1.04	0	1
2005	0	X	1	5.8	1.00	0	1
2006	0	X	1	0	1.00	0	1
2007	0	X	1	1.7	1.00	0	1
2008	0	X	1	52.2	1.08	0	1
2009	0	X	1	0.9	1.00	0	1
2010	0	X	1	2.9	1.00	0	1
2011	0	X	1	9.4	1.01	0	1
2012	0	X	1	12	1.01	0	1
2013	0	X	1	6.6	1.01	0	1
2014	0	X	1	24	1.03	0	1
2015	0	X	1	4.8	1.00	-	-
2016	0	X	1	-	-	-	-

Note: VN: Visit Number; NDR: Normal Diplomatic Relations; 7S: 7-point Scale; FDI: Foreign Direct Investment; MA: Military Assistance

<sup>311</sup> USAID, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants (GREENBOOK)*; U.S. Census Bureau Foreign Trade, *Trade in Goods with North Korea*; “Freedom in the World,” Office of the Historian, *Korea, North - Travels of the Secretary of State*.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Ahn, Taehyung. "Patience or Lethargy?: U.S. Policy Toward North Korea Under the Obama Administration." *North Korean Review* 8, no. 1 (2012): 67–83. doi://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.3172/NKR.8.1.67.
- Armstrong, Charles. "One-Family Rule: North Korea's Hereditary Authoritarianism." *World Politics Review* (February 18, 2014). <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13573/one-family-rule-north-korea-s-hereditary-authoritarianism>.
- Aung Myoe, Maung. *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw: Myanmar's China Policy since 1948*. Singapore : Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011. <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=https://muse.jhu.edu/books/9789814345187>.
- Ba, Alice. "Systemic Neglect? A Reconsideration of U.S.-Southeast Asia Policy." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, no. 3 (2009): 369–398. doi:10.1355/cs31-3a. [http://www.academia.edu/6594496/Systemic\\_Neglect\\_A\\_Reconsideration\\_of\\_US\\_Southeast\\_Asia\\_Policy](http://www.academia.edu/6594496/Systemic_Neglect_A_Reconsideration_of_US_Southeast_Asia_Policy).
- Bajpai, Prableen. "U.S. and EU Sanctions Against North Korea." INVESTOPEDIA. Accessed October 28, 2016. <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/021815/us-and-eu-sanctions-against-north-korea.asp>.
- Blanc, Marie-Eve. "An Emerging Civil Society?: Local Associations Working on HIV/AIDS." In *Rethinking Vietnam*, edited by Duncan McCargo, 153–164. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Brancati, Dawn. "Democratic Authoritarianism: Origins and Effects." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17, no. 1 (2014): 313–326. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-052013-115248. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052013-115248>.
- Brown, Frederick Z. "Rapprochement between Vietnam and the United States." *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 32, no. 3 (December 2010): 317–342. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/412801>.
- Brownlee, Jason. "Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies." *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (2007): 595–628. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40060174>.
- Burke, Jason, and Sara Olsen. "Hillary Clinton Begins Burma Visit." *Guardian*. Accessed October 14, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/30/hillary-clinton-burma-visit-reform-hopes>.
- Cha, Victor D., and David C. Kang. *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

- Chanlett-Avery, Emma, Ian E. Rinehart, and Mary Beth D. Nikitin. *North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation* (CRS Report No. R41259). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R41259.pdf>.
- Clarke, Gerard. "The Social Challenges of Reform: Restructuring State-Owned Enterprises in Vietnam." In *Rethinking Vietnam*, edited by Duncan McCargo, 91–109. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Dzung, Le. "Vietnamese Defense Minister's Visit to the United States." Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States. Accessed August 21, 2016. <http://vietnamembassy-usa.org/relations/vietnamese-defense-ministers-visit-united-states>.
- Erlanger, Steven. "Albright Lays Cornerstone for Diplomacy with Vietnam." *New York Times*, June 29, 1997. <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/06/29/world/albright-lays-cornerstone-for-diplomacy-with-vietnam.html>.
- Fact Sheet. "U.S. Relations with Burma." U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 13, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35910.htm>.
- Freedom House. "Freedom in the World." Freedom House. Accessed May 13, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016>.
- . "North Korea | Country Report | Freedom in the World | 2016." Freedom House. Accessed October 28, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/north-korea>.
- . "Vietnam | Country Report | Freedom in the World | 2001." Freedom House. Accessed October 1, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2001/vietnam>.
- . "Vietnam | Country Report | Freedom in the World | 2006." Freedom House. Accessed October 1, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2006/vietnam>.
- . "Vietnam | Country Report | Freedom in the World | 2016." Freedom House. Accessed October 1, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/vietnam>.
- Gady, Franz-Stefan. "1st U.S. Warships Port at Cam Ranh Bay since End of Vietnam War." *Diplomat*. Accessed October 7, 2016. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/10/1st-us-warships-port-at-cam-ranh-bay-since-end-of-vietnam-war/>.
- globalEDGE. "Vietnam: Trade Statistics." Michigan State University. Accessed August 23, 2016. <http://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/vietnam/tradestats>.

- Guilloux, Alain. "Myanmar: Analyzing Problems of Transition and Intervention." *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 383–401. doi:10.1080/13569775.2010.523938. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2010.523938>.
- Haacke, Jürgen. "Myanmar: Now a Site for Sino-US Geopolitical Competition?" *The London School of Economics and Political Science* 2016, no. 13 (2012): 53–60. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/publications/reports/pdf/sr015/sr015-seasia-haacke-.pdf>.
- Hadar, Leon T. "Burma: U.S. Foreign Policy as Morality Play." *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 411. <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=4437258&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Harold, Scott Warren. *Why Has Obama Lifted the Arms Sales Ban on Vietnam?*. The RAND Blog. RAND Corporation, 2016. <http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/05/why-has-obama-lifted-the-arms-sales-ban-on-vietnam.html>.
- Harris, Gardiner. "Vietnam Arms Embargo to be Fully Lifted, Obama Says in Hanoi." *New York Times*, May 23, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/24/world/asia/vietnam-us-arms-embargo-obama.html>.
- Hassig, Ralph C., and Kongdan Oh. *The Hidden People of North Korea: Everyday Life in the Hermit Kingdom*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.
- Hierbert, Murray, Gregory B. Poling, and Phuong Nguyen. *A New Era in U.S.-Vietnam Relations*. New York: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2014. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-era-us-vietnam-relations>.
- Hlaing, Kyaw Yin. "Understanding Recent Political Changes in Myanmar." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 34, no. 2 (2012): 197–216.
- ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. "Timeline: U.S.-Vietnam Relations." *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 32, no. 3 (December 2010): 350–353. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/412803>.
- Jackson, Karl D. "Myanmar Awakening and U.S. National Interests." *Testimony Prepared for the Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations* (April 26, 2012): 1–8. <http://web.jhu.edu/administration/gca/government/federal/PDFs/MyanmartestimonyApril2012.pdf>.
- Jang, Jun Young. "Changes and Challenges of Myanmar-China Relations: Balance of Power and Strategic Hedging." *Southeast Asian Research* 24, no. 3 (2014): 85–120. [http://210.101.116.28/W\\_files/kiss6/32600622\\_pv.pdf](http://210.101.116.28/W_files/kiss6/32600622_pv.pdf).

- Jordan, William, Lewis M. Stern, and Walter Lohman. "U.S.-Vietnam Defense Relations: Investing in Strategic Alignment." *The Heritage Foundation* (July 18, 2012). <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/07/us-vietnam-defense-relations-investing-in-strategic-alignment>.
- Kirkpatrick, Jeane. "Dictatorships' Double Standards." *Commentary* 68, no. 5 (November 1979): 34–45. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/199566537/D693646A10D44CE0PQ/8?accountid=12702>.
- Kuok, Lynn. "Promoting Peace in Myanmar: U.S. Interests and Role." *Center for Strategic & International Studies* (May 2014). [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/140428\\_Kuok\\_PeaceMyanmar\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/140428_Kuok_PeaceMyanmar_Web.pdf).
- Leeson, Peter T., and Andrea M. Dean. "The Democratic Domino Theory: An Empirical Investigation." *American Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 3 (July 2009): 533–551. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2009.00385.x. <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=42215123&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Lieberthal, Kenneth, and Wang Jisi. "Addressing U.S.-China Strategic Distrust." *John L. Thornton China Center at Brookings* no. 4 (March 2012). [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0330\\_china\\_lieberthal.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0330_china_lieberthal.pdf).
- Linz, Juan J., and Alfred C. Stepan. "Modern Non-Democratic Regimes." In *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, 38–54. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Little, John William Jr. "Vietnam in U.S. Foreign Policy: An Association for the Strategic Balance in Southeast Asia." Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1991. <http://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/26834>.
- Lohman, Walter. "Guidelines for U.S. Policy in Southeast Asia." The Heritage Foundation. Accessed October 2016. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2007/03/guidelines-for-us-policy-in-southeast-asia>.
- MacAskill, Ewen. "Thein Sein Becomes First Burmese President to Visit U.S. since 1966." *Guardian*. Accessed October 14, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/20/thein-sein-burma-visit-us-obama>.

- Magaloni, Beatriz, and Ruth Kricheli. "Political Order and One-Party Rule." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. 1 (June 2010): 123–143. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.031908.220529. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.031908.220529>.
- Manyin, Mark E. *U.S.-Vietnam Economic and Trade Relations: Issues for the 114th Congress* (CRS Report No. R41550). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41550.pdf>.
- . *U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2010: Current Issues and Implications for U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. R40208). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010. [www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA530565](http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA530565).
- . *U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2014: Current Issues and Implications for U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. R40208). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40208.pdf>.
- . *U.S.-Vietnam Relations: Background and Issues for Congress* (CRS Report No. RL33316). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2008. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33316.pdf>.
- . *The Vietnam-U.S. Normalization Process* (CRS Report No. IB98033). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2005. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IB98033.pdf>.
- Marble, Andrew. "Political Change in the DPRK." *Asia Policy* no. 12 (July 2011): 131–139. [http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia\\_policy/Free/AP12\\_F\\_NKoreaQA.pdf](http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/Free/AP12_F_NKoreaQA.pdf).
- Martin, Michael F. *Burma's Political Prisoners and U.S. Sanctions* (CRS Report No. R42363). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013a. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42363.pdf>.
- . *U.S. Policy Towards Burma: Issues for the 113th Congress* (CRS Report No. R43035). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013b. <https://archive-it.org/collections/1078?q=R43035&show=ArchivedPages&go=Go>.
- McCargo, Duncan. *Rethinking Vietnam*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Nguyen, Phuong. *Revisiting U.S. Military Ties with Myanmar*. cogitASIA CSIS Asia Policy Blog. Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2014. <http://cogitasia.com/revisiting-u-s-military-ties-with-myanmar/>.
- Niksch, Larry A. *Burma-U.S. Relations* (CRS Report No. RL33479). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33479.pdf>.

- Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by President Obama and President Thein Sein of Myanmar After Bilateral Meeting." The White House, 2016. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/20/remarks-president-obama-and-president-thein-sein-myanmar-after-bilateral>.
- Office of Foreign Assets Control. *Burma Sanctions Program*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Treasury. <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/burma.pdf>.
- . "North Korea Sanctions Program." U.S. Department of the Treasury. Accessed October 28, 2016. <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/nkorea.pdf>.
- Office of the Historian. "Burma - Travels of the President." Accessed May 10, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/burma>.
- . "Burma - Travels of the Secretary of State." Accessed May 10, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/burma>.
- . "Burma - Visits by Foreign Heads of State." Accessed May 10, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits>.
- . "Korea, North - Travels of the Secretary of State." Accessed November 17, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/korea-north>.
- . "Vietnam - Travels of the President - Travels." Accessed November 17, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/vietnam>.
- . "Vietnam - Travels of the President - Travels." Accessed November 17, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/vietnam>.
- . "Vietnam - Visits by Foreign Leaders." Accessed November 17, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits/vietnam>.
- Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs. "Vietnam - Visits by Foreign Leaders - Department History - Office of the Historian." U.S. Department of State. Accessed September 5, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits/vietnam>.
- Owen, Norman G. *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005.
- Parameswaran, Prashanth. "U.S. Announces Maritime Security Boost for Southeast Asia." *Diplomat* (September 19, 2015a). <http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/us-announces-boost-to-maritime-security-assistance-to-southeast-asia/>.



- . “U.S., Vietnam Eye Deeper Coast Guard Cooperation.” *Diplomat* (September 30, 2015b). <http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/us-eyes-deeper-coast-guard-cooperation-with-vietnam/>.
- Pennington, Matthew. “Lawmakers Uneasy Over US-Myanmar Military Ties.” Yahoo News. Accessed June 11, 2016. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/lawmakers-uneasy-over-us-myanmar-military-ties-070904322--politics.html?ref=gs>.
- Perlez, Jane. “Clinton Trip to North Korea Is Mired in Transition Politics.” *New York Times*, December 20, 2000. <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/20/world/clinton-trip-to-north-korea-is-mired-in-transition-politics.html>;
- Pritchard, Charles L., Scott A. Snyder, and John H. Tilelli. *U. S. Policy Toward the Korean Peninsula: Independent Task Force Report*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2014.
- Psaki, Jen. “Secretary of State John Kerry’s Travel to Burma, Australia, Solomon Islands, and Hawaii.” U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 14, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/230154.htm>.
- Rennack, Dianne E. *North Korea: Legislative Basis for U.S. Economic Sanctions* (CRS Report No. R41438). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41438.pdf>.
- Richmond, Melvin E. *United States National Interests in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam* 1996. <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA309571>.
- Ryoo, Kihl-jae. “Purges in the 1960s and the Rise of Sultanism in North Korea.” *Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 1 (March 2004): 77–110. <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE01193972>.
- Sanger, David E. “John Kerry and Aung San Suu Kyi: A Milestone Meeting in Myanmar, Tempered by Questions.” *New York Times*, May 22, 2016. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/23/world/asia/john-kerry-myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/23/world/asia/john-kerry-myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi.html?_r=0);
- Schirokauer, Conrad, and Donald N. Clark. *Modern East Asia: A Brief History*. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2016.
- SIPRI. “Trade Registers.” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Accessed May 12, 2016. [http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade\\_register.php](http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php).
- Smith, Benjamin. “Life of the Party: The Origins of Regime Breakdown and Persistence Under Single-Party Rule.” *World Politics* 57, no. 3 (2005): 421–451. <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu/stable/40060108>.

- Somanader, Tanya. "The President Wraps Up Trip in Burma, Heads to Australia." The White House. Accessed October 14, 2016. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/11/15/president-wraps-trip-burma-heads-australia>.
- Song, Sophie. "U.S. to Increase Military Engagement with Myanmar Military with Focus on Humanitarian Issues." *International Business Times*. Accessed June 11, 2016. <http://www.ibtimes.com/us-increase-military-engagement-myanmar-military-focus-humanitarian-issues-1368137>.
- Staff Report. "Myanmar and the U.S.: Stumbling Toward a Critical Relationship." *Defense & Foreign Affairs' Strategic Policy* (January 2013): 8. <http://www.lexisnexis.com.libproxy.nps.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&csi=7824>
- Steinberg, David I. "Burma-Myanmar: The U.S.-Burmese Relationship and Its Vicissitudes." *Center for Global Development* (2006): 209–244. <http://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/archive/doc/shortofthegoal/chap7.pdf>.
- Steinberg, David I. "Burma/Myanmar and the Dilemmas of U.S. Foreign Policy." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 21, no. 2 (August 1999a): 283–311. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798457>.
- . "Myanmar and U.S. Policy: Platitudes, Progress, and Potential Problems." *Georgetown Journal of Asian Affairs* (2014): 115–121. <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/712756>.
- . "Myanmar: Reconciliation - Progress in the Process?" *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2003 (2003): 169–188. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/400083>.
- . "The United States and Myanmar: A 'Boutique Issue'?" *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2010): 175–194. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2346.2010.00874.x. <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2010.00874.x>.
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database." SIPRI. Accessed October 29, 2016. <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.
- Sun, Yun. "Myanmar in U.S.-China Relations." Stimson Center. Accessed October 12, 2016. <http://www.stimson.org/content/myanmar-us-china-relations-0>.
- Tea, Billy. "China and Myanmar Strategic Interests, Strategies and the Road Ahead." *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* 26 (September 2010). [http://www.ipcs.org/pdf\\_file/issue/RP26-Billy-Sino-Myanmar.pdf](http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/RP26-Billy-Sino-Myanmar.pdf).

- Than, Tin Maung Maung. "Myanmar: Preoccupation with Regime Survival, National Unity, and Stability." In *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, edited by Alagappa, Muthiah, 390–416. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Thayer, Carl. "Obama's Visit to Vietnam: A Turning Point?" *Diplomat*. Accessed October 7, 2016. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/05/obamas-visit-to-vietnam-a-turning-point/>.
- . "Vietnam Gradually Warms Up to U.S. Military." *Diplomat* (November 6, 2013). <http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/vietnam-gradually-warms-up-to-us-military/>.
- Trang, Tran Thi Thu. "Vietnam's Ruler Transformation." In *Rethinking Vietnam*, edited by Duncan McCargo, 110–124. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Tuan, Hoang Anh. "Rapprochement between Vietnam and the United States: A Response." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 32, no. 3 (2010): 343–349. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798861>.
- UNCTADstat. "UNCTADstat - Table View - Foreign Direct Investment: Inward and Outward Flows and Stock, Annual, 1980–2014." Accessed May 12, 2016. <http://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableViewer/tableView.aspx>.
- U.S. Agency for International Development. "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2014." USAID. Accessed May 12, 2016. <https://explorer.usaid.gov/reports-greenbook.html>.
- U.S. Census Bureau Foreign Trade. "Trade in Goods with North Korea." Accessed November 17, 2016. <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5790.html>.
- . "Trade in Goods with Vietnam." The United States Census Bureau. Accessed August 23, 2016. <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5520.html#questions>.
- U.S. Department of State. "North Korea." U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 28, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>.
- . "Remarks at the ASEAN-U.S. Ministerial Meeting." U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 2, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/07/145046.htm>.
- . "Remarks on Climate Change and the Environment." U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 2, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/12/218726.htm>.

- . “Remarks to Ho Chi Minh City Business Community and Fulbright Economic Teaching Program Participants.” U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 2, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/12/218721.htm>.
- . “Tour of Ngoc Lam Pagoda and Signing of PEPFAR Agreement.” U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 2, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/07/145038.htm>.
- . “U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership.” U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 2, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218734.htm>.
- U.S. Department of Treasury. “Burma Sanctions - Sanctions Program Ended as of 10/7/2016.” U.S. Department of Treasury. Accessed October 10, 2016. <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/pages/burma.aspx>.
- USAID. “U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants (GREENBOOK).” USAID. Accessed August 23, 2016. <https://explorer.usaid.gov/reports-greenbook.html>.
- Wagner, Alex. “Albright Visits North Korea; Progress Made on Missile Front.” Arms Control Association. Accessed October 28, 2016. [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000\\_11/albrighttalks](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_11/albrighttalks).
- Weiss, Stanley. “Rekindling Military-to-Military Ties between the U.S. and Myanmar.” Huffington Post. Accessed June 11, 2016. <file:///Users/ranglee/Desktop/Thesis/us-relationship/myanmar/Rekindling%20Military-to-Military%20Ties%20Between%20the%20U.S.%20and%20Myanmar.html>.
- The White House. “The President’s Trip to China, Burma and Australia | the White House.” The White House. Accessed October 14, 2016. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy/asia-trip-2014>.
- . “National Security Strategy.” Washington, DC: The White House, 2010. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf).
- The White House Office of the Press Secretary. “Remarks by President Obama at the University of Yangon.” The White House. Accessed October 14, 2016. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/11/19/remarks-president-obama-university-yangon>.

## **INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST**

1. Defense Technical Information Center  
Ft. Belvoir, Virginia
2. Dudley Knox Library  
Naval Postgraduate School  
Monterey, California