The conflict between indigenous communities and corporations at the intersection of politics and economics in Southeast Asia

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Abstract: This article investigates the confluence of political and economic factors in the disputes that arise between corporations and indigenous communities in Southeast Asia. The Southeast Asian region has been a locus of considerable contention between corporations and native populations, particularly with regard to the utilisation of natural resources. The conflict is further intensified by the cultural heterogeneity of the region and the intricate social intricacies that ensue from it. The aforementioned conflicts are analysed within a comprehensive framework that encompasses the political and economic milieu at both the regional and national levels. The method used is qualitative, with data sources derived from journal articles, news, reports, and government and interantional organizations publications. Data processing begins with data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and data visualisation in the form of tables and figures. The findings indicate that the aforementioned conflicts are not solely focused on vying for resources but also encompass a broader struggle for autonomy, personal identity, and basic human entitlements. The aforementioned assertion underscores the noteworthy impact of political and economic variables in moulding and escalating conflicts. It is imperative to establish a conflict resolution mechanism that is both inclusive and sustainable and safeguards the rights and interests of all stakeholders in order to mitigate and potentially resolve the conflict at hand.

Keywords: *Conflict, Indigenous Communities, Corporations, Southeast Asia, Economics and Politics*

Abstrak: Artikel ini menyelidiki interseksi faktor politik dan ekonomi dalam perselisihan yang muncul antara perusahaan dan masyarakat adat di Asia Tenggara. Wilayah Asia Tenggara telah menjadi tempat pertikaian yang cukup besar antara perusahaan dan penduduk asli, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan pemanfaatan sumber daya alam. Konflik semakin diintensifkan oleh heterogenitas budaya di wilayah tersebut dan kerumitan sosial yang rumit yang dihasilkan darinya. Konflik-konflik tersebut dianalisis dalam kerangka komprehensif yang mencakup lingkungan politik dan ekonomi baik di tingkat regional maupun nasional. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif, dengan sumber data yang berasal dari artikel jurnal, berita, laporan, dan publikasi pemerintah dan organisasi internasional. Pengolahan data diawali dengan pengumpulan data, analisis data, interpretasi data, dan visualisasi data dalam bentuk tabel dan gambar. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa konflik tersebut tidak semata-mata terfokus pada perebutan sumber daya tetapi juga mencakup perjuangan yang lebih luas untuk otonomi, identitas pribadi, dan hak dasar manusia. Penegasan tersebut di atas menggarisbawahi dampak penting dari variabel politik dan ekonomi dalam pembentukan dan eskalasi konflik. Sangat penting untuk membangun mekanisme penyelesaian konflik yang inklusif dan berkelanjutan serta melindungi hak dan kepentingan semua pemangku kepentingan untuk memitigasi dan berpotensi menyelesaikan konflik yang ada.

Kata Kunci: konflik, masyarakat adat, korporasi, asia tenggara, ekonomi, politik

INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia is a region of exceptional dynamism due to its rich cultural diversity and varying political inclinations (Curato & Fossati, 2020; King, 2016; Mandal, 2012; Ullah & Ming Yit Ho, 2021). The region is recognised not only for its exceptional cultural heterogeneity, distinctive ecological systems, but also for its significant capacity in relation to natural endowments (Nawaz et al., 2019). This geographical area, comprising of eleven nations with significant populace, presents a favourable setting for comprehending the interplay and discord between indigenous communities and business entities, particularly in the milieu of natural resource utilisation in political and economic spheres.

The conflict between indigenous communities and companies at the crossroads of politics and economics in Southeast Asia is of great urgency. First, the protection and recognition of human rights are crucial issues in this matter. Conflicts often involve violations of the rights of indigenous communities, and it is important to fight for better recognition and protection of their rights. This research can provide a basis for advocating for better policies in terms of protecting the rights of indigenous communities.

In addition, this conflict also has an impact on the sustainability of the environment and the lives of indigenous communities. Many conflicts are related to the management of natural resources in the forestry and mining sectors. The urgency of this problem lies in the need to understand the economic and ecological impacts of the conflict as well as produce sustainable policy recommendations to reduce environmental damage and promote sustainability. In a broader context, this research can also help improve social and economic justice by addressing economic disparities and promoting regional inclusion and stability in Southeast Asia.

In recent decades, indigenous communities in Southeast Asia have been confronted with the challenge of preserving their entitlements and opportunities to utilise the territories and ecological assets that they have traditionally conserved and governed in a sustainable manner for centuries (Ford et al., 2020; Lambert & Scott, 2019). The individuals in question are confronted with mounting perils and obstacles emanating from sizable corporate entities, both domestic and international in scope, that aim to capitalise on these innate resources for financial profit. On numerous occasions, confrontations between indigenous communities and corporate entities escalate to a severe extent, resulting in instances of aggression and coerced displacement (Chua et al., 2019; van Uhm & Grigore, 2021).

Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that this particular conflict cannot be comprehended solely as a contestation over resources. Furthermore, the aforementioned conflict embodies a wider and intricate endeavour for self-governance,

individuality, and fundamental human entitlements. This conflict exemplifies the interplay between politics and economics in the genesis, exacerbation, and perpetuation of conflict. Government policies that facilitate resource extraction by corporations can have adverse effects on indigenous communities. Simultaneously, the conduct of corporations is impacted by economic interests and market forces on a global scale, which in turn affects their engagement with the environment and indigenous communities (Azhgaliyeva et al., 2020).

The issue of conflict between indigenous communities and companies at the intersection of politics and economics in Southeast Asia has been the focus of significant academic research and discussion. A number of studies have been conducted to understand the root causes, dynamics, and impacts of this conflict. For example, research has identified the social, political, and economic factors that fuel conflict, including natural resource management, power imbalances, and injustice in decision-making. Several studies have also highlighted the importance of recognising the rights of indigenous communities and protecting the environment in preventing and resolving these conflicts.

Recent research has also underlined the role of global politics and economics in intensifying conflicts between indigenous communities and companies in Southeast Asia. In the context of international trade and foreign investment, research has revealed how multinational companies are often involved in practises that harm indigenous communities, including forced evictions and human rights violations. In addition, studies have also highlighted collaborative efforts and alternative solutions, such as the development of sustainable business models and dialogue approaches between governments, companies, and indigenous communities, which can reduce tensions and reach mutually beneficial agreements.

The objective of this research is to elucidate and scrutinise the discord between indigenous populations and corporate entities in Southeast Asia by examining the interplay between political and economic factors. By comprehending these conflicts within a wider framework, we can enhance our comprehension of the dynamics and consequences of these conflicts, as well as how they can be equitably and durably resolved.

The discussion of the Conflict Between Indigenous Communities and Corporations is a dynamic issue in conflict studies. This issue can be explored from several angles, such as in the principle of justice, where there is a gap with efforts to explore the urgency of justice theory, which is considered to be able to understand conflicts between local Indigenous communities and multinational companies from the natural resources sector (Whiteman, 2009). In a different study, this issue is highlighted from another angle by exploring how economic rationality based on utilitarian and reductionist thinking as manifested by Codelco is prioritised locally over socio-natural

rationality based on holistic thinking and concern for sustainability as articulated by indigenous communities (Camacho, 2012).

It is our contention that the outcomes of this investigation will constitute a significant addition to the extant body of scholarship pertaining to clashes between indigenous populations and commercial enterprises in the Southeast Asian region. This study aims to offer novel perspectives on the interplay between politics and economics and their impact on the aforementioned conflicts. The acquisition of this knowledge holds significance not only for scholars with a vested interest in these matters, but also for decision makers, professionals, and other individuals seeking to resolve these conflicts and establish fair and enduring resolutions.

Furthermore, through an examination and evaluation of this conflict within a more comprehensive and all-encompassing framework, this study aims to surmount the inclination in current literature to perceive this conflict in a limited manner as a competition for resources. This study conceptualises the aforementioned conflicts as constituents of a multifaceted and intricate endeavour for self-governance, self-definition, and fundamental entitlements, which transpires within a fluid and frequently imbalanced sociopolitical and economic milieu.

Notwithstanding its primary focus on the conflicts between indigenous communities and corporations in Southeast Asia, the outcomes and perspectives of this study may have applicability and value in other settings. In a world that is becoming more globalised and interconnected, comparable conflicts frequently arise in diverse regions, spanning from Latin America to Africa (Acuña, 2015; Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2020; Scheidel et al., 2020; Whiteman, 2009; Whyte, 2020). Hence, it is imperative to gain a more comprehensive comprehension of these conflicts, their susceptibility to political and economic influences, and the viable means of resolving them in a fair and enduring manner.

The present study aims to enhance comprehension of the conflicts that arise between corporations and indigenous communities in Southeast Asia. Additionally, it is anticipated that this research will facilitate future investigations and practical measures to effectively manage these conflicts and safeguard the rights and welfare of indigenous populations. This study is in line with the growing worldwide endeavours to acknowledge and uphold the entitlements of indigenous communities, and to advance just and enduring progress.

METHODS

The purpose of this research is to understand the disputes that occur between corporations and indigenous communities in Southeast Asia within the framework of political and economic considerations. The methodology used is qualitative, and the data collection technique used is an analysis of sources of information obtained through

online (Lefever et al., 2007; Torrentira, Moises C., 2020), likes journal articles, news, reports, and publications by governments and international organisations. Subsequent to their collection, the aforementioned documents undergo a process of analysis aimed at discerning recurring patterns, themes, and narratives pertaining to the conflict. This analysis primarily centres on the influence of political and economic policies on conflict dynamics as well as their effects on natural resources and indigenous populations.

The research spanned a two-month data collection period from various online sources in various Southeast Asian countries. The data is further categorized by type of issue, individuals or groups involved, and affected countries.

The results of this approach produce a holistic picture of the conflicts that arise between indigenous communities and business entities in the Southeast Asian region by considering the political and economic dimensions. The aspiration of this research is to provide new and relevant perspectives for development professionals, policymakers, and scholars in understanding the existence of indigenous communities as entities that are often disadvantaged in contemporary economic and political dynamics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The contemporary issue of the conflict between indigenous communities and corporations at the intersection of politics and economics is a topic of interest in the field of non-traditional security studies. The aforementioned conflict has the potential to initiate the development of additional conflicts that may pose a risk to a nation's national interests (Horn, 2014). This matter is particularly significant, particularly in light of its intersection with concerns surrounding identity, external intervention, and socio-economic inequalities between indigenous and non-indigenous populations.

Result

Indigenous communities refer to those belonging to communities that have traditionally resided in a specific geographic region or country (Echo-Hawk, 2011). The environment has a significant impact on various aspects of cultures, languages, and individual lifestyles. Indigenous communities frequently exhibit a profound connection to their lands and environmental resources, which serve as a crucial means of sustenance for their livelihoods (Tipa & Welch, 2006). Indigenous communities are dispersed across various regions of the world, including Southeast Asia (Eversole et al., 2008). According to Figure 1, as presented by the World Bank's data, the presence of indigenous populations in Southeast Asia ranks third.

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing conflict between indigenous communities in Southeast Asia and governmental bodies and corporations regarding the allocation and utilisation of land and resources (W. Holden et al., 2011; W. N. Holden, 2005; Tipton, 2009; Xanthaki, 2003). Enterprises exhibit a keen interest in the natural resources of Southeast Asia, including but not limited to timber, oil, mining, and gas. Frequently, there is a pursuit to cultivate these resources on territories that have historically been possessed by native communities.
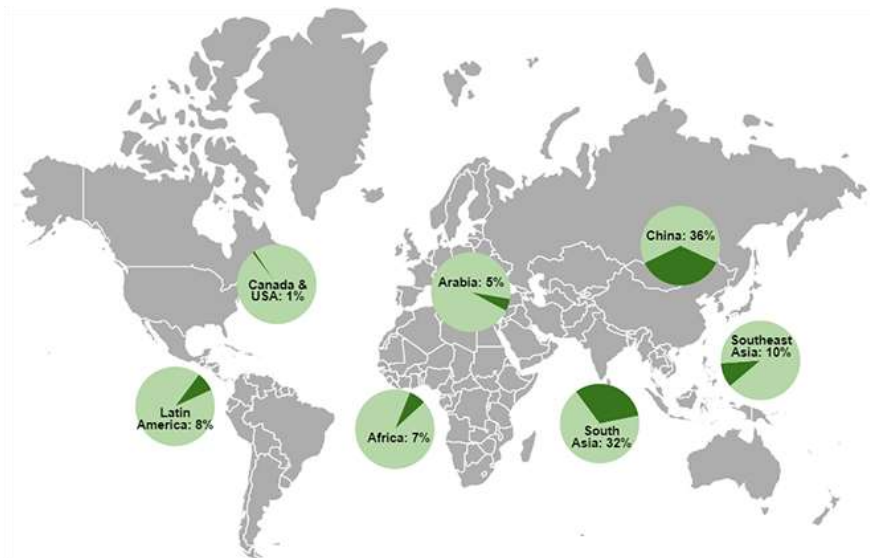

Figure 1. Estimated Distribution of Indigenous Communities in the World

The Southeast Asian governments exhibit a strong inclination towards the attraction of foreign investment and the promotion of economic development (Carroll, 2020; Lucas, 1993). It is possible that they could provide backing for the creation of such resources on traditional territories, regardless of the potential displacement of indigenous populations. Table 1 displays the prevalent conflicts that arise between corporations and Indigenous communities in Southeast Asia.

The intricate matters of contention between corporations and indigenous communities in Southeast Asia have a protracted historical background. The phenomenon under consideration is founded upon the historical and persistent act of expropriating indigenous communities of their territories and natural assets. The exacerbation of the conflict is attributable to the inadequate political representation and dearth of economic opportunities available to the indigenous population (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013).

The absence of political representation and economic opportunities for indigenous communities in Southeast Asia further intensifies the conflicts that arise between them and corporations. Indigenous populations frequently encounter marginalisation and

exclusion from the political decision-making apparatus. Individuals have limited or negligible influence in the formulation of policies that impact their livelihood.

Table 1. Conflict Issues Between Indigenous Communities and Corporations in Southeast Asia

No	Countries	Conflict Issues
1	Indonesia	Land grabbing, environmental damage, violence, and unfair law enforcement.
2	Malaysia	Forced evictions, damage to forest ecosystems, abuse of indigenous communities rights.
3	Thailand	Environmental damage due to exploitation of natural resources, forced evictions from customary lands, unfair enforcement of land rights, and neglect of indigenous communities rights.
4	Cambodia	Deforestation, loss of livelihoods, economic inequality, and unfair law enforcement.
5	Vietnam	Enforcement of land rights, environmental damage from large-scale farming and development projects, and social and economic marginalisation
6	Singapore	Urban development and gentrification, community exclusion, and social and economic inequality.
7	Philippines	Gold mine exploitation, environmental damage, and social and economic marginalisation.
8	Brunei	Limited access to resources and economic opportunities, as well as potential negative impacts from the exploitation of natural resources.
9	Lao PDR	Environmental impacts of corporate projects, loss of land and resources, social marginalisation.
10	Myanmar	Exploitation of natural resources, environmental damage, land displacement, social and politics unrest, unfair law enforcement, and human rights.
11	Timor Leste	Land displacement, environmental damage, and unfair distribution of benefits.

Furthermore, indigenous communities frequently encounter limited access to economic prospects. Exclusion from land ownership and employment opportunities may be a possibility for them. The absence of economic prospects poses a challenge for indigenous communities in safeguarding their territories and natural assets against corporate and governmental entities.

Figure 2. Mapping of Indegenous Land in Southeast Asia Countries

The matter of conflicts between corporations and indigenous communities has garnered growing attention within the Southeast Asian region (Clarke, 2001; Tipton, 2009; Xanthaki, 2003). This study aims to comprehend and expose the recurring trends in the conflict by examining four primary concerns: land displacement, environmental degradation, legal disputes and violence, and economic and social inequalities.

Initially, the process of removing vegetation and other obstacles from a particular area of land Indigenous populations in nations such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Cambodia are frequently confronted with the possibility or actuality of land dispossession. The indigenous population's longstanding management and utilisation of land and natural resources for both practical and ceremonial purposes is vulnerable to exploitation by corporate entities. Indigenous communities have frequently encountered instances of land expropriation without adequate consultation or compensation.

The forced removals of indigenous communities had adverse effects not only on their economic and social welfare but also on their cultural and spiritual essence. Indigenous communities attribute significant value to land and nature, not only as tangible assets but also as integral components of their cultural and spiritual heritage. Consequently, the displacement of land frequently results in the deprivation of a significant aspect of their cultural legacy and individuality.

The issue of environmental damage is of significant importance. The exploitation of natural resources by corporations in countries like Laos and Vietnam has been observed to have a detrimental effect on the environment. Instances of environmental harm frequently include deforestation, pollution of water and soil, and other forms of ecosystem degradation. The aforementioned activity not only causes harm to the natural surroundings but also poses a threat to the long-term viability of the subsistence and cultural practises of indigenous communities, which rely heavily on the equilibrium and durability of the ecosystem.

Numerous instances of legal disputes and violent incidents were identified in relation to the clashes between indigenous communities and corporate entities. Indigenous populations in Indonesia and the Philippines frequently find themselves in a disadvantaged position when engaging in legal disputes with corporate entities. In addition, they are confronted with various forms of intimidation and violent actions that are intended to coerce them into relinquishing their stance to corporate interests.

This study concludes that there are increasing economic and social inequalities between indigenous communities and other factions that profit from the utilisation of natural resources. Indigenous populations in nations like Thailand and Myanmar frequently encounter a situation where they possess legal entitlements to their territories and ecological assets, yet they are frequently deprived of equitable economic gains that arise from the utilisation of these resources.

The aforementioned results offer a more profound comprehension of the intricacy and diversity of disputes that arise between native communities and business enterprises in the Southeast Asian region. The authors highlight that this matter pertains not solely to land or natural resource entitlements but also to the wider entitlements of indigenous communities, encompassing their entitlement to cultural and spiritual identity, their entitlement to a salubrious environment, and their entitlement to live without prejudice and violence. Furthermore, the aforementioned discoveries underscore the significance of assessing and modifying the insufficient commercial procedures and regulations that presently prevail in the interaction between native communities and enterprises in Southeast Asia. By doing so, it is possible to promote constructive transformation and guarantee the safeguarding and acknowledgement of the rights and concerns of native populations.

Discussion

The study's results demonstrate the significance of political and economic intersections in comprehending and managing conflicts between corporations and indigenous communities in Southeast Asia. This study is noteworthy as it demonstrates the influence of the prevailing political and economic framework on the dynamics and outcomes of the conflict.

The confluence of political and economic domains constitutes a multifaceted and dynamic terrain (Cox et al., 2019). The phenomenon of intersectionality is observable in Southeast Asia through the clashes that arise between corporations and indigenous communities (Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Ong, 2000; Ralph & Hancock, 2019).

For a considerable period, the indigenous communities in Southeast Asia have experienced marginalisation and exploitation (Achmadi et al., 2021; Clarke, 2001; Rokhim et al., 2020). Frequently, individuals are bereft of adequate representation or influence in the decision-making procedures that impact their territories and assets. This phenomenon can be attributed, at least in part, to the frequent revocation of their political rights. Certain individuals may not possess the same rights as other members of society, and they may encounter limitations in their ability to engage in political activities such as voting or participating in governmental affairs (Tomaselli, 2017).

In contrast, corporations wield substantial power and exert considerable influence in the Southeast Asian region (Brown, 2007; Kijkasiwat et al., 2022). Frequently, individuals and organisations are able to obtain land and resources from the government, even if it entails the displacement of indigenous populations. Frequently, such actions are carried out under the guise of promoting economic progress, yet they may result in calamitous outcomes for native populations.

The interactions between corporations and indigenous communities are frequently characterised by violent conflicts. Indigenous populations have suffered fatalities, physical harm, and forced relocation in the pursuit of economic advancement. The present discord additionally constitutes a potential hazard to the natural surroundings (Islam et al., 2016). Corporations have been known to engage in activities that result in the contamination of soil and water as well as the exacerbation of deforestation (Hughes, 2017; Laurance, 1999).

In the Southeast Asian region, there are various strategies that can be employed to address conflicts arising between indigenous communities and companies. One potential strategy involves enhancing the legal protections afforded to indigenous communities. This encompasses endowing individuals with the privilege to exercise their voting rights, engage in governmental affairs, and manage their territories and assets. An alternative strategy involves imposing responsibility on the organisation for its conduct.

This involves guaranteeing adherence to environmental regulations and preventing infringement on the rights of indigenous communities.

The issue of conflict between indigenous communities and corporations is multifaceted and intricate. Nonetheless, this presents a formidable obstacle that must be surmounted in order to attain sustainable development in the Southeast Asian region.

The study's findings demonstrate the significance of the interplay between politics and the economy in comprehending and managing disputes between indigenous communities and corporations in Southeast Asia. The primary point of contention in this conflict pertains to the eviction of land, which not only manifests as a physical struggle over territory but also has deep-seated roots in the prevailing political and economic framework.

Governmental organisations and legal frameworks frequently support and endorse the phenomenon of corporations engaging in land grabs, underscoring the precedence of economic considerations over human rights and social equity (Corbera et al., 2017; Yang & He, 2021). The assertion makes the claim that politics and law frequently find themselves in a catch situation where economic factors frequently drive political policies and decisions.

Within this framework, it is imperative to examine the ways in which extant political and economic frameworks may be moulded and modified in order to more effectively bolster the rights of indigenous populations. The aforementioned pertains to the implementation of legal and policy modifications that guarantee enhanced acknowledgement and safeguarding of the rights of indigenous communities. Additionally, it involves adopting a more comprehensive and human rights-centred strategy in economic policy and application.

The utilisation of natural resources by corporations has led to the deterioration of the environment (Downey et al., 2010). This observation indicates the interplay between the realms of politics and economics. Corporate business practises are often underpinned by policies and regulations that promote or facilitate the overexploitation of natural resources. The aforementioned highlights the intricate relationship between politics and economics in influencing the conduct of corporations and their resultant ecological impacts.

Legal disputes and violent acts serve as examples of the intersection of politics and the economy. The legal conflicts between corporations and indigenous communities frequently result in a disadvantaged position for the latter. The current legal and political frameworks are to blame for this because they reinforce injustice and inequality. Conversely, the application of violence in such confrontations is frequently bolstered by pre-existing political and economic frameworks that authorise or even endorse the implementation of violence as a means to achieve financial benefits.

The economic and social disparities that result from the exploitation of natural resources serve as evidence of the interaction between politics and the economy. The aforementioned discrepancy is indicative of the interplay between politics and economics in perpetuating and establishing inequity. Within this particular context, the research underscores the necessity for a political and economic approach that is more comprehensive and centred on human rights. This approach should acknowledge and safeguard the rights of indigenous communities while simultaneously advancing social and economic equity.

It is crucial to contemplate the involvement of global stakeholders, such as multilateral institutions and benefactor nations, at this juncture. International standards, trade agreements, and development aid policies are potential avenues through which conflicts can be influenced. As a result, the wider global context as well as internal factors have an impact on the complexity of this specific conflict.

Moreover, conducting comparisons with other nations can yield significant insights. Drawing insights from how conflicts are addressed in other regions can offer valuable insights for effectively resolving conflicts in Southeast Asia. The incorporation of particular case studies can facilitate a more comprehensive comprehension of the concerns and discoveries examined within this study.

The significance of media and information technology is noteworthy. The dissemination and reception of information pertaining to this conflict can exert a substantial impact on the public's perception and the policies that are implemented. Therefore, the formulation of an effective communication and information delivery strategy is a pivotal factor in the resolution of this conflict (Saleem & Hanan, 2014).

Furthermore, it is imperative to consider the influence of climate change on the aforementioned conflict. The impact of climate change on conflict, particularly in relation to natural resources, must be taken into account in conflict analysis.

Ultimately, it is imperative to engage in a discourse regarding tactics and tangible resolutions aimed at surmounting this particular conflict. In the study of conflict resolution, there are approaches that can minimise and even end conflict. This approach needs to be considered from a legal, economic, and socio-cultural perspective. The logical solution to this conflict is the need for legal and policy reforms, the inclusiveness of implementing economic policies and practises, as well as the recognition and involvement of the rights of indigenous communities.

The dynamics of this issue show the impact of the relationship between politics and the economy on conflicts involving indigenous communities and corporations in Southeast Asia. In addition, what needs to be highlighted is the contribution of various factors to the intricacies of this conflict. Then it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive perspective and use various tactics to manage these disputes efficiently and effectively.

CONCLUSION

The intersection of political and economic variables influences the characteristics of conflict between indigenous people and business organisations in Southeast Asian countries. The interaction between political and economic factors is reflected in the displacement of indigenous communities from their lands, environmental degradation, legal disputes, physical aggression, and economic and social inequality arising from corporate use of natural resources. The confluence of politics and law is often entangled in economic quandaries, wherein political policies and decisions are frequently influenced by economic considerations. The current study highlights the importance of implementing a holistic approach to tackle this dispute, which involves legal reorganisation, economic inclusivity, and recognition of the indigenous communities' rights.

Although this study is limited by its geographic and thematic parameters, it has the potential to expand research on the impact of climate change on global stakeholders. Potential research areas include further exploring the engagement of international stakeholders, analysing the consequences of climate change, and appraising concrete strategies to address this issue. The importance of understanding this conflict within a broader political and economic framework is emphasised by the extensive research conducted on this topic.

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