Perceived threats looming on SDG of peace and justice: Effects of investor's identity, symbolic and economic threats on attitudes towards FDI

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Abstract. Foreign investment has always been a polemic in Indonesia, facilitated by provocative undertones on several media outlets. However, how this information can influence people's attitudes towards foreign investment has not been explored much. This research aimed to understand how foreign investment information from different countries could trigger threats and, consequently, influence people's attitude toward foreign investment with the framework from Integrated Threat Theory and information processing. As much as 559 participants participated in an online experimental survey. They were randomly grouped into six experimental groups with 3 (investors cue: China, Saudi Arabia, US) x 2 (threat: symbolic, economic) and one control group. Mediation analysis showed exposure to threat laden information influenced the formation of negative attitudes towards foreign investment through systematic processing by activating economic and symbolic threat perceptions. This effect significantly appears on participants exposed by information containing the economic threat and symbolic threat from China, but not from Saudi Arabia and the US. This result indicates that support towards foreign investment is still heavily related to sentiment to Chinese ethnicity deeply rooted in Indonesia which can hinder the goals towards establishing peace, justice and strong institutions.

1. Introduction

To accelerate Indonesia's economic growth and competitiveness in the global market, the government has been eager to increase foreign direct investment (FDI). Indonesia's Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) has noted the growing trend of FDI in the last five years [1]. In 2019, the country's investment rate was dominated by foreign investment for 52% of the total realization compared to 48% of domestic investment. This number is still expected to grow in the next few years, although the recent pandemic proves to be an overwhelming obstacle. Nevertheless, foreign investment is always on the governments' agenda. With the current efforts to ease implementation and FDI permission, BKPM is optimistic FDI will rise even higher than the target. Despite the government's relentless efforts, foreign investment is met with controversy.

The issue has been used as a catalyst to attack the current government, accusing them of being dependent on foreign countries and making our 'money' go into the foreigners' pockets [2]. Although, as an economic activity, FDI should have been reviewed for its financial pros and cons, support
towards FDI is proved to be still related to psychological factors such as negative sentiment or prejudice towards foreigners and ethnocentrism [3][4]. Andrew et al. have found that US states with high ethnocentrism levels have the lowest level of FDI inflow [4]. In Indonesia, FDI has been viewed symbolically as another attempt of colonization [5].

Despite the growing trend, the number of FDI in Indonesia is still relatively lower than in other Southeast Asia countries such as Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia [6]. One main reason is the existence of restrictive policies for FDI in Indonesia [7]. This restrictive policy is justified by people with a conflict of interest to protect Indonesian people [8]. Concerns about FDI are mostly matters of the growing debts and the inflow of foreign workers. Not only that, but people also seem to be concerned about where the investors are coming from. This concern has been highlighted in Fossati's research, showing how public support for FDI depends on the investors' description. Prejudice towards ethnic diaspora in Indonesia and the Chinese's perceived considerable cultural distance compared with the Arabs lead to lower FDI support. This support gets even lower when the investor is depicted as Christian Chinese [3].

Both China and Saudi Arabia are countries long historically tied to Indonesia. Both of the largest ethnic diaspora in Indonesia, but both countries, also serve as vital actors in Southeast Asia's global economy. China is one of the top three, with the highest number of investments in Indonesia [1]. On the other side, despite not being on the list, Saudi Arabia is one of the government's target countries to invest [9]. To add the third identity comparison, the United States is chosen for its higher economic status and a significant force in the global economy.

Anti-Chinese sentiments are deeply rooted in Indonesia, where Chinese in Indonesia has been a frequent target of ethnic violence since colonialism through the democratic period [10]. Compared with the Chinese, Arabs are not targeting social exclusion. Fossati attributes this due to the similarity in religion, which, in turn, makes it easier to assimilate into the people [3]. On the contrary, the US is a country within the center of polarity. In general, Indonesians have favorable views on the US, as indicated in the consensus, although this number is steadily decreasing since the Trump administration [11]. Comparing the three as targets of high, low, and relatively neutral sentiments will be one of the main objectives of this research to gain insight on how the sentiment levels can influence public attitudes towards FDI in Indonesia.

Media has also been central to the growing issue of FDI. The polemic about FDI is mainly facilitated by media inconsistency and provocative undertones on several media outlets. Content analysis on Kompas and Jakarta Post, two major media outlets in Indonesia, found articles covering both foreign investment and highly harmful workers [8]. Most of the items emphasize how FDI will undermine Indonesia in several aspects such as the food industry, energy to policy decision making. Furthermore, the research shows that people with higher accessibility to media exposure have more negative views on foreign investment. Although various studies have found the linkage between negative sentiments, media exposure, and public policy acceptance, explaining these linkages has not been explored much. The mechanism is often overlooked when it is essential to find the factors constraining economic openness in Indonesia.

FDI as a public policy can be regarded in social psychological terms as intergroup relations, representing a relationship between the ingroup (host country) and the outgroup (investors). The word 'foreign,' which emphasizes the differences between ingroup and outgroup, is more comfortable to perceive as a threat. For example, calling 'foreign' students makes them look more like threats instead of getting them 'international' students [12]. Treating outgroups as a threat is covered in major social psychology theories such as Realistic Group Conflict Theory and Social Identity Theory [13-14]. One central concept focuses on threat perceptions and its relation to negative prejudice towards outgroups is Integrated Threat Theory [15-16]. ITT elaborates antecedents leading to intolerance. Two of them are perceived threats, namely, realistic and symbolic threats. The symbolic threat is a threat perceived towards ingroup's worldviews, moral views, values, and beliefs. The realistic threat is more of a danger perceived towards the group's existence in terms of physical and material or FDI, threatening economically. ITT also introduces two antecedents in the forms of emotions: existing negative
stereotypes with the outgroup and intergroup anxiety or the concern about interacting with members of the outgroup due to unfamiliarity and negative emotions.

These threat perceptions and emotions are often influenced by media exposure. Previous research indicate that media exposure is the primary source of ingroup and outgroup relationships [17-19]. If the media persistently depict a group as a threat, media exposure will be more likely to impact intergroup relationships [20] negatively. The use of media information is often called news framing. It serves as an interpretive package since the combination of textual and visual communication can help define problems, diagnose the cause, and form moral judgments [21]. There are two routes of information processing framework. Systematic processing is a route in which the processing needs more mental effort, requiring the viewer to think about the contents more elaborately. While the other way, heuristic processing, is a faster and more efficient route, often automatic and needs little mental efforts [22].

Based on ITT and informational processing framework, threats exposure in both visual and written form can influence individuals' attitude formation through two processing [18]. Content-based information presented in the textual way of the information and enhanced by the visual modality will be processed systematically by activating perceptions of threats. On the other side, visual modality alone can lead to attitude formation through heuristic processing by automatically activating existing emotions, such as negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety.

Considering how foreign investment is generally made known to the public through information from media exposure, multimodal information is made as a stimulus to explore the role of threats perception in influencing attitudes towards FDI. This study poses three main hypotheses. The first hypothesis predicts that threat-laden multimodal information can influence FDI through systematic processing by activating both economic and symbolic threat perceptions. The second hypothesis predicts that they will also trigger negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety through visual modalities' heuristic processing. Finally, the paper predicts this effect will be higher on individuals exposed to information depicting the investors from China than when the investors are from the United States and Saudi Arabia due to the relationship between Indonesians and Chinese.

2. Method
The research consists of two stages of study. The first stage is the pilot study conducted to evaluate the stimuli and instruments used for the primary analysis. The second is the main study.

2.1. Pilot study: Experimental stimuli and instruments
Before the main study, a pilot study was first conducted to evaluate the primary research stimulus. Visual and textual stimuli were assessed in terms of threat perception, arousal, salience, ambiguity, visual complexity, and newsworthiness by a total of 55 participants. The stimuli chosen were the ones with the higher scores on the evaluation indexes. Visual stimulus showed a picture of a stereotypical Chinese/Arabic/US worker, while textual stimuli describe a situation where the rising trend of FDI leads to higher economic/symbolic threats. Control stimulus showed a picture of a neutral position relevant to the FDI topic and a text describing the general rising trend of FDI with objective data.

| No. | Information type | Content |
|-----|------------------|---------|
| 1.  | Control          | Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) Indonesia has recorded Rp423.1 trillion of foreign investment realization in Indonesia as of the latter half of 2019 compared to the last number in Rp392.7 trillion. This marked FDI growth as much as 23.17 percent. The rising trend of investment coming from China/Saudi Arabia/United States is accompanied by Indonesia’s rise in foreign countries’ debts. If this debt continues to rise and Indonesia fails to return payment before the assigned time, the consequences might be fatal. |
| 2.  | Economic threat  | }
3. Symbolic threat

Along with the investment, China/Saudi Arabia/United States starts funding scholars from Indonesia to continue their studies in large Universities of their country. This can be considered as an alternative way to instill specific China/Saudi Arabia/United States values in our people.

A total of five scales are used to measure the mediating and dependent variables. They are economic perception threat scale, symbolic perception scale, stereotype negative index, intergroup anxiety scale, and attitudes towards FDI scale.

Table 2. Instruments used to measure dependent variables.

| No. | Research variables          | Instrument adapted from                      | Type of scale                                      | α    |
|-----|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1.  | Economic threat perception  | Schmuck & Matthes (2017)                    | 6-point Likert                                     | 0.77 |
| 2.  | Symbolic threat perception  | Stephan, et al. (1998); Schmuck & Matthes (2017) | 6-point Likert                                     | 0.85 |
| 3.  | Negative stereotypes index  | Stephan, et al. (1998)                      | 10-point favorability scale x percentage of outgroup | 0.83 |
| 4.  | Intergroup anxiety scale    | Stephan, et al. (1985)                      | 10-point scale                                     | 0.86 |
| 5.  | Attitudes towards FDI       |                                            | 6-point scale                                      | 0.82 |

2.2. Main study and data analysis

The preliminary study was conducted in online survey-experimental research explicitly designed for the analysis with 3 (investors cue: China, Saudi Arabia, US) x 2 (threats: symbolic, economic) between-subjects design and one control group with neutral information. A total of 691 participants were recruited with a snowball sampling technique and multiple site entries by sending the link on several websites, forums, and social media platforms. As many as 114 participants were excluded from the final analysis due to technical difficulties and failed manipulation check tests. The other 18 participants were excluded as outliers. The last 559 participants were randomly grouped into seven experimental groups (China-economic threat, Arab-economic threat, US-economic threat, China-symbolic threat, Arab-symbolic threat, US-symbolic threat, control group).

After filling the informed consent, participants were directed into one of seven experimental groups. In each experimental group, participants were instructed to evaluate the information article consisting of one picture and a text piece that has been manipulated and assessed in the pilot study for as long as 30 seconds. After the stimulus evaluation, participants were asked to rate the article, followed by an assessment of mediating and dependent variables.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was first conducted to test the model fit of four threat variables (economic threat, symbolic threat, negative stereotype, intergroup anxiety) as mediating variables. Meanwhile, the hypotheses testing were conducted with the help of Process MACRO for SPSS 24 model 4 [23]. Experimental groups were treated as multi categorical variables, and mediating variables were entered simultaneously. Possible intervening demographic variables such as sex, religion, age, and education were controlled as well. The significance test was inferred from the indirect effect using 95% CI based on 5000 bootstrap samples.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Preliminary results
Plotting and global assessment indicated the data supports all the regression assumptions. CFA was conducted using maximum likelihood estimation (MLM) with lavaan package in R ver 4.0.2 [24][25].
Fit indices used are Comparative Fit Indices (CFI) > 0.94, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < 0.07 and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) < 0.08 [26]. Analysis showed the model with four latent mediators has a considerable fit, meeting all the indices ($\chi^2$(559) = 350.513, p < 0.001, CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.060, 90%CI [0.053, 0.067], SRMR = 0.056).

3.2. Hypotheses testing

This research predicted that multimodal information containing threats would lead to systematic and heuristic processing by activating threat perceptions, negative stereotypes, and intergroup anxiety. By comparing each experimental group with the control group, the first way of path analysis showed that economic threat-laden information led to a higher perception of economic threats, but only in groups exposed to investors from China ($\beta = 0.585$, t(548) = 3.879, p < 0.001). Mediation analysis also showed this path led to higher negative attitudes towards FDI ($\beta = 0.294$, BootSE = 0.080, 95% BootCI [0.139, 0.456]). This significant indirect effect was not found in other experimental groups exposed to investors from Saudi Arabia and the US.

Similar results were found in groups exposed to symbolic-threat laden information, where this information only led to higher perception of symbolic threats on groups exposed to investors from China ($\beta = 0.370$, t(548) = 2.342, p < 0.05). This path also led to higher negative attitudes towards FDI ($\beta = 0.110$, BootSE = 0.045, 95% BootCI [0.022, 0.204]).

Additionally, despite not having significant direct effect, economic-threat laden information also led to higher negative attitudes towards FDI by activating perception of symbolic threat in groups exposed to investors from China ($\beta = 0.155$, BootSE = 0.046, 95% BootCI [0.068, 0.250]) and US ($\beta = 0.084$, BootSE = 0.041, 95% BootCI [0.004, 0.168]).

![Figure 1. Hypothesized systematic route results analysis (Source: Author).](image)

This research also predicted the possibilities of multimodal information activating negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety through heuristic processing. At the same time, economic-threat laden information did lead to higher negative stereotypes in groups exposed to China investors ($\beta = 0.388$, t(548) = 2.413, p < 0.05), the result failed to find the evidence of negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety influencing negative attitudes towards FDI on across all the experimental groups.

Multimodal threat-laden political information, mediating variables and controlled demographic variables together predicted higher attitudes towards FDI ($F(14, 544) = 58.871$, p < 0.001, $R^2 = 0.602$). In other words, approximately 60% variances and predictors significantly explained attitudes towards FDI. The results found no significant indirect effect of multimodal information exposure on attitudes towards FDI, indicating this exposure did not necessarily predict attitudes towards FDI when mediating variables were statistically controlled.
3.3. Discussion

In line with previous research on how threat perception facilitated by media exposure can lead to negative attitudes towards outgroups [19][20][27], the study found multimodal threat-laden political information exposure can influence higher negative attitudes towards FDI by activating threat perceptions. However, the study argued that the identity of the investors would moderate this effect.

Both analyses supported the hypothesis that predicting this media exposure threat effect on negative attitudes towards FDI would be more assertive on information depicting investors from China than the other two countries. Furthermore, the depiction of US investors also showed a more substantial effect than Saudi Arabia, which was not proven to be communicating threat across all the experimental stimuli.

These results align with the ITT framework, explaining how past relationships with outgroups served as an antecedent for perceptions of threat [13]. They also strengthen the existing narration of anti-China sentiments, which is still standing strong after two decades of reformation, born out of the clash of economic power and religion since Orde Baru [28-29].

The depiction of Chinese investors also showed a more substantial effect on negative attitudes towards FDI. This effect supports the previous findings, where lower support for FDI is found in Chinese investors [3]. Threat wise, economic-threat laden information also showed a more substantial effect by activating economic and symbolic threat perceptions. This result is expected, where there is a freer association of economic threat with FDI in general. A similar finding is also found in the US, where the US respondents are less likely to support Chinese FDI when they were primed with economic threats posed by FDI [30].

Economic-threat information also led to higher negative attitudes towards FDI on groups exposed to US investors by activating symbolic threat perception. This indicated that FDI, as an economic activity, is inherently also influenced by symbolic association. Participants consider the economic disadvantages and symbolic values and culture tied to the investing countries. This result extends Fossati's finding by explaining investor identity mechanisms influencing support towards FDI [3].

Multimodal information can be understood by considering both modalities [31]. Visual modalities are salient, instantly perceived, and are positively related to emotional engagement with the viewers. Meanwhile, textual modalities are not as attractive, but the structure leads to higher cognitive elaboration and meaning construction. In this research, a picture is used as the main attractor and the salient factor in identifying investors' ethnic background. In other words, Chinese investors' identification plays a more significant role than the depiction of investors from Saudi Arabia and the US, leading to higher cognitive elaboration on the textual content and finally activates threat perceptions. This can be considered systematic processing based on the information processing framework, in which perceptions are formed based on arguments presented.
The research also considered the instant effect of visual modalities through heuristic processing by activating existing emotional reactions such as negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety. However, it failed to find the evidence of this prediction, leading us to look for an explanation based on the stimuli characteristics. On the contrary, with the previous relevant study which explains negative attitudes influenced by implicit political campaign ads inserted in a full newspaper [19], our research implemented an explicit form of stimulus where participants were only exposed to the FDI information. This difference may matter due to higher extensive motivations to infer a conclusion from exact measurements than the implicit ones, in line with systematic processing [32]. This also explains why this research’s participants depend more on the systematic processing in forming their attitudes towards FDI.

3.4. Limitation
This study is not free from limitations. First, despite using multimodal information as a stimulus, it had not elaborated further on each modality's characteristics and how they can explain perception formation individually. Future research can dig more into this by separating both modalities and by considering their congruence. Secondly, due to participants' specific instructions to imagine interactions with foreign investors, this imagined interaction may lead to bias in intergroup anxiety measurements. Specific targets, such as foreign investors, can be positively influenced by perceived psychological distance. Future research might consider adding new variables such as previous interaction to minimize this bias. Finally, this research framework is still based on the original model of ITT [13]. In its development, negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety can also serve as antecedents of threat perceptions. Future research might develop another research model based on the recent expansion to get a more comprehensive understanding.

4. Conclusion
This study manages to explain how multimodal threat-laden political information can influence the formation of attitudes towards FDI through systematic processing by activating threat perceptions. Even so, this information turns out to have a different effect based on the source of threats depicted in the story despite the threat contents being precisely identical. The information exposure effect on FDI attitudes was only found in groups exposed to investors from China. This result indicates that support towards FDI is still not free from ethnic sentiment deeply rooted in Indonesia.

Aside from proving hypotheses, this study also implies the ever-present high level of susceptibility to news framing on specific target groups. Although the stimulus was designed to strengthen external validity, the information was still far from credible, as it did not mention any credible source of information. This implicates a further need for media literacy for the Indonesian public, especially for the future generation.

Highly similar effects of economic-threat and symbolic-threat on FDI attitudes also implicate that FDI is not only seen as disadvantageous economically for the country but even symbolically threatening for national integrity and values. In contrast with seeing FDI as means to achieve goals in economic growth, acceptance towards FDI is affecting the sustainable goals towards peace and justice. Finally, this research contributes theoretically to the use of ITT and information processing theory in explaining threat perceptions towards negative attitudes while taking account of the heterogeneity of target groups. Moreover, this extends not only towards prejudice but also towards general opinion on public policy.

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