

Spring 2025 - Marcellus Policy Analysis

## A Better US China Strategy Requires Realism in Southeast Asia

By Jack Erickson

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

China's rise during the early 21st century constitutes the most significant development in Asia since the end of World War II. Because of China's considerable geographic, demographic, and economic size, it will prove difficult to consider American strategy in any part of Asia without respect to China itself. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze Southeast Asia's importance to the United States in the face of an increasingly assertive and powerful China.

The primary interest of the United States in Southeast Asia is to seek economic returns and ensure access to natural resources essential to both the U.S. economy and national security, and that competition with China in the region should be principally economic. The last several decades have proven the inadequacy of a strategy that overwhelmingly prioritizes the spread of democracy in the region, ceding American influence in the region to China.

This paper makes four principal policy recommendations. The first is for Washington to recalibrate its understanding of the nature of Southeast Asian countries to account for a recent history of repeated democratic failures and a lack of coalition-building. Accordingly, U.S. policy should temper its ideological and strategic expectations as a consequence. The second recommendation is to continue a strategy of freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea so as to frustrate Chinese expansion and capture of natural resources, as well as to build goodwill among littoral Southeast Asian states. The third recommendation is to expand America's

---

**Jack Erickson** holds a bachelor's degree in International Studies from Emory University. His words have appeared in publications such as *The National Interest* and *China Focus*.

The John Quincy Adams Society is a nonpartisan, independent national network of professionals and students focused on U.S. foreign policy, with a centering vision of restraint. The Society does not take specific policy positions and all views, positions, and conclusions expressed in this publication should be understood to be those of the author.

economic footprint through increased investment, especially in emerging sectors and infrastructure. The final recommendation is to prioritize America's access to critical minerals found in the region to ensure a steady and secure flow of resources essential to national security.

## Introduction

Long before it reached the Pacific, the United States was already looking east. Even as a fledgling republic, it struck deals in Siam (Thailand) and jostled for influence in Canton—staking its claim in Asia before it had finished claiming itself. For more than 150 years, the United States shared influence in Asia with European powers and later Imperial Japan. It was not until the mid-twentieth century, following European decolonization and Maoist China's inward focus, that the United States enjoyed near-primacy in the region.

Seventy years later, the seams of this American-led order in Asia are withering. An ascendant China now possesses the capacity to directly challenge—if not entirely displace—American regional primacy. Consequently, policymakers in Washington must reassess America's national interests in the region within this emerging international environment and forge new approaches for attaining them.

Although there has been much discussion surrounding America's China strategy, these analyses tend to focus exclusively on either the U.S.-China relationship itself or U.S. partnerships in East Asia. Missing from these conversations is Southeast Asia, along with how U.S. activities in the region should evolve in response to increasing Chinese power and influence, along with analysis on how Southeast Asia factors into U.S. China strategy.

Understanding American interests in Southeast Asia is important to better adapt to a new Asian order in which U.S. primacy is challenged. These interests are primarily economic in nature. While much ink has been spilled comparing U.S.-China military advantages and defense postures in Asia, relatively fewer attention is given to the potential for the United States to outmaneuver Chinese gains in Southeast Asia's economy. Given the size of America's economy, as well as the importance of American capital and domestic market access, Washington must be cognizant of its strengths while charting a new course

for America's role in Asia. If American policymakers fail to appreciate the economic realm in Southeast Asia as the central ground for competition with China, their overall China strategy will be critically deficient. Integrating U.S. strategy in Southeast Asia with the U.S. China strategy in this way will help develop a more comprehensive and cohesive approach to Asia as a whole.

## America's Interests in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is important to the United States for primarily economic reasons. The region boasts a population of more than 650 million people, making it one of the most populous areas of the world.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Southeast Asia's population is young; roughly half of the region's population is under 30 years old, compared to a share of one-third in Europe.<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> Southeast Asia's young population is also incredibly tech-savvy, with the region possessing one of the largest populations of active internet users.<sup>4</sup>

Southeast Asia's immense working-age population has helped fuel rapid economic growth over the last several decades. For example, the per capita income in Vietnam is 11 times higher now than it was in 2000.<sup>5</sup> In total, the region's GDP is \$3.6 trillion, which is greater than developed Western economies such as the United Kingdom and France.<sup>6</sup> Southeast Asia is expected to become the world's fourth-largest economy by 2030.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the United States is Southeast Asia's primary trading partner, overtaking China as its primary export market in 2024.<sup>8</sup> Bilateral trade between the United States and Southeast Asia is worth approximately \$500 billion, and more than 14 percent of America's trade passes through the South China Sea.<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> The United States is also Southeast Asia's largest contributor of foreign direct investment (FDI), with American businesses investing almost \$500 billion in the region.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, Southeast Asia is a crucial source of natural resources for the United States. For example, the United States imports the vast majority of its rubber from Southeast Asia.<sup>12</sup> Rubber is essential for a plethora of products, such as automobile tires to protective medical gear. Currently, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam are the three largest rubber producers in the world by a wide margin. Rubber

is not the only natural resource found in the region. Many critical minerals are primarily sourced from Southeast Asia. For example, the “Tin Belt,” from which over half of the world’s tin is extracted, stretches across Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.<sup>13</sup> Tin is essential for the electronics industry, particularly as a solder in the production of circuit boards for semiconductors. Other critical minerals in the region include bauxite and nickel, both components of alloys used in industrial infrastructure.<sup>14</sup> Indonesia is the United States’ largest supplier of nickel, without which American manufacturers would be unable to produce stainless steel and lithium-ion batteries.<sup>15</sup>

## **America’s Flawed Approach to Southeast Asia**

The United States’ strategy in Southeast Asia has been far from perfect. Washington’s streak of mishaps in the region not only diminishes direct advantages gained from a presence in the region, but also degrades America’s ability to respond to a growing China. The primary issues over the last several decades include a lack of diplomatic engagement, excessive emphasis on changing the political realities of Southeast Asian countries, and inordinate expectations when it comes to coalition-building to counter China.

### **The Need for Presence in Regional Fora**

The first problem—lack of diplomatic engagement—is easiest to rectify. The President of the United States has often failed to attend the region’s most important multilateral meeting: the biannual ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Summit. President Donald Trump attended just one ASEAN Summit during his first term, only to leave the meeting early.<sup>16</sup> Despite claiming Southeast Asia to be “at the heart of [his] administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy,” former President Joe Biden skipped the meeting for two consecutive years, leaving ASEAN members feeling snubbed.<sup>17 18</sup>

Although it would be unrealistic to expect the president’s schedule to accommodate every ASEAN Summit, presidential administrations should be cognizant of regional perceptions and prioritize attendance when feasible. The presence of the American president at an ASEAN Summit would

improve regional opinion of the United States, especially when the Chinese president neglects such meetings, as has previously been the case.<sup>19</sup>

The United States has also failed to direct attention to developments of high intra-regional importance, putting a damper on Southeast Asian nations’ perception of America’s interest in regional affairs. For example, Washington has been relatively quiet on the civil war in Burma, despite resolution of the conflict being a top priority on ASEAN’s agenda for years.<sup>20</sup> In 2024, a group of U.S. senators sent a letter to the Biden Administration expressing concerns over a lack of strategy in grappling with the war. The complaint noted that, although China has actively “[manipulated] all sides of the conflict to advance its strategic interests,” Washington had “[failed] to meet the moment” in Burma.<sup>21</sup> In order to bolster Southeast Asia’s perception of the United States as a benign and attentive regional power, Washington must remain observant of intra-regional issues and adequately respond to them, ideally in a way that both satisfies Southeast Asian partners and advances American interests.

### **Realigning Priorities**

Another problem with America’s approach to Southeast Asia has been its overemphasis on political reform and human rights. The United States has often failed to acknowledge the limits of reform that can be realistically achieved by Southeast Asian nations, which face a milieu of economic, cultural, and historical realities that are in many ways unsuitable for the American system of liberal democracy. This inclination was made evident as recently as 2022, when the Biden Administration’s Indo-Pacific Strategy white paper emphasized the importance of “strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law and accountable democratic governance,” as well as centering our strategy around “democratic resilience.”<sup>22</sup> Washington’s insistence that Southeast Asian nations attain implausible internal reforms has eroded American influence in the region, allowing China to bolster its own sway.

A recent example occurred in the Philippines during the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte. Relations between the United States and the Philippines have been rocky in recent years, owing to Washington’s distaste for the former president’s crackdown on illegal drugs,

which he initiated in 2016. The brutal war on drugs drew criticism from the United Nations due to purported extrajudicial killings. In response, the U.S. Congress approved sanctions on officials in Duterte's administration in 2019. Months later, Duterte hit back by banning the entry of the two U.S. senators who authored the provision, and also by disbanding the Visiting Forces Agreement, which grants the United States broad judicial authority over its soldiers stationed in the Philippines. Although Duterte later reinstated the agreement, his administration saw a thawing of relations with China as a security and economic partner at the expense of American influence. Under Duterte's tenure, the Philippines sought Chinese infrastructure investment and even considered joint exploration of natural gas deposits in the South China Sea with Beijing.<sup>23</sup>

Given that Duterte's drug war was overwhelmingly popular among Philippine citizens—reaching an approval rating of nearly 80 percent—it is unsurprising that the United States' alienation of the Philippines over its crackdown coincided with a general decline in Filipinos' opinion of the United States (a trend especially prevalent among Duterte's supporters).<sup>24</sup> The U.S. stance towards the Philippines under Duterte is indicative of a tendency among policymakers to risk American influence at the expense of urging internal political reform of Southeast Asian countries. This proclivity was epitomized as far back as 1988, when Singapore expelled an American diplomat after accusing him of urging citizens to challenge the ruling party by running as opposition candidates. A Singaporean government official justified the government's action by declaring that “the Singapore political system and future is a matter for only Singaporeans to decide.”<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately, the United States has repeatedly failed to consider the principle behind this maxim. For example, in the early 1990s, the United States supported the failed United Nations (UN) attempt to transform post-communist Cambodia into a democracy. Despite the United States committing more than \$500 million of the transitional authority's \$3 billion budget, Cambodian strongman Hun Sen was able to ignore the UN-backed election, exterminate his opposition, and rule the country for nearly 30 years.<sup>26</sup>

27

Similar missteps have occurred elsewhere. The

United States championed Burmese politician Aung San Suu Kyi and her pro-democracy government, while ignoring her party's unpopularity among ethnic minority groups.<sup>28</sup> Washington's surprise at the 2021 coup d'état that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi and her party is reflective of its narrow focus on supporting democratic reform while neglecting the political realities of Southeast Asian countries. Unlike the United States, China has often overlooked the nature of Southeast Asian nations' political systems, preferring to negotiate with whichever government happens to be in control of the country.

Indeed, China has proudly labeled itself an adherent to a policy of noninterference since the 1950s, where Beijing declared “abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country” as a foundation of its foreign policy.<sup>29</sup> The states of Southeast Asia are more than willing to return the favor: in a 2022 vote of the United Nations Human Rights Council to open debate on China's human rights violations in Xinjiang, not a single Southeast Asian nation voted in the affirmative.<sup>30</sup> As a consequence of this mutual understanding, China's influence has increased in countries like Burma and Cambodia, while America's has suffered.

## The Failure of Coalition Building

A third critical error the United States has made in its approach to Southeast Asia has been its attempts to build a coalition of countries to counter China. Although it is important for the United States to expand its influence in the region, which often necessarily entails diminishing China's influence, policymakers in Washington often hold unrealistic expectations of how far Southeast Asian governments are willing to push back against China.

As a region caught between two powerful countries, Southeast Asian governments often prefer to balance China with the United States, and vice versa. Referred to as “bamboo diplomacy,” Southeast Asian states shift towards China or the United States depending on which option presents the greater benefit to their country.<sup>31</sup> Vietnam, for instance, adopted a policy of “Three No's” in the late 1990s: no foreign military bases, no alliances, and no aligning with one country to oppose another.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Southeast Asian nations tend to be highly sensitive to encroachments on their sovereignty. For example, despite close



economic ties with China, Vietnamese politics tends to be highly nationalistic when Vietnamese perceive China to be violating their national sovereignty, such as in territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Unfortunately, American policymakers and analysts have often viewed Southeast Asia through a binary framework of being either pro-United States or pro-China, seeking to build a coalition of pro-U.S. states to counter China's influence. Recognizing that the countries of Southeast Asia prefer to balance between the United States and China would help prevent Washington from holding unrealistic expectations of how much leverage they will concede to the United States.

## **Policy Recommendations**

In order to most effectively counter Chinese influence in Southeast Asia, the United States should pursue a strategy that expands its economic presence in the region while diminishing China's where feasible. Three ways to achieve this are through denying China access to energy resources in the South China Sea, encouraging American investment in Southeast Asia, and leveraging the U.S. economy to ensure supply chain diversification of critical minerals.

### **1: Expand FONOPs and Energy Cooperation in the South China Seas**

The first policy is one that the United States has already successfully implemented with the Philippines and Vietnam. By conducting freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the South China Sea, the United States reassures Vietnam and other littoral nations that Chinese hegemony over the sea is not uncontested. Moreover, joint naval exercises with the Philippines and Vietnam convey the image of a reliable security partner to countries in the region, diminishing perceptions of China as the regional hegemon.

Operations such as a recent joint U.S.-Philippine training exercise, in which both militaries practiced seizing an oil and gas platform in the South China Sea, serve to both reassure Southeast Asian nations that the United States can balance Chinese aggression and warn China that encroachments on the territory of a U.S. treaty ally—the Philippines—will not be permitted.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, by contesting China's

unimpeded access to the South China Sea, the United States degrades China's ability to extract energy from the sea's abundant liquified natural gas (LNG) deposits.

Currently, China is heavily reliant on energy imported from the Middle East. Its decades-long expansion and aggression in the South China Sea is reflective of Beijing's desire to wean itself off of Middle Eastern energy through exploiting the LNG resources of the South China Sea, shortening the distance of transportation and reducing its strategic vulnerability of the Malacca Strait chokepoint (through which around 80 percent of its oil imports pass).<sup>34</sup> Washington should facilitate joint exploration operations with countries like the Philippines in order to expand Southeast Asia's control over the energy deposits at the expense of China. The Philippines has already indicated a willingness to begin joint LNG explorations, and has even floated the idea of collaborating with China.<sup>35</sup> The United States can avoid such a scenario either by filling the vacuum itself, or encouraging a capable ally such as Japan to do so as well.

### **2: Enhance Targeted Foreign Direct Investment**

The second strategy Washington should pursue is encouraging FDI in Southeast Asian countries. As a region experiencing rapid economic and population growth, Southeast Asia is searching for foreign investment to boost development.

China has capitalized on this desire, expanding its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) infrastructure project to a number of Southeast Asian countries, as well as through the Asian Development Bank. By investing in local infrastructure, China is actively laying the groundwork for a normalization of Chinese technological standards across the region, simultaneously reaping returns on investment and locking out American firms. For example, by helping build 5G networks in the region, Chinese technology companies such as Huawei are establishing a digital ecosystem that heavily relies on Chinese technology.

It is imperative that the United States bolster its investment in Southeast Asia's infrastructure to avoid losing access to Southeast Asia's dynamic economies.

Southeast Asia requires roughly \$210 billion in annual external infrastructure investment to meet domestic demands.<sup>36</sup> Although China has made significant headway through its BRI program, outpacing the United States, America has the opportunity to exploit areas of weakness commonly found in Chinese investment. Chinese infrastructure investments have raised concerns over risky loans and minimal skill transfer, owing to Chinese firms' inclination to hire Chinese workers instead of relying on local labor.<sup>37</sup> American companies should prioritize local job reaction and transfer of expertise when investing in foreign infrastructure to compete with Chinese firms that remain hesitant to do the same. Washington can encourage such investment through a number of ways, such as by overhauling the Biden Administration's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework to emphasize investment in strategic infrastructure, or by utilizing the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation to incentivize investment from American firms.

Where the United States cannot effectively compete on its own, it can encourage partners such as Japan to fill the void. Japan operates a government agency—the Japan International Cooperation Agency—specifically designed to coordinate investment with the Japanese government's foreign policy objectives.<sup>38</sup>

The United States should also encourage investment in emerging markets to outcompete Chinese companies. For example, Chinese firms are gaining a foothold in the e-commerce sector, which is taking off in countries like Vietnam and Indonesia as more Southeast Asians gain access to the internet.<sup>39</sup> A similar trend is occurring in the increasingly lucrative electric vehicle industry, where the United States currently lacks a strategy to compete with Chinese manufacturers.<sup>40</sup> While Chinese firms increase their market share in Southeast Asia, countries like Singapore have expressed concern about a relative lack of American economic engagement in the region.<sup>41</sup>

### **3: Secure the Flow of Critical Minerals**

The United States must also seek access to Southeast Asia's critical minerals. Due to the importance of critical minerals in sustaining modern technology, having reliable and diverse supply chains of these resources is essential. Southeast Asia is abundant in

critical mineral deposits, making it critical for the United States to source its mineral imports from the region while also impeding China's access to these resources.

The United States should not hesitate to leverage its market to gain access to Southeast Asia's critical minerals when necessary. As a whole, Southeast Asia runs a trade deficit with China worth around \$140 billion.<sup>42</sup> To offset this deficit, which accounts for almost 4 percent of Southeast Asia's total GDP, the region relies on a trade surplus with the United States, which is worth more than \$220 billion.<sup>43 44</sup> By raising the prospect of targeted tariffs on lucrative Southeast Asian exports such as electrical and machinery equipment, Washington can persuade Southeast Asian countries to concede access to mining rights for rare earth minerals deemed essential to U.S. national security. Given the speed with which China has acquired access to large swathes of rare earth deposits in the region, it is imperative that the United States gain a foothold in the region as well.

For example, The United States government considers nickel to be a mineral critical to national security.<sup>45</sup> Indonesia possesses the world's highest concentration of nickel deposits, of which Chinese firms already control roughly 75 percent.<sup>46</sup> Indonesia also sports a trade surplus of nearly \$18 billion with the United States.<sup>47</sup> Washington should not be afraid to limit countries like Indonesia from access to its markets until they grant rights to American firms to critical minerals.

President Trump's tariffs on Indonesia revealed Jakarta's reluctance to make hard adjustments away from the U.S. economy. As a part of his "Liberation Day" tariffs strategy, Donald Trump announced a 32 percent tariff on imports from Indonesia, which spooked important domestic industries, such as textile producers, reliant on the American market. The Indonesian government, which had already sought to bolster the textile sector as a part of its Making Indonesia 4.0 economic strategy.<sup>48</sup> Indonesia's textile producers saw no immediate alternative to the American market, and the Indonesian government quickly approached Washington for trade talks with concessions in hand.<sup>49</sup>

Although the Trump Administration's tariffs demonstrated Southeast Asia's vulnerability to

American tariffs, utilizing them for strategic economic concessions should be of a “carrot-and-stick” nature, incorporating incentives such as American investment in foreign critical minerals extraction and refinement. While China controls the bulk of the world’s refinement capacity, the United States can aid countries like Indonesia in developing their own refinement capabilities. Notably, Indonesia’s own National Industry Development Master Plan calls for the development of a domestic nickel refinement industry, which an injection of American capital can help realize, thus benefiting Indonesia’s economy while shoring up a crucial supply chain for American manufacturers.<sup>50</sup>

Another way the United States can gain access to critical rare earths in Southeast Asia is by evaluating the viability and legality of indirect resource sourcing via such non-state actors. For example, around half of the world’s heavy rare earths come from Burma, especially in the north, which is controlled by ethnic militias at war with the pro-China junta.<sup>51</sup> The United States, which already has frosty relations with the junta, should consider engaging these ethnic militias for access to the heavy rare earths under their control.

Working with these militias would not be unprecedented; the northern Kachin people collaborated with the United States to combat Imperial Japan in World War II. The Kachin Independence Army, which is at war with Burma’s military government and wary of China, has captured multiple rare earth mines from junta-aligned forces.<sup>52</sup> While militias like the Kachin Independence Army export the majority of their rare earths north to China, Beijing has leveraged the ethnic organization’s economic dependence on the Chinese market to force Kachin forces to halt their attacks on the junta.<sup>53</sup> The United States should explore opening supply chains through its treaty ally, Thailand, that enables the United States to source rare earths from non-state actors in Burma that seek to reduce their dependence on China.

## Conclusion

While bilateral relations between the United States and China tend to receive the spotlight of popular and analytical attention, it is important to consider Southeast Asia as a part of a comprehensive and integrated framework from which to approach U.S. China strategy. Over recent decades, American

strategy in Southeast Asia has been defective, and such defects are more pronounced in the face of recent developments in the U.S.-China relationship. By recasting America’s strategy in Southeast Asia in terms of economic competition with China, the United States can more easily free itself from its misconceptions of the reality of Southeast Asia. Instead of prioritizing internal political reform and expecting an exclusively pro-America, anti-China bloc to emerge in Southeast Asia, Washington should emphasize the need for greater economic attention and organization in its approach to the region.

## Endnotes

- 1       Arsjad Rasjid. “The ASEAN region is the world’s economic dark horse. Here’s why.” World Economic Forum, August 22, 2023. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/08/asean-economic-growth/>.
- 2       Tahsin Saadi Sedik. “Passing the Baton.” International Monetary Fund, September, 2018. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2018/09/southeast-asian-youth-on-the-future-overman>.
- 3       Ivana Katsarova. “Young people in the EU: A demographic snapshot.” European Parliamentary Research Service, April 29, 2022. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS\\_ATA\(2022\)729400#:~:text=A%20third%20of%20the%20total,aged%2014%20years%20or%20less](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA(2022)729400#:~:text=A%20third%20of%20the%20total,aged%2014%20years%20or%20less).
- 4       “ASEAN Matters for America/America Matters for ASEAN” 6<sup>th</sup> ed. East-West Center, 2023. <https://www.usasean.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/2023-ASEAN-Matters-for-America.pdf>.
- 5       Anne-Charlotte Paret Onorato. “Southeast Asia’s Economies Can Gain Most by Packaging Ambitious Reforms.” IMF Blog, March 25, 2025. <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2025/03/25/southeast-asias-economies-can-gain-most-by-packaging-ambitious-reforms#:~:text=Southeast%20Asia's%20major%20economies%20have,times%20higher%20than%20in%202000>.
- 6       Shay Wester and Kaewkamol Pitakdumrongkit. “On U.S.-ASEAN Relations & Trade.” Asia Society. <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/us-asean-relations-trade>.
- 7       Allurentis and ASEAN. “Investing in ASEAN.” 2022. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/investment-report-2023.pdf>.
- 8       Shay Wester and Kaewkamol Pitakdumrongkit. “On U.S.-ASEAN Relations & Trade.” Asia Society. <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/us-asean-relations-trade>.
- 9       Ibid.
- 10      “How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?” China Power Team. <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/>.
- 11      Shay Wester and Kaewkamol Pitakdumrongkit. “On U.S.-ASEAN Relations & Trade.” Asia Society. <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/us-asean-relations-trade>.
- 12      “Is Natural Rubber the Next Critical Material to Challenge the U.S. Economy?” HSSEDI, June 24, 2024. <https://www.mitre.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/PR-24-2127-2-Is-Natural-Rubber-the-Next-Critical-Material-to-Challenge-the-US-Economy.pdf>.
- 13      Schwartz et al. “The South East Asian Tin Belt.” *Earth-Science Reviews*, July 1995. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223354060\\_The\\_South\\_East\\_Asian\\_tin\\_belt](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223354060_The_South_East_Asian_tin_belt)
- 14      Han Phoumin. “Southeast Asia’s potential in critical minerals.” *The Strategist*, April 15, 2024. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/southeast-asias-potential-in-critical-minerals/>.
- 15      David Guberman, Samantha Schreiber, and Anna Perry. “Export Restrictions on Minerals and Metals: Indonesia’s Export Ban of Nickel.” Office of Industry and Competitiveness Analysis, February 2024. [https://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/working\\_papers/ermm\\_indonesia\\_export\\_ban\\_of\\_nickel.pdf](https://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/working_papers/ermm_indonesia_export_ban_of_nickel.pdf).
- 16      Gregory B. Poling. “Biden Is Missing Another East Asia Summit. So What?” Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 9, 2024. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/biden-missing-another-east-asia-summit-so-what>.
- 17      Seung Min Kim and Zeke Miller. “Biden pledges US will work with Southeast Asian nations.” *Associated Press*, November 12, 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/biden-asia-indonesia-united-states-china-a9fa80404afe5d16fa9cce953780ab6e>.
- 18      Pimuk Rakkhanam. “Biden misses regional summits for second straight year.” Radio Free Asia, October 10, 2024. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/us-biden-skips-asean-10102024041130.html>.



- 19 Euan Graham. "ASEAN summits overshadowed by absences and a map." *The Strategist*, September 8, 2023. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/asean-summits-overshadowed-by-absences-and-a-map/>.
- 20 Martin Abbugao and Thanaporn Promyamyai. "ASEAN summit seeks progress on Myanmar civil war." *The Jakarta Post*, October 9, 2024. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/world/2024/10/09/asean-summit-seeks-progress-on-myanmar-civil-war.html>.
- 21 Senator Benjamin L. Cardin et al. July 29, 2024. [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/blc\\_letter\\_to\\_secblinkenandadminpowerreburma.pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/blc_letter_to_secblinkenandadminpowerreburma.pdf).
- 22 "Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States." The White House, February 2022. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.
- 23 Derek Grossman. "Duterte's Dalliance with China Is Over." RAND Corporation, November 2, 2021. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2021/11/dutertes-dalliance-with-china-is-over.html>.
- 24 Jacob Poushter and Caldwell Bishop. "People in the Philippines Still Favor U.S. Over China, but Gap Is Narrowing." Pew Research Center, September 21, 2017. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2017/09/21/people-in-the-philippines-still-favor-u-s-over-china-but-gap-is-narrowing/>.
- 25 Ruth Youngblood. "Singapore chagrined at Washington's expulsion of diplomat." United Press International, May 12, 1988. <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1988/05/12/Singapore-chagrined-at-Washingtons-expulsion-of-diplomat/9073579412800/>.
- 26 Richard Fisher. "Averting a Failure of U.N. Peacekeeping in Cambodia." The Heritage Foundation, December 15, 1992. <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/averting-failure-un-peacekeeping-cambodia>.
- 27 Brad Adams. "Cambodia: July 1997: Shock and Aftermath." Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/07/27/cambodia-july-1997-shock-and-aftermath>.
- 28 Lucas Myers. "What Myanmar's 2020 Election Tells Us About U.S.-China Competition." Wilson Center, January 12, 2021. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/what-myanmars-2020-election-tells-us-about-us-china-competition>.
- 29 Jason Li. "Conflict Mediation with Chinese Characteristics: How China Justifies Its Non-Interference Policy." Stimson Center, August 27, 2019. <https://www.stimson.org/2019/conflict-mediation-chinese-characteristics-how-china-justifies-its-non-interference-policy/>.
- 30 "UN Human Rights Council voted against debate on human rights violations in China's Xinjiang region." International Federation for Human Rights, June 10, 2022. <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/china/china-human-rights-council-voted-against-a-debate-on-human-rights>.
- 31 Akhil Ramesh. "Vietnam's bamboo diplomacy has lessons for the Global South." *The Japan Times*, October 2, 2024. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/commentary/2024/10/02/world/vietnam-bamboo-diplomacy/>.
- 32 Sebastian Strangio. "In the Dragon's Shadow: Southeast Asia in the Chinese Century." Yale University Press, 2020. Pg.82
- 33 Aaron-Matthew Lariosa. "U.S. and Philippine Forces Practice Seizing Gas Platform in South China Sea Exercise." *USNI News*, March 4, 2025. <https://news.usni.org/2025/03/04/u-s-and-philippine-forces-practice-seizing-gas-platform-in-south-china-sea-exercise>.
- 34 "How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?" China Power Team. <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/>.
- 35 "Philippines wants to start new energy exploration projects in South China Sea." Reuters, December 17, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-marcos-says-tensions-south-china-sea-have-increased-2023-12-17/>.
- 36 Scot Marciel. "In Southeast Asia, the United States Needs to Up its Economic Game." Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, July 6, 2022.

<https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/southeast-asia-united-states-needs-its-economic-game>.

37 Sam Barr. “West Still Lacks Adequate Response to BRI.” Wilson Center, January 11, 2024. <https://acrosskarman.wilsoncenter.org/article/west-still-lacks-adequate-response-bri>.

38 Siddhartha Kazi. “How Japan Can Power America’s China Strategy.” *The National Interest*, July 27, 2023. <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/tech-land/how-japan-can-power-americas-china-strategy-206670..>

39 Timothy Goh. “Mixed outlook for S’pore’s e-commerce industry amid growing competition, economic uncertainty.” *The Straits Times*, December 9, 2024. <https://www.straitstimes.com/business/companies-markets/mixed-outlook-for-spores-e-commerce-industry-amid-growing-competition-economic-uncertainty>.

40 Xian Hong Say. “China’s EV Boom and Southeast Asia.” The Indo-Pacific Studies Center. <https://www.indo-pacificstudiescenter.org/commentaries/china-ev-boom-southeast-asia-impact>.

41 Joyce Koh. “U.S. Needs More Substantive Asia Economic Plan, Singapore Says.” *Bloomberg*, November 30, 2021. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-30/u-s-needs-more-substantive-asia-economic-plan-singapore-says>.

42 Shay Wester. “Balancing Act: Assessing China’s Growing Economic Influence in ASEAN.” Asia Society, November 8, 2023. <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/balancing-act-assessing-chinas-growing-economic-influence-asean>.

43 Ibid.

44 “Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).” Office of the United States Trade Representative. <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/southeast-asia-pacific/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean>.

45 “2022 Final List of Critical Minerals.” U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior. February 24, 2022. <https://www.federalregister.gov/docume>

<nts/2022/02/24/2022-04027/2022-final-list-of-critical-minerals>.

46 “Chinese firms control around 75% of Indonesian nickel capacity, report finds.” Reuters, February 5, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/chinese-firms-control-around-75-indonesian-nickel-capacity-report-finds-2025-02-05/>.

47 “Indonesia.” Office of the United States Trade Representative. <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/southeast-asia-pacific/indonesia>.

48 “Indonesia Garment Manufacturing Industry Research Report, 2023-2032.” Research and Markets, August, 2023. [https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5867876/indonesia-garment-manufacturing-industry?utm\\_source=GNE&utm\\_medium=PressRelease&utm\\_code=2gzjln&utm\\_campaign=1931186+-+Indonesia+Garment+Manufacturing+Market+Report+2023-2032%3a+Projected+to+Reach+%2418.2+Billion+by+2032+at+a+CA-GR+of+8.6%25&utm\\_exec=jocampi](https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5867876/indonesia-garment-manufacturing-industry?utm_source=GNE&utm_medium=PressRelease&utm_code=2gzjln&utm_campaign=1931186+-+Indonesia+Garment+Manufacturing+Market+Report+2023-2032%3a+Projected+to+Reach+%2418.2+Billion+by+2032+at+a+CA-GR+of+8.6%25&utm_exec=jocampi)

49 Aditya Hadi. “Hit hard by tariffs, textile makers want to ramp up US cotton imports.” *The Jakarta Post*, April 13, 2025. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/business/2025/04/13/hit-hard-by-tariffs-textile-makers-want-to-ramp-up-us-cotton-imports.html>.

50 David Guberman, Samantha Schreiber, and Anna Perry. “Export Restrictions on Minerals and Metals: Indonesia’s Export Ban of Nickel.” Office of Industry and Competitiveness Analysis, February 2024. [https://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/working\\_papers/ermm\\_indonesia\\_export\\_ban\\_of\\_nickel.pdf](https://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/working_papers/ermm_indonesia_export_ban_of_nickel.pdf).

51 K. Warner. “Myanmar REE mining halts, prices soar.” *Metal Tech News*, November 13, 2024. <https://www.metaltechnews.com/story/2024/11/13/tech-metals/myanmar-ree-mining-halts-prices-soar/2032.html>.

52 “Myanmar rebels seize rare-earth mining hubs, threatening supply chains.” *Nikkei Asia*, November 6, 2024. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Myanmar-Crisis/Myanmar-rebels-seize-rare-earth-mining-hubs-threatening-supply-chains>.

53      “China Shuts Border as Kachin Fighters ‘Seize Pangwa’.” *The Irrawaddy*, October 21, 2024. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/china-shuts-border-as-kachin-fighters-seize-pangwa.html>.