

Educating for Peace: The Influence of Study Abroad on Asia–Pacific Leadership, 1975–2025

Kevin Tangonan, University of Maryland Global Campus–Hawaii, United States

The Asian Conference on the Social Science 2026
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This paper investigates how study abroad experiences have shaped the leadership orientations and peace-related policy choices of Asia–Pacific political leaders over the past fifty years (1975–2025). Drawing on a qualitative review of all 162 heads of state across 18 countries in Northeast and Southeast Asia, the study assesses whether foreign post-secondary education correlates with diplomacy-oriented governance by examining interstate conflict behavior, regime type, participation in multilateral organizations, and engagement in bilateral or multilateral agreements such as FTAs, defense treaties, and cooperation frameworks. Case studies of leaders including Junichiro Koizumi, Park Geun-hye, Ma Ying-jeou, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Lee Hsien Loong, and Thaksin Shinawatra illustrate how exposure to democratic norms, transnational networks, and intercultural environments can encourage cosmopolitan identity formation, negotiation, and peaceful conflict resolution. To provide contrast, the study also examines autocratic leaders, some of whom were educated abroad, such as Deng Xiaoping, Pol Pot, Vladimir Putin, Min Aung Hlaing, and Kim Jong Un, showing how entrenched authoritarian orientations can override the moderating effects of foreign exposure. Their governing styles amplify neorealist, unilateral, and nationalist tendencies, as well as political-psychology dynamics like cult-of-personality leadership, resulting in weaker commitments to international norms and greater willingness to employ coercive or conflict-prone behavior. Using comparative case studies and process tracing supported by content analysis of speeches, policy documents, and biographical accounts, the paper clarifies its analytical procedures while acknowledging the difficulty of isolating causal influence amid multifaceted political and social variables. Preliminary findings suggest that although foreign study is not determinative, it is a meaningful and understudied contributor to peace-oriented leadership with implications for regional stability and political behavior research.

Keywords: study abroad, Asia–Pacific leadership, diplomacy, comparative politics, peace studies

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

The year 1975 is an important turning point in the political evolution of the Asia–Pacific region as a whole. The fall of Saigon signaled the end of the Vietnam War and the subsequent onset of the Cambodian genocide reshaped the strategic landscape of Southeast Asia. For the United States, these events appeared to validate the Cold War’s domino theory as communist movements gained ascendancy. For scholars, however, 1975 offers a meaningful starting point: it captures a diverse array of regime types: authoritarian, democratic, and hybrid democracies; and provides a 50-year window in which we can observe long-term transformations in leadership behavior, political institutions, and international relations.

Over these five decades, the global environment has undergone profound structural shifts. The collapse of the Soviet Union, China’s market-oriented reforms, and the post-1990s transition from a bipolar to a unipolar international order expanded the reach of liberal norms and multilateral institutions. Simultaneously, the post-Cold War period has been characterized as the longest era of relative peace in human history, marked by declining interstate warfare and heightened economic interdependence. Yet the stability of this liberal moment has always been contingent. Since the turn of the millennium, the rise of China, renewed great-power competition, and the global resurgence of populist and nationalist leaderships have unsettled assumptions about the inevitability of liberalism and international peace in our time. Many contemporary leaders exhibit insular tendencies, prioritizing domestic legitimacy over international engagement, thereby raising questions about the sources of diplomatic restraint and the pursuit of peace.

This research examines one potential but understudied source of leadership orientation: study abroad experiences. Existing scholarship suggests that foreign education can be a formative process that pushes individuals beyond familiar cultural and organizational contexts (Chang, 2021). The study abroad experience can act as a cognitive “reset,” interrupting inherited habits of perception and enabling individuals to encounter new models of governance, negotiation, and cooperation (Onosu, 2021). While such developmental transformations are widely recognized at the individual level, less is known about how they manifest when former international students become political elites charged with making decisions about war, peace, and the regional order.

Methodology and Significance

This study addresses whether foreign post-secondary education correlates with peace-oriented leadership behavior among Asia–Pacific heads of state and government from 1975 to 2025. Drawing on a qualitative review of 162 leaders across 18 countries in Northeast and Southeast Asia, the analysis evaluates how internationally educated leaders differ from their domestically educated or non-educated counterparts in four key domains: interstate conflict behavior, regime type and governance orientation, participation in multilateral organizations, and engagement in international agreements such as free trade agreements, defense treaties, and other cooperation frameworks. Through comparative case studies including leaders like Junichiro Koizumi, Park Geun-hye, Ma Ying-jeou, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Lee Hsien Loong, and Thaksin Shinawatra, the paper explores how exposure to democratic norms, transnational networks, and intercultural environments can influence diplomatic decision-making and conflict management. To provide an analytical balance, the study also examines mainly domestically educated autocratic leaders, such as Min Aung Hlaing and Vladimir Putin, whose governing styles reflect entrenched authoritarian orientations. These cases highlight how

structural constraints, ideological commitments, and political-psychological dynamics: such as security paranoia, and neorealist strategic thinking can bypass international education's moderating effects.

The significance of this research lies in its attempt to integrate international education, leadership psychology, and Asia-Pacific security studies within a new unified theoretical framework. By combining comparative case studies, process tracing, and content analysis of speeches and policy documents, the study seeks to clarify methodological pathways for evaluating causal influence while acknowledging the challenges of isolating individual-level effects in complex political environments. Essentially, the study contributes a systematic review of leadership behavior over a half-century period, offering insights into how global learning experiences might shape orientations toward peace, diplomacy, and international cooperation. Although study abroad is not deterministic, preliminary findings suggest it is a meaningful and previously underexplored factor in political leadership. Understanding its influence has implications not only for scholarship in political psychology and international relations but also for contemporary debates on regional stability and the cultivation of leaders capable of navigating an increasingly multipolar and turbulent world.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

The author posits that study abroad can serve as a mechanism of political socialization, allowing future leaders to internalize cosmopolitan identities, build transnational networks, and observe alternative governance models firsthand. These developmental experiences may cultivate broader worldviews, greater cultural empathy, and a preference for diplomatic engagement. However, realists argue that such effects are not uniform. Autocratic or highly nationalist leaders may reinterpret foreign exposure through preexisting ideological filters, or may actively resist cosmopolitan influences in favor of regime-preserving behaviors. Therefore, the impact of international education is best evaluated through empirical patterns in leaders' foreign policy decisions, conflict behaviors, and multilateral participation.

As mentioned previously, the scope of this study extends to all 162 heads of state across 18 countries in Northeast and Southeast Asia from 1975 to 2025, encompassing democratic, authoritarian, and hybrid regimes. This design enables a structured comparison of leaders with and without foreign educational backgrounds, while also assessing how regime type conditions the influence of such experiences. The following hypotheses guide the empirical analysis.

H₀: Null Hypothesis

Leaders of liberal democratic nations, including those who have studied abroad, are equally or more likely to initiate or continue wars during their rule.

The null hypothesis follows a realist school of thought, and assumes that foreign education does not have a pacifying effect and may even coincide with assertive foreign policy behavior in some cases. Under this view, systemic factors, national interests, or alliance obligations; not educational experiences; drive conflict decisions. The null also acknowledges that democratic states can and do engage in military operations, particularly when leaders face electoral incentives, security dilemmas, or pressures from domestic constituencies (Skidelsky, 2022).

H₁: Alternative Hypothesis

Leaders of liberal democratic nations, especially those who have studied abroad, are less likely to initiate or continue wars during their rule.

This hypothesis reflects the theoretical expectation that foreign education fosters cosmopolitanism, global norm internalization, and diplomatic problem-solving, which in turn should correlate with lower levels of violent interstate conflict. Leaders influenced by democratic ideals or exposed to international institutions may prefer negotiation, multilateral engagement, and institutionalized dispute resolution over military escalation (Doyle, 1983).

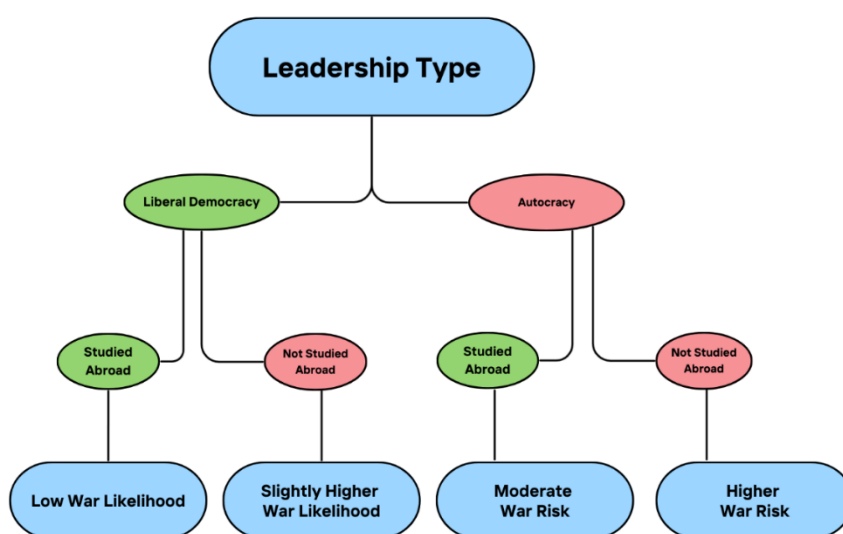
H₂: Corresponding Alternative Hypothesis

Leaders of autocratic nations who did not study abroad are more likely to initiate or continue wars during their rule.

This hypothesis evaluates the contrasting expectation that leaders lacking foreign exposure, and operating within authoritarian political structures are more prone to unilateral, nationalist, or coercive foreign policy behaviors. Autocratic leaders without a foreign education may have more limited worldview perspectives, stronger security paranoia, fewer international networks, and higher incentives to use conflict to consolidate domestic power or enhance legitimacy.

Figure 1

Leadership Type to War Risk Decision Tree Model

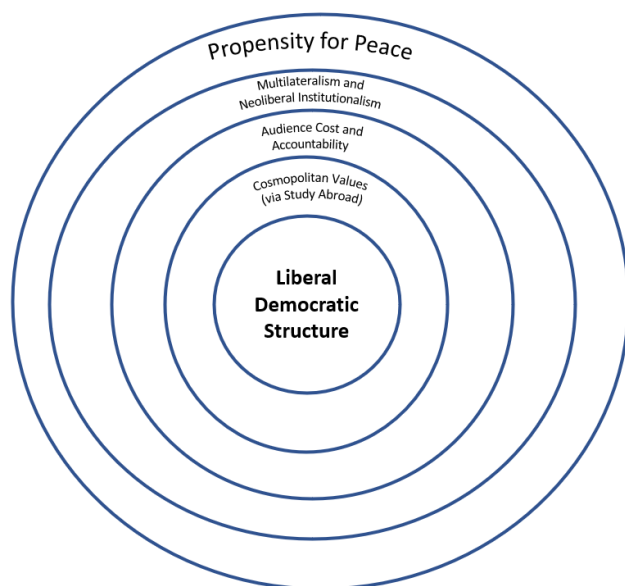


The decision-tree model in Figure 1 (above) outlines four potential leadership pathways based on two key variables: regime type (liberal democracy vs. autocracy) and educational background (studied abroad vs. not studied abroad). These pathways align with the study's alternative hypotheses (H1 and H2). In theoretical terms, leaders from liberal democracies who have studied abroad represent the most peaceful pathway, exhibiting the lowest likelihood of initiating or prolonging interstate conflict during their tenure. Conversely, autocratic leaders without foreign educational experience fall at the opposite end of the spectrum, displaying the highest predicted propensity for conflict escalation or war initiation. The underlying mechanisms influencing these divergent outcomes are examined in greater detail through the

subsequent conceptual models: the Propensity for Peace Onion (PFPO) Model and the Propensity for War Onion (PFWO) Model, each unpacking the layered factors that may encourage diplomatic restraint or contribute to conflict-oriented leadership behavior.

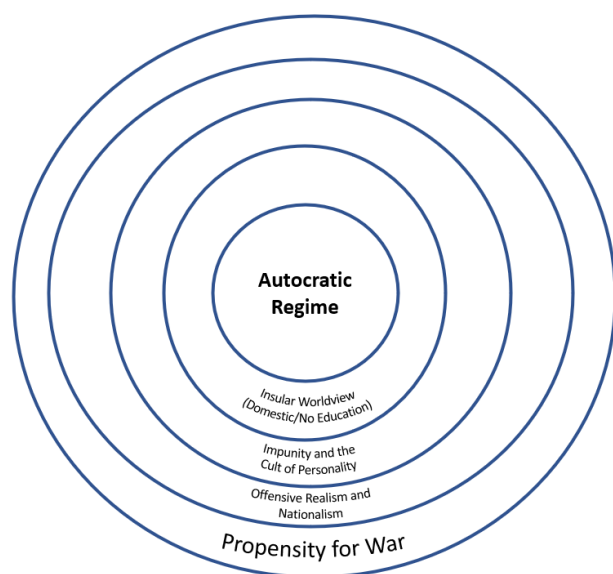
Figure 2

The Propensity for Peace Onion Model



The PFPO Model in Figure 2 (above) conceptualizes peace-oriented leadership as the product of layered influences, beginning with a foundation rooted in liberal democratic institutions. Consistent with Democratic Peace Theory (DPT), liberal democracies tend to be less inclined to initiate interstate conflict due to normative constraints and institutional checks on executive power. At the individual level, leaders of liberal democracies who have studied abroad often develop cosmopolitan values, broader worldviews, and heightened cultural empathy; traits that reinforce diplomatic decision-making and reduce the appeal of coercive strategies. At the domestic level, mechanisms such as audience costs, electoral accountability, and robust checks and balances further discourage unnecessary conflict (Hegre et al., 2020). Leaders must maintain public support, and the political risks associated with initiating war make peaceful settlement strategies more attractive. Hardline posturing may still occur domestically, but democratic constraints limit escalation and incentivize negotiation over aggression (Haass et al., 2022; Mor, 1997). At the international level, democratic leaders especially those with foreign educational backgrounds tend to embrace multilateralism, rely on institutionalized cooperation, and participate actively in intergovernmental organizations in line with neoliberal institutionalist theory. Together, these layers interact to produce a strong propensity for peace, with study abroad serving as a formative influence that enhances leaders' diplomatic orientations within an already peace-supportive structural environment.

Figure 3
The Propensity for War Onion Model



The PFWO Model in Figure 3 (above) conceptualizes conflict-prone leadership as emerging from an autocratic regime structure, which, in contrast to the expectations of DPT, is more permissive of militarized behavior. At the individual level, autocratic leaders who have not studied abroad often possess more insular worldviews, reinforcing parochial nationalism, threat sensitivity, and a narrower understanding of international norms; all of which can heighten the likelihood of conflict. At the domestic level, audience costs are minimal because elections, accountability mechanisms, and public dissent exert little to no constraint on executive decision-making (Fearon, 1994). Autocrats frequently benefit from impunity, personality cults, and information control, enabling them to initiate conflicts with limited fear of domestic backlash. War may even serve as a strategic tool to consolidate internal support by rallying citizens against a perceived external threat. Additionally, the potential material or symbolic gains of conflict: territory, resources, prestige, or legacy can further incentivize aggressive behavior (Hellmeier, 2021). Weak or nonexistent checks and balances remove institutional barriers that might otherwise restrain escalation. At the international level, autocratic leaders often operate according to power-maximizing logics consistent with offensive realism, prioritizing survival in an anarchic system by enhancing military capabilities, pursuing regional dominance, and hindering the growth of potential rivals (Blinova, 2024). Nationalism functions both as a domestic rallying mechanism and as an ideological justification for unilateral action. External condemnation carries little weight in such systems, as regime legitimacy is anchored domestically rather than internationally. Together, these layers interact to create a robust propensity for war, with limited or purely domestic educational backgrounds reinforcing insular perspectives and amplifying conflict-oriented leadership tendencies.

Literature Review

The theoretical foundation for this study's hypotheses draws in part from debates surrounding DPT, a core tenet in liberal IR theory asserting that democracies are less likely to engage in war with one another. The classic formulation stems from Immanuel Kant's Perpetual Peace (1795), which argues that proto-democratic states, due to institutional constraints, transparency, and citizens' aversion to the costs of war, naturally incline toward peaceful relations. Michael Doyle's (1983) influential revival of Kant's thesis further formalized the

“separate peace” among liberal democracies, emphasizing shared norms of compromise, respect for individual rights, and the restraining force of representative institutions. For Doyle, these internal characteristics generate predictable patterns of external behavior, making democracies structurally predisposed toward peaceful dispute resolution: an assumption closely aligned with this study’s alternative hypothesis (H1).

However, recent critiques challenge the universality and causal assumptions embedded in DPT. Poletti (2021) argues that democratic peace is less a product of regime type and more a consequence of strategic alignment, interdependence, and bloc politics. From this perspective, democracies appear peaceful not because of intrinsic values or institutions but because major democracies tend to be embedded in the same geopolitical and economic coalitions. Peace among democracies is thus contingent rather than structural, raising doubts about whether democratic institutions genuinely reduce the probability of conflict. Such critiques complicate the expectation that leaders of liberal democratic states, regardless of educational background, will behave more peacefully. Similarly, Skidelsky (2022) contends that DPT overlooks the historical record of democracies engaging in wars of intervention, coercion, or expansion against non-democracies. He argues that democratic leaders can be as prone to militaristic behavior as their autocratic counterparts when national interests, ideological narratives, or domestic political incentives align. Skidelsky’s critique emphasizes that normative self-perception within democracies may obscure the extent to which they employ force in pursuit of strategic objectives. His findings challenge the assumption that democratic institutions inherently deter war, suggesting instead that contextual factors: identity, leadership psychology, and external threat perceptions play a more decisive role.

Taking everything into account, these critiques temper the optimism of Kant and Doyle by positioning democratic peace as conditional rather than deterministic. This debate directly informs the empirical orientation of this study, which seeks to evaluate whether study abroad experiences, when combined with democratic institutional contexts, strengthen the peace-promoting tendencies posited by liberal theory; or whether, as Poletti and Skidelsky suggest, structural and strategic pressures dilute or override them. The tension between these perspectives underpins the formulation of both the null hypothesis (H0) and alternative hypotheses (H1, H2), grounding the theoretical inquiry in an evolving scholarly landscape.

Limitations and Findings

This study acknowledges several limitations inherent in examining leadership behavior across a 50-year period and multiple regime types. Isolating causal influence is challenging given the complex interplay of political, social, and structural variables that shape foreign policy decisions. While preliminary findings indicate that foreign education is not determinative, it appears to be a meaningful and understudied contributor to peace-oriented leadership, with implications for regional stability and the study of political behavior. The analysis also necessarily generalizes hybrid regimes by grouping hybrid democracies and hybrid autocracies within the broader category of democratic leadership in the next section of the paper, a simplification that may obscure important nuances. The wide temporal scope across five decades presents another constraint, as does the focus on a narrow set of indicators: formal agreements and participation in multilateral organizations to evaluate multilateralism. Additionally, the study defines study abroad strictly as post-secondary education, excluding military training, and examines only Northeast and Southeast Asia, limiting global generalizability.

Despite these constraints, the results offer clear trends: foreign-educated leaders in liberal democracies show a lower propensity to initiate or escalate war, while autocratic leaders without international educational exposure exhibit the highest rates of conflict initiation or prolongment, supporting both the main and supplemental hypotheses.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section II analyzes democratic and hybrid democratic leaders, their study abroad backgrounds, and their corresponding propensity for peace. Section III examines autocratic leaders and the factors contributing to their higher propensity for conflict. Section IV concludes by evaluating how the findings align with the proposed hypotheses, discussing the study's contributions, and identifying avenues for future research.

Democratic Leaders, Study Abroad, and Peace

This section examines six democratic and one hybrid-democratic leader whose study abroad experiences, peaceful foreign policy records, and engagement in multilateral institutions position them as notable cases within the theoretical framework of the PFPO Model. The leaders reviewed here share three characteristics essential to this study's design: (1) they governed in broadly liberal democratic systems, (2) they did not initiate or prolong interstate war during their tenure, and (3) they studied abroad at the post-secondary level while later advancing international agreements and/or joining multilateral organizations. More information can be found on these democratic leaders in Appendix A. Their trajectories provide insight into how exposure to foreign cultures and norms may reinforce institutional incentives for peace.

Japan's Junichiro Koizumi, who studied economics at University College London in the 1960s, frequently recalled his fondness for the UK and how his time abroad shaped his outlook (UCL News, 2004). As prime minister, he emphasized the "deep trust" among Japan, the UK, and the U.S., and advanced Japan's role in multilateral frameworks through major economic agreements and new regional memberships (MOFA Japan, 2001).

South Korea's Park Geun-hye, who briefly studied in Grenoble, France, spoke warmly of her host family and of returning to France decades later as president (Chang, 2013). She promoted cultural diplomacy as a bridge for understanding and maintained balanced ties with China, Japan, and the United States, concluding key trade and security agreements and joining the AIIB, reflecting a cooperative institutionalist approach (Yoon, 2013).

Taiwan's Ma Ying-jeou, educated at NYU and Harvard, credited his U.S. legal studies with shaping his beliefs in constitutional democracy and human rights (NYU Law Magazine, 2008). As president, he rebuilt trust with Washington through a "no surprises" policy and pursued dialogue-based cross-strait engagement, including the 2010 ECFA agreement, emphasizing predictability and peace in the Taiwan Strait (USC U.S.–China Institute, 2017).

Indonesia's Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who earned a master's degree at Webster University, often described the U.S. as his "second country" (NAFSA, 2011). Known as the "Father of Peace" for ending the Aceh conflict, he expanded U.S.–Indonesia cooperation and supported educational exchanges while guiding Indonesia into major multilateral institutions.

The Philippines' Fidel Ramos, a graduate of West Point and the University of Illinois, consistently championed U.S.–Philippine partnership and regional economic interdependence

as foundations for peace (Leaders Magazine, 2013). He urged constructive engagement with China and famously promoted diplomacy— “Talk talk, peace peace. Fight fight, war war”— while integrating the Philippines into eight multilateral organizations (Hua, 2011).

Thailand’s Thaksin Shinawatra, who earned graduate degrees in the U.S. and described Huntsville as his “second hometown,” credited American democratic ideals for shaping his leadership (Graczyk, 2004). As prime minister, he pursued pragmatic diplomacy, promoted fair trade and U.S.–Thai partnership, and concluded three major trade agreements while joining three multilateral organizations, reflecting a cooperative and internationally engaged orientation.

Taken together, these six leaders exhibit a consistent pattern in which foreign educational experiences contributed to broader worldviews, greater sensitivity to international norms, and sustained engagement with multilateral institutions. In alignment with the PFPO Model, international education functioned as a key individual-level layer that complemented domestic and international structures, collectively reducing the likelihood of conflict.

Hybrid Democratic Leader: Singapore

Although Singapore is not a liberal democracy in the classical sense, its political system occupies a hybrid space featuring electoral participation and democratic institutions but constrained by illiberal practices, long-ruling dominant parties, and limitations on civil liberties. Singapore, officially a parliamentary republic, functions in practice as a semi-authoritarian or hybrid regime dominated by the People’s Action Party since 1959. For the purposes of this study, leaders from these systems are included under the democratic section, though treated as a distinct subcategory because they exhibit institutional characteristics short of autocracy and, importantly, demonstrate how study abroad experiences can still align with peace-oriented behavior even in constrained semi-democratic environments. Appendix B provides a full scope of the 24 leaders of North and Southeast Asia from the past 50 years who fall under this hybrid democratic system.

Singapore’s Lee Hsien Loong illustrates how foreign education can reinforce pragmatic, stability-oriented leadership. Educated at Cambridge University and later as a Mason Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School, Lee has described these experiences as formative in shaping his analytical policymaking style and appreciation for diverse perspectives (Harvard Kennedy School, n.d.). He has frequently expressed affection for his alma maters and the intellectual environments that broadened his worldview (Wong, 2016). In foreign policy, Lee consistently advocates multilateralism and a rules-based order, urging sustained U.S. engagement in Asia while warning against U.S.–China confrontation and pressures on smaller states to choose sides (Werner, 2020), reflecting a diplomacy centered on stability, cooperation, and economic openness.

Hybrid democratic leaders reveal that even in illiberal or semi-authoritarian electoral systems, foreign-educated elites may internalize cosmopolitan norms and favor multilateral engagement. Their study abroad experiences reinforce cooperative instincts and diplomatic restraint, contributing to a propensity for peace that parallels trends observed among leaders from fully liberal democratic regimes.

Autocratic Leaders, Study Abroad, and Peace

This section examines four autocratic leaders whose limited or absent study abroad experiences, combined with concentrated political power, weak accountability mechanisms, and inward-looking nationalist governance, make them illustrative cases within the PFWO Model. These leaders share three characteristics central to the study's analytical design: (1) they governed within clearly autocratic or authoritarian political systems, (2) they initiated, escalated, or prolonged interstate conflict during their tenure, and (3) they either lacked foreign post-secondary education entirely or received only partial exposure abroad while ultimately embracing rigidly domestic, strongman-oriented worldviews. As detailed in Appendix C, their political trajectories illuminate how non-exposure to foreign cultures, norms, and institutional environments can reinforce insular perspectives, heighten threat perceptions, and increase the likelihood of coercive or militarized foreign policy behavior. The four leaders selected for this section fit the core criteria of autocratic rule, demonstrated conflict initiation, and minimal international educational influence. Although some pursued limited agreements or entered multilateral organizations, these actions were often instrumental, driven by geopolitical necessity, diplomatic *détente*, or the influence of partner states rather than genuine commitments to institutionalized cooperation ala hollow multilateralism (Flonk & Debre, 2025). Collectively, these cases reveal how authoritarian political structures and the absence of cosmopolitan socialization can contribute to a markedly higher propensity for war, standing in sharp contrast to the patterns observed among democratic leaders in Section II.

War and Foreign Educated Autocrats—China and Cambodia

The cases of Deng Xiaoping and Pol Pot demonstrate that study abroad, while a meaningful factor in many democratic contexts, is insufficient to override the structural, ideological, and personal dynamics that shape autocratic leadership behavior. Both leaders were educated abroad: Deng in France and later in the Soviet Union, and Pol Pot in France; yet each presided over interstate wars, reinforcing DPT's expectation that regime type, rather than foreign exposure alone, remains the dominant determinant of peaceful or conflictual behavior. Their trajectories reveal how authoritarian systems, combined with revolutionary ideological socialization, can transform international study into a radicalizing experience rather than a cosmopolitan one.

Deng Xiaoping's work-study years in France and later university education in the Soviet Union exposed him to Marxism but reinforced revolutionary discipline rather than pacifism. Although he later viewed France as a valuable model for technological modernization and criticized Soviet economic stagnation, his strategic worldview remained shaped by autocratic power politics (Albers, 2013; Zhang, 2016). The Sino-Soviet split, Vietnam's alliance with Moscow, and Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia convinced Deng that Vietnam served Soviet expansionism, justifying the Sino-Vietnamese War as a necessary punitive strike to protect China's regional interests.

Pol Pot's time in France similarly radicalized rather than liberalized him. While formally studying radio electronics, he immersed himself in Marxist circles and French revolutionary thought, embracing the idea that revolution must be total (Totten & Parsons, 2013). Fearing Vietnamese dominance in Indochina, the Khmer Rouge purged Vietnamese-trained cadres and launched cross-border attacks in 1975 and 1977, prompting Vietnam's decisive invasion in 1978 (Path, 2020). Together, these cases show how foreign exposure can intensify ideological

rigidity in autocratic leaders, with war emerging as an extension of revolutionary and nationalist logic rather than a failure of education.

Together, these cases show that autocrats may reinterpret international education through ideological lenses, transforming foreign influence into revolutionary fuel rather than peace-oriented cosmopolitanism. Deng and Pol Pot's foreign study amplified their ideological convictions rather than moderating them, and their authoritarian systems allowed these convictions to escalate into interstate conflict, reinforcing this study's central contention that regime type and autocratic political psychology are stronger predictors of war propensity than educational background alone.

War and Non-foreign Educated Autocrats—Russia and Myanmar

A second category of autocratic leaders in this study consists of those who did not study abroad and whose formative years unfolded entirely within domestic institutions – whether the intelligence services, military hierarchy, or communist revolutionary structures. Vladimir Putin and Min Aung Hlaing exemplify how limited international exposure, combined with authoritarian political systems, can foster insular worldviews, nationalist ideologies, and a propensity for conflict consistent with the PFWO Model. Their educational backgrounds were shaped not by cosmopolitan exchange but by early immersion in state power structures: Putin studied law domestically at Leningrad State University before entering the KGB, later reinforcing his statist worldview through a Soviet security lens; and Min Aung Hlaing's brief university experience in Myanmar ended when he entered the Defense Services Academy, beginning a slow but steady ascent through the military hierarchy (Mohan & Padmanabhan, 2023; Sterken Jr., 2023).

Across these cases, the absence of foreign education meant the absence of moderating influences typically associated with cosmopolitanism, interdependence, or exposure to liberal norms. Instead, each leader embraced nationalist mobilization, power consolidation, and offensive realist calculations as guiding principles of statecraft. Putin's wars from Chechnya to Georgia, Crimea, Syria, and Ukraine reflect a worldview shaped by security-service logic, belief in great-power spheres of influence, and the use of conflict to generate domestic legitimacy. Min Aung Hlaing's leadership of Myanmar's military junta, alongside his continuation of the prolonged civil war – with Bangladesh caught in some of the crossfire, demonstrates how military insularity, impunity, and a cult-of-personality environment enable coercive rule unconstrained by audience costs or multilateral norms.

All in all, these leaders illustrate how domestically educated autocrats, unshaped by foreign cultural or academic exposure, tend to internalize narrow national interests, prioritize regime survival, and rely on coercive strategies to manage both domestic dissent and external threats. Their trajectories highlight that in the absence of cosmopolitan socialization, authoritarian institutions and political psychology overwhelmingly drive leaders toward conflict rather than peace.

Autocrats in Relative Peace

A third and final category of autocratic leaders consists of those who, despite operating within authoritarian systems and exhibiting tension-generating behaviors, did not escalate conflicts into full-scale interstate war over the past fifty years. This group includes both foreign-educated leaders such as Kim Jong Un, who studied in Switzerland and non-foreign-educated leaders

from China and North Korea, including Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping, Kim Il-sung, and Kim Jong-Il. While their tenures were marked by missile tests, militarized disputes, and coercive signaling, ranging from inter-Korean clashes to confrontations in the South China Sea, Taiwan Strait, Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and Himalayan border; these crises remained contained. Their behavior aligns with autocratic tendencies toward nationalism, threat inflation, and power consolidation, yet the absence of war suggests the influence of strategic restraint, nuclear deterrence, economic interdependence, or regime-preservation logic.

Alongside them are autocrats who have largely avoided external conflict altogether, whether foreign educated: Chiang Ching-kuo, Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah, Thongloun Sisoulith, Ferdinand Marcos, Nguyen Phu Trong; or the domestically educated, such as Yumjaagiin Tsedenbal, Maung Maung, and Thanin Kraivichien. Their peaceful tenure does not contradict the PFWO Model but highlights a critical nuance: autocrats may refrain from war not because of cosmopolitan values, but because war threatens regime survival, economic stability, or geopolitical balancing strategies. In some cases, foreign education may have modestly tempered aggressive impulses; in others, structural constraints or pragmatic self-interest served as stronger deterrents than any normative commitment to peace.

Ultimately, this category underscores the complexity of autocratic behavior: while autocracies display a higher overall propensity for conflict, not all autocrats pursue war and their restraint often reflects strategic calculation rather than peace-oriented leadership. The broader implications of these patterns are discussed in the Conclusion.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine whether study abroad experiences shape the war–peace behavior of political leaders in Northeast and Southeast Asia between 1975 and 2025. By systematically reviewing 162 heads of state and government across 18 countries, the analysis bridges international relations theory, political psychology, and leadership studies to assess how foreign education interacts with regime type in influencing conflict initiation. The findings offer clear, if carefully bounded, empirical support for both the primary and supplemental hypotheses.

Table 1

Findings From Liberal Democracies—War and Peace

Study Abroad?	War	Peace	Interpretation
Studied abroad	0	46	No foreign-educated democratic leader started or prolonged a war.
Not studied abroad	1	50	Only one non-foreign-educated democratic leader started or prolonged a war.

Among leaders governing liberal democracies, war initiation or prolongment is exceedingly rare, according to findings in Table 1. Of the 97 democratic leaders examined, only one leader (approximately 1%) initiated or prolonged a war during their tenure. Crucially, none of the 46 democratic leaders who studied abroad initiated or prolonged a war, while the sole case of democratic war initiation or prolongment occurred under a leader without foreign educational experience. Although the absolute numbers are small, the pattern is directionally consistent and meaningful: foreign-educated democratic leaders exhibit the lowest propensity for war, lending strong support to Hypothesis 1. These results align with DPT, while also suggesting that study

abroad may reinforce democratic norms, cosmopolitan identity formation, and sensitivity to audience costs that further discourage the use of force.

Table 2

Findings From Autocratic Regimes—War and Peace

Study Abroad?	War	Peace	Interpretation
Studied abroad	5	19	About 21% of foreign-educated autocrats either started or prolonged a war.
Not studied abroad	12	29	About 29% of non-foreign-educated autocrats either started or prolonged a war.

Shown in Table 2, the contrast with autocratic regimes is striking. Of the 65 autocratic leaders examined, 17 (26%) initiated or prolonged interstate war. Within this group, leaders who did not study abroad exhibited a higher war-starting or war-prolongment rate (29.3%) than their foreign-educated counterparts (20.8%). Moreover, 71% of autocrats who initiated or prolonged a war lacked foreign educational experience, supporting the supplemental hypothesis that non-foreign-educated autocrats are more prone to conflict. While foreign education does not eliminate war-prone behavior in authoritarian systems, the consistent difference between the two groups suggests that exposure to international norms, institutions, and alternative political models may exert a modest but meaningful constraining effect even under autocratic rule.

In conclusion, the findings reveal a layered pattern. Regime type remains the most powerful predictor of peace, strongly confirming the core claims of DPT. However, foreign education functions as an important secondary factor, particularly within democracies, where it appears to reinforce peace-oriented leadership, and within autocracies, where its absence correlates with greater conflict propensity. Study abroad is neither deterministic nor sufficient on its own, but it operates as a formative influence that interacts with institutional constraints, elite socialization, and political psychology.

This study contributes to the literature by offering one of the most comprehensive qualitative reviews of leadership education and conflict behavior in the Asia-Pacific over a fifty-year period. By integrating a novel analytical framework: the PFPO and PFWO Models, it highlights how individual-level experiences intersect with domestic and international structures to shape leader behavior. Future research could expand this framework globally, disaggregate types of foreign education, or explore how military training abroad differs from civilian academic exposure. As the international system enters an increasingly turbulent and multipolar era, understanding the formative experiences that shape leaders' choices between war and peace remains both theoretically and practically vital.

References

- A Chat with Ma Ying-jeou*. (2008). *NYU Law Magazine*.
<http://magazine.law.nyu.edu/index.html%3Fp=2624.html>
- Albers, M. (2013, November 14). *Seeking Truth from Facts: Deng Xiaoping's Visit to France in 1975*. *Wilson Center*. <https://afghanistan.wilsoncenter.org/publication/seeking-truth-facts-deng-xiaopings-visit-to-france-1975>
- Blinova, D. (2024, January 23). *Dangerous Logic of Ambitions: Autocrats' Quest for Historical Immortality*. *Midwest Political Science Association*.
<https://www.mpsanet.org/dangerous-logic-of-ambitions-autocrats-quest-for-historical-immortality/>
- Chang, B. (2021). Situated Learning - Foreign Sites as Learning Contexts. *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education*, 13(2), 5–22.
<https://doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i2.2615>
- Chang, J. (2013, November 5). *Park Holds Emotional Reunion with Elderly French Woman*. *Yonhap News Agency*. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20131105000100315>
- Doyle, M. W. (1983). Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 12(3), 205–235. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2265298>
- Fearon, J. D. (1994). Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes. *American Political Science Review*, 88(3), 577–592.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2944796>
- Flonk, D., & Debre, M. (2025). Hollow Multilateralism: How Autocracies Contest the Norms and Procedures of International Organizations. *International Affairs*, 101(4), 1463–1482. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaaf104>
- Graczyk, M. (2004, October 26). *Thai Prime Minister gets Texas University's Humanitarian Award*. *My Plainview*. <https://www.myplainview.com/news/article/Thai-prime-minister-gets-Texas-university-s-9007434.php>
- Haass, F., Hartzell, C. A., & Ottmann, M. (2022). Citizens in Peace Processes. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 66(9), 1547–1561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221089691>
- Harvard Kennedy School. (n.d.). *Alumni of the Mason Program Reflect on their Experiences*. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/alumni-mason-program-reflect-their-experiences>
- Hegre, H., Bernhard, M., & Teorell, J. (2020). Civil Society and the Democratic Peace. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 64(1), 32–62. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48597420>
- Hellmeier, S. (2021). How Foreign Pressure Affects Mass Mobilization in Favor of Authoritarian Regimes. *European Journal of International Relations*, 27(2), 450–477.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120934527>

- Hua, C. (2011, October 5). *Ramos talks World Peace*. *Yale Daily News*.
<https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2011/10/05/ramos-talks-world-peace/>
- Kant, I. (1795/1991). *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (H. B. Nisbet, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1795)
- Leaders Magazine. (2013). *His Excellency Fidel V. Ramos, Former President, Republic of the Philippines*. https://www.leadersmag.com/issues/2013.4_oct/ROB/LEADERS-Fidel-Ramos-Philippines.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2001, July 2). *Visit of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Results and Outline)*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/pmv0106/outline.html>
- Mohan, D., & Padmanabhan, A. (2023). *Strongmen Saviours: A Political Economy of Populism in India, Turkey, Russia and Brazil*. Taylor & Francis.
- Mor, B.D. (1997). Peace Initiatives and Public Opinion: The Domestic Context of Conflict Resolution. *Journal of Peace Research*, 34(2), 197–215.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343397034002006>
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators. (2011). *International Educator: Indonesia and Building Partnerships* [PDF].
https://www.nafsa.org/sites/default/files/ektron/files/underscore/ie_mayjun11_feature.pdf
- Onosu, G. (2021). The Impact of Cultural Immersion Experience on Identity Transformation Process. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(5), Article 2680. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052680>
- Path, K. (2020). *Vietnam's Strategic Thinking during the Third Indochina War*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Poletti, L. (2021, October 20). *Kant, Doyle, and the Democratic Peace Thesis: A Postcolonial Critique*. *E-International Relations*. <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/10/20/kant-doyle-and-the-democratic-peace-thesis-a-postcolonial-critique/>
- Skidelsky, R. (2022, April 19). *The False Promise of Democratic Peace*. *Project Syndicate*.
<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/democratic-peace-theory-is-wrong-by-robert-skidelsky-2022-04>
- Sterken, R. E., Jr. (2023). *The Kings of Buddhism: Power, Religion, and Fury in Myanmar*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Totten, S., & Parsons, W. S. (Eds.). (2013). *Centuries of Genocide: Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*. Routledge.
- University College London. (2004, April 1). *East Asia Links*. *UCL News*.
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2004/apr/east-asia-links>

- USC U.S.-China Institute. (2017, November 5). *Ma Ying-jeou visits USC*.
<https://china.usc.edu/ma-ying-jeou-visits-usc>
- Werner, D. (2020, July 28). *Singapore's Prime Minister has a Message for the US: Don't Choose China Confrontation or Asia Withdrawal*. *Atlantic Council*.
<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/singapores-prime-minister-has-a-message-for-the-us-dont-choose-china-confrontation-or-asia-withdrawal/>
- Wong, D. (2016, October 20). *PM Lee Hsien Loong attends Cambridge Alumni Reunion Dinner*. *The Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/pm-lee-hsien-loong-attends-cambridge-alumni-reunion-dinner>
- Yoon, M. (2013, November 4). *Park Seeks to Promote Korean Culture in Paris*. *The Korea Herald*. <https://www.koreaherald.com/article/24060>
- Zhang, W. (2016). *The China Horizon: Glory and Dream of a Civilizational State*. World Scientific Publishing Company.

Appendices

Appendix A

The Liberal Democracy Leadership Matrix (1975–2025)

Country	Leader	Years in Power	Liberal Democracy?	War Waged?	Studied Abroad?	# of Agreements	# of Multilateral Orgs
Indonesia	B.J. Habibie	1998 - 1999	YES	NO	YES	0	1
Indonesia	Abdurrahman Wahid	1999 - 2001	YES	NO	YES	0	0
Indonesia	Megawati Sukarnoputri	2001 - 2004	YES	NO	NO	0	1
Indonesia	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono	2004 – 2014	YES	NO	YES	4	1
Indonesia	Joko Widodo	2014 – 2024	YES	NO	NO	9	1
Indonesia	Prabowo Subianto	2024 - Present	YES	NO	YES	3	1
Japan	Sosuke Uno	1989	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Japan	Tsutomu Hata	1994	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Japan	Takeo Miki	1974 – 1976	YES	NO	YES	0	1
Japan	Takeo Fukuda	1976 – 1978	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Japan	Masayoshi Ohira	1978 – 1980	YES	NO	NO	0	1
Japan	Zenko Suzuki	1980 - 1982	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Japan	Yasuhiro Nakasone	1982 – 1987	YES	NO	NO	0	2
Japan	Noboru Takeshita	1987 – 1989	YES	NO	NO	0	1
Japan	Toshiki Kaifu	1989 – 1991	YES	NO	NO	0	1
Japan	Kiichi Miyazawa	1991 – 1993	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Japan	Morihiro Hosokawa	1993 – 1994	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Japan	Tomiichi Murayama	1994 – 1996	YES	NO	NO	0	4
Japan	Ryutaro Hashimoto	1996 – 1998	YES	NO	YES	0	3
Japan	Keizo Obuchi	1998 – 2000	YES	NO	NO	0	1
Japan	Yoshiro Mori	2000 – 2001	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Japan	Junichiro Koizumi	2001 – 2006	YES	NO, TENSION	YES	4	3
Japan	Shinzo Abe	2006 – 2007; 2012 – 2020	YES	NO, TENSION	YES	6	0
Japan	Yasuo Fukuda	2007 – 2008	YES	NO	NO	4	2
Japan	Taro Aso	2008 – 2009	YES	NO	YES	3	0
Japan	Yukio Hatoyama	2009 – 2010	YES	NO	YES	0	0
Japan	Naoto Kan	2010 – 2011	YES	NO	NO	2	2
Japan	Yoshihiko Noda	2011 - 2012	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Japan	Yoshihide Suga	2020 - 2021	YES	NO	NO	2	0
Japan	Fumio Kishida	2021 – 2024	YES	NO	YES	0	0
Japan	Shigeru Ishiba	2024 – 2025	YES	NO	NO	1	0
Japan	Sanae Takaichi	2025 - Present	YES	NO, TENSION	YES	0	0
Mongolia	Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat	1990 – 1997	YES	NO	YES	2	12
Mongolia	Natsagiin Bagabandi	1997 – 2005	YES	NO	YES	0	6
Mongolia	Nambaryn Enkhbayar	2005 – 2009	YES	NO	YES	0	1
Mongolia	Tsakhiaagiin Elbegdorj	2009 – 2017	YES	NO	YES	3	1
Mongolia	Khaltmaagiin Battulga	2017 – 2021	YES	NO	NO	2	1
Mongolia	Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh	2021 – Present	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Philippines	Corazon Aquino	1986 – 1992	YES	NO	YES	1	1
Philippines	Fidel Ramos	1992 – 1998	YES	NO	YES	1	8
Philippines	Joseph Estrada	1998 – 2001	YES	NO	NO	1	0
Philippines	Gloria Macapagal–Arroyo	2001 - 2010	YES	NO	YES	2	2
Philippines	Benigno Aquino III	2010 – 2016	YES	NO, TENSION	NO	3	2
Philippines	Rodrigo Duterte	2016 – 2022	YES	NO	NO	1	1
Philippines	Bongbong Marcos	2022 - Present	YES	NO, TENSION	YES	3	0
South Korea	Roh Tae-woo	1988 – 1993	YES	NO	NO	0	2
South Korea	Kim Young-sam	1993 – 1998	YES	NO	NO	0	10
South Korea	Kim Dae-jung	1998 – 2003	YES	NO	YES	1	5
South Korea	Roh Moo-hyun	2003 – 2008	YES	NO	NO	4	2
South Korea	Lee Myung-bak	2008 – 2013	YES	NO, TENSION	NO	5	1
South Korea	Park Geun-hye	2013 – 2017	YES	NO, TENSION	YES	5	1
South Korea	Moon Jae-in	2017 – 2022	YES	NO	NO	5	0

South Korea	Yoon Suk-yeol	2022 – 2025	YES	NO, TENSION	NO	5	0
South Korea	Lee Jae-myung	2025 - Present	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Taiwan (ROC)	Lee Teng-hui	1988 (1996) – 2000	YES	NO, TENSION	YES	0	1
Taiwan (ROC)	Chen Shui-bian	2000 – 2008	YES	NO, TENSION	NO	3	1
Taiwan (ROC)	Ma Ying-jeou	2008 – 2016	YES	NO	YES	3	0
Taiwan (ROC)	Tsai Ing-wen	2016 – 2024	YES	NO, TENSION	YES	4	0
Taiwan (ROC)	Lai Ching-te	2024 - Present	YES	NO, TENSION	YES	0	0
Thailand	Anand Panyarachun	1991- 1992	YES	NO	YES	2	0
Thailand	Chuan Leekpai	1992 – 1995; 1997 - 2001	YES	NO	NO	0	6
Thailand	Banharn Silpa-archa	1995 – 1996	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Thailand	Chavalit Yongchaiyudh	1996 – 1997	YES	NO	NO	0	4
Thailand	Thaksin Shinawatra	2001 – 2006	YES	NO	YES	3	3
Thailand	Somchai Wongsawat	2008 – 2008	YES	NO	NO	0	0
Thailand	Samak Sundaravej	2008 – 2008	YES	NO	YES	0	0
Thailand	Abhisit Vejjajiva	2008 – 2011	YES	NO, TENSION	YES	1	0
Thailand	Yingluck Shinawatra	2011 – 2014	YES	NO	YES	1	0
Thailand	Srettha Thavisin	2023 – 2024	YES	NO	YES	1	0
Timor-Leste	Xanana Gusmao	2002-2007	YES	NO	NO	0	16
Timor-Leste	Jose Ramos-Horta	2007-2012; 2022-Present	YES	NO	YES	0	3
Timor-Leste	Taur Matan Ruak	2012-2017	YES	NO	NO	1	1
Timor-Leste	Francisco Guterres	2017-2022	YES	NO	NO	1	0

Appendix B

The Hybrid Democracy Leadership Matrix (1975–2025)

Country	Leader	Years in Power	Liberal Democracy?	War Waged?	Studied Abroad?	# of Agreements	# of Multilateral Orgs
Malaysia	Abdul Razak Hussein	1970-1976	HYBRID	NO	YES	0	0
Malaysia	Hussein Onn	1976-1981	HYBRID	NO	YES	0	1
Malaysia	Mahathir Mohamad	1981-2003; 2018-2020	HYBRID	NO	YES	2	10
Malaysia	Abdullah Ahmad Badawi	2003-2009	HYBRID	NO	NO	3	1
Malaysia	Najib Abdul Razak	2009-2018	HYBRID	NO	YES	6	1
Malaysia	Muhyiddin Mohd Yassin	2020-2021	HYBRID	NO	NO	1	0
Malaysia	Ismail Sabri Yaakob	2021-2022	HYBRID	NO	NO	0	0
Malaysia	Anwar Ibrahim	2022-Present	HYBRID	NO	NO	2	0
Myanmar	Thein Sein	2011-2016	PARTIAL	NO	NO	0	2
Myanmar	Htin Kyaw	2016-2018	PARTIAL	NO	YES	0	0
Myanmar	Win Myint	2018-2021	PARTIAL	NO	NO	1	0
Russia/USSR	Boris Yeltsin	1992-2000	PARTIAL	YES	NO	2	17
Singapore	Lee Kuan Yew	1959 – 1990	HYBRID	NO	YES	1	2
Singapore	Goh Chok Tong	1990 – 2004	HYBRID	NO	YES	7	9
Singapore	Lee Hsien Loong	2004 – 2024	HYBRID	NO	YES	23	2
Singapore	Lawrence Wong	2024 - Present	HYBRID	NO	YES	0	0
Thailand	Sanya Dharmasakti	1973 - 1975	HYBRID	NO	YES	0	0
Thailand	Kukrit Pramoj	1975 - 1976	HYBRID	NO	YES	0	0
Thailand	Kriangsak Chamanan	1977 - 1980	HYBRID	NO	NO	0	1
Thailand	Prem Tinsulanonda	1980 - 1988	HYBRID	NO	NO	0	0
Thailand	Chatichai Choonhavan	1988 - 1991	HYBRID	NO	NO	0	1
Thailand	Surayud Chulanont	2006 - 2008	HYBRID	NO	NO	1	0
Thailand	Paetongtarn Shinawatra	2024 - 2025	HYBRID	NO, TENSION	YES	0	0
Thailand	Anutin Charnvirakul	2025 - Present	HYBRID	NO, TENSION	YES	0	0

Appendix C

The Autocratic Leadership Matrix (1975–2025)

Country	Leader	Years in Power	Liberal Democracy?	War Waged?	Studied Abroad?	# of Agreements	# of Multilateral Orgs
Brunei	Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah	1967 - Present	NO	NO	YES	7	23
Cambodia	Lon Nol	1972 - 1975	NO	YES	NO	0	0
Cambodia	Norodom Sihanouk	1975 - 1976	NO	YES	YES	0	0
Cambodia	Pol Pot	1976 - 1979	NO	YES	YES	0	0
Cambodia	Heng Samrin	1979 - 1992	NO	YES	NO	1	0
Cambodia	Hun Sen	1992 – 1993; 1993 – 1998; 1998 - 2023	NO	YES	YES	4	21
Cambodia	Norodom Rannariddh	1993 - 1997	NO	NO	YES	0	0
Cambodia	Ung Huot	1997 - 1998	NO	NO	YES	0	0
Cambodia	Hun Manet	2023 - Present	NO	YES	YES	0	0
China	Mao Zedong	1949-1976	NO	NO	NO	1	0
China	Deng Xiaoping	1978-1992	NO	YES	YES	0	6
China	Jiang Zemin	1989-2002	NO	NO, TENSION	NO	1	12
China	Hu Jintao	2002-2012	NO	NO, TENSION	NO	12	5
China	Xi Jinping	2012 – Present	NO	NO, TENSION	NO	15	2
Indonesia	Suharto	1967 - 1998	NO	YES	NO	1	10
Laos	Souphanouvong	1975-1986	NO	NO	YES	0	1
Laos	Phoumi Vongvichit	1986-1991	NO	NO	NO	0	0
Laos	Kaysone Phomvihane	1991-1992	NO	NO	YES	2	2
Laos	Nouhak Phoumsavanh	1992-1998	NO	NO	NO	0	5
Laos	Khamtai Siphandone	1998-2006	NO	NO	NO	0	6
Laos	Choummaly Sayasone	2006-2016	NO	NO	NO	0	4
Laos	Bounnhang Vorachit	2016-2021	NO	NO	YES	2	0
Laos	Thongloun Sisoulith	2021-Present	NO	NO	YES	1	0
Mongolia	Yumjaagiin Tsedenbal	1952 – 1984	NO	NO	YES	1	1
Mongolia	Jambyn Batmonkh	1984 - 1990	NO	NO	YES	0	1
Myanmar	Ne Win	1974-1981	NO	NO	NO	0	0
Myanmar	San Yu	1981-1988	NO	NO	NO	0	1
Myanmar	Sein Lwin	1988-1988	NO	NO	NO	0	0
Myanmar	Maung Maung	1988-1988	NO	NO	YES	0	0
Myanmar	Saw Maung	1988-1992	NO	NO	NO	1	2
Myanmar	Than Shwe	1992-2011	NO	NO	NO	0	11
Myanmar	Myint Swe	2018, 2021-2025	NO	NO, TENSION	NO	0	0
Myanmar	Min Aung Hlaing	2024-Present	NO	NO, TENSION	NO	0	0
North Korea	Kim Il-Sung	1948 - 1994	NO	NO, TENSION	YES	0	3
North Korea	Kim Jong-Il	1994 – 2011	NO	NO, TENSION	NO	1	1
North Korea	Kim Jong Un	2011 – Present	NO	NO, TENSION	YES	1	0
Philippines	Ferdinand Marcos	1965 – 1986	NO	NO	YES	0	4
Russia/USSR	Leonid Brezhnev	1964 – 1982	NO	YES	NO	0	1
Russia/USSR	Yuri Andropov	1982 – 1984	NO	YES	NO	0	0
Russia/USSR	Konstantin Chernenko	1984 – 1985	NO	YES	NO	0	0
Russia/USSR	Mikhail Gorbachev	1985 – 1991	NO	YES	NO	0	1
Russia/USSR	Vladimir Putin	2000 – 2008; 2012 – Present	NO	YES	NO	11	9
Russia/USSR	Dmitry Medvedev	2008 - 2012	NO	YES	NO	1	2
South Korea	Park Chung-hee	1963 – 1979	NO	NO, TENSION	NO	1	0
South Korea	Choi Kyu-hah	1979 – 1980	NO	NO	YES	0	0
South Korea	Chun Doo-hwan	1980 – 1988	NO	NO, TENSION	NO	0	1
Taiwan (ROC)	Chiang Kai-shek	1948 - 1975	NO	NO	NO	0	0
Taiwan (ROC)	Yen Chia-kan	1975 – 1978	NO	NO	NO	0	0
Taiwan (ROC)	Chiang Ching-kuo	1978 – 1988	NO	NO, TENSION	YES	0	0
Thailand	Thanin Kraivichien	1976 - 1977	NO	NO	YES	0	0
Thailand	Suchinda Kraprayoon	1992 - 1992	NO	NO	NO	0	0
Thailand	Prayut Chan-o-cha	2014 – 2023	NO	NO	NO	4	2
Vietnam	Ton Duc Thang	1969-1980	NO	YES	NO	1	1

Vietnam	Truong Chunh	1981-1987	NO	YES	NO	0	1
Vietnam	Vo Chi Cong	1987-1992	NO	YES	NO	1	1
Vietnam	Le Duc Anh	1992-1997	NO	NO	NO	0	9
Vietnam	Tran Duc Luong	1997-2006	NO	NO	NO	0	6
Vietnam	Nguyen Minh Triet	2006-2011	NO	NO	NO	2	2
Vietnam	Truong Tan Sang	2011-2016	NO	NO	NO	4	2
Vietnam	Tran Dai Quang	2016-2018	NO	NO	NO	2	0
Vietnam	Nguyen Phu Trong	2018-2021	NO	NO	YES	3	0
Vietnam	Nguyen Xuan Phuc	2021-2023	NO	NO	YES	2	0
Vietnam	Vo Van Thuong	2023-2024	NO	NO	NO	4	0
Vietnam	To Lam	2024-2024	NO	NO	NO	0	0
Vietnam	Luong Cuong	2024-Present	NO	NO	YES	8	0