

Indonesia's Approach Toward Myanmar's Crisis: Understanding the Different Perspectives of the Democracy Process in Indonesia and Myanmar and the Role of the Military

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Abstrak

Kudeta militer baru-baru ini di Myanmar telah mengejutkan negara-negara ASEAN, menyebabkan beberapa orang mempertanyakan lintasan dan pendekatan ASEAN untuk mengatasi masalah demokratisasi. Negara-negara ASEAN telah mengambil pendekatan berbeda, sebagaimana seruan Majelis Umum PBB untuk menghentikan penjualan senjata ke Myanmar. Sementara, Indonesia, negara demokrasi terbesar ketiga di dunia, negara demokrasi terbesar di Asia Tenggara, dan salah satu anggota pendiri ASEAN, memimpin dalam mengakhiri krisis di Myanmar. Indonesia membawa masalah Myanmar ke pertemuan Pemimpin ASEAN pada 24 April 2021, menghasilkan konsensus lima poin dalam pertemuan khusus Jakarta untuk Myanmar, tetapi sejauh ini belum menunjukkan kemajuan yang nyata. Banyak cendekiawan, penggiat demokrasi, dan pemerhati kebijakan luar negeri menilai peran Indonesia dikarenakan keberhasilan mereformasi militernya dan menjadikannya profesional setelah mendominasi politik. Oleh karena itu, tulisan ini mencoba mengkaji berbagai perspektif pendekatan Indonesia dalam mendorong demokrasi di kawasan. Perkembangan terkini menunjukkan bahwa Indonesia telah secara halus menantang pendekatan tradisional kebijakan non-interferensi. Tulisan ini mendorong Indonesia untuk mempertahankan cara keterlibatan konstruktif ASEAN yang terbukti berhasil mendorong demokratisasi di Myanmar. Indonesia harus menjadi panutan bahwa berada di bawah kekuasaan sipil tidak membuat militer Myanmar semakin lemah, kurang sejahtera, atau tidak lagi dihargai sebagai perekat negara, melainkan sebaliknya. Tulisan ini juga merekomendasikan keterlibatan militer Indonesia ke Myanmar.

Kata Kunci: krisis Myanmar, pendekatan Indonesia, militer, demokrasi.

Abstract

The recent military coup in Myanmar has shocked ASEAN countries, causing some to question ASEAN's trajectory and approach to addressing the democratization issue. ASEAN countries have taken different approaches, as reflected in the UN General Assembly's call to halt arms sales to Myanmar. Meanwhile, Indonesia, the world's third-largest democracy, the largest democracy in Southeast Asia, and an ASEAN founding member, has taken the lead. Indonesia brought the issue to the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on 24 April 2021, resulting in a five-point consensus. However, it demonstrated no actual progress so far. Many scholars, democracy activists, and foreign policy observers consider Indonesia's role since its success in reforming its military and turning it into a professional after having political domination. Thus, this paper examined different perspectives on how Indonesia encourages democracy in the region. Recent development depicts that Indonesia has subtly challenged the traditional non-interference policy approach. This paper enables Indonesia to maintain ASEAN's constructive engagement. Indonesia must become a role model as the champion for a civilian rule that will not make Myanmar's military weaker, less prosperous, or no longer be

appreciated as the glue of the country—but vice versa. This paper also recommends intensifying the Indonesian military to military engagement with Myanmar.

Keywords: Myanmar crisis, Indonesia's approach, military, democracy.

INTRODUCTION

No nation in Southeast Asia is regarded as being fully democratic. Authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes have governed the area for many years. After being ruled for 32 years by an authoritarian regime, Indonesia seems to have added to convoluted identity politics. Even after the fall of Marcos in 1986, the Philippines is still not regarded as a fully functioning democracy. Recently, the country is still entangled with oligarchs. At the same time, Myanmar's democratic government lasted only a decade before being overthrown by the military in February 2021. Malaysia's opposition party, on the other hand, eventually won the general election for the first time in its history but lost the government in 2018. The same regime still runs Singapore since its independence, and Brunei has recently implemented the Syariah law. Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam have not exhibited any indication of democratization. All countries mentioned are still lacking in the democracy index. On the issue of Myanmar's crisis, ASEAN countries have taken different approaches, illustrated in the recent United National General Assembly's call for a halt of weapons to Myanmar (Ramcharan, 2000).

After declaring independence from the UK in 1948, Myanmar, known as Burma from 1962 to 2011, was administered by the military until a new administration began restoring civilian governance (Maung Htin Aung, 2022). Since then, the Myanmar military has remained a significant political force in many aspects: political, social, and economic. The dominations benefit the regime. They will try to eliminate anyone trying to change the economic and social privileges the military has gained for the last 70 years, including any opposition like the National League for Democracy (NLD) or power-questioning expression or opinion. Despite unexpected democratic actions taken into action by the military regime (e.g., the organization of the 2010 multi-party elections, the release of political prisoners

following the international community's demand, and other democratization policies), the military still holds significant political power in the form of one-fourth parliament seat reserve for military, manipulated election, support for the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), persecution of minorities, and other forms of policy privileging the military institution. Myanmar's democratization lasted a decade before the military seized control of the democratic government after a coup d'état in February 2021. The military accused the NLD, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, of voter fraud in the November 2020 election. It was when their representative party was defeated by the NLD, which achieved an overwhelming re-election victory (Fishbein, 2022). The Army Head, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, was given control by the military following the coup. Since then, Myanmar has been engulfed in turmoil. The military's initially moderate response to the first waves of pro-democracy demonstrations grew increasingly violent, culminating in a devastating assault on the movement. To eradicate the movement or resistance, the Myanmar military, known as the Tatmadaw, has been firing rockets and torching homes along the border (Goldman, 2021). The seizure of power by the military caused the death of 18 people on 28 January 2021 in the escalating conflict. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) has documented and released the data on the number of dead victims as of 17 June 2022, reaching 1,963 people, with 11,096 in custody, 1,154 directly sentenced, and 74 facing the death penalty. This number includes two children, and 120 people have been condemned in their absence, with 41 also receiving the death penalty (United Nations, 2021).

Indonesia, as the world's third-largest democracy, the largest in Southeast Asia, one of the founding members of ASEAN, and has a history of a military coup under the President Suharto era, has taken the lead in bringing Myanmar's conflict to an end. Indonesia has brought the

Myanmar issue to the spotlight of the ASEAN Leaders' Conference in Jakarta on 24 April 2021. As a result, the ASEAN's approach to resolving the political situation in Myanmar, organized by the organization in Jakarta in April 2021, resulted in a five-point agreement, including an immediate cessation of hostilities, providing humanitarian aid and designating an ASEAN envoy to promote communication between all stakeholders (Nachemson & Fishbein, 2022). Indonesia's President, Joko Widodo, asserted in a video statement after the summit that the violence in Myanmar should be put to an end and democracy, as well as peace and stability, must be restored (Paddock, 2021). Unfortunately, it has made no substantive progress in the year since the summit.

Many academics, democratic activists, and foreign policy analysts have questioned whether Indonesia should play a more active role in Southeast Asia, notably Myanmar, to promote democratization. These individuals also push Indonesia to make ASEAN rethink its ASEAN way, specifically in the non-interference policy. Although ASEAN has moved beyond its traditional *non-interference* approach, many scholars believe that the non-interference principle still constrains ASEAN's action on regional issues, such as Myanmar's crisis. Other scholars, on the other hand, argue that the most crucial thing is to maintain regional peace and stability while simultaneously attempting more flexible engagement. Thus, this study aims to examine various perspectives on how Indonesia promotes democracy in the region and explain the most appropriate approach with the constructive engagement model. This article is also expected to contribute to Indonesian policymakers. The actors are at the domestic level and in ASEAN and Myanmar. International relations students have also become the other target of the intended readership to support their understanding of the Myanmar issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study has reviewed several works of literature on Myanmar's military-junta-related political crisis. It groups them into at least three clusters based on their stances in discussing interventive policies toward Myanmar. The first cluster concerns the debate on whether interventive

policies in Myanmar can be justified. While some scholars believe that ASEAN and its members have the responsibility to protect and provide humanitarian assistance for Myanmar's civil society suffering from the crisis (Tan, 2019; Ryu, Minn, & Mon, 2021), other studies question the problem and dilemma behind the discourse and action of interventive action toward Myanmar because of conflictual norms within the region (Rüland, 2022; Prayitno, 2022). The second cluster overviews the roles and norms of external entities in addressing Myanmar's political crisis, ranging from ASEAN's humanitarian assistance to Southeast Asian nations' diplomatic culture (Duan & Liu, 2023; Wicaksana, Nauvarian & Pramudia, 2023).

There is also a third cluster of studies concerning constructive engagement in Southeast Asia, especially the issue of Myanmar. This cluster is a "middle way" in responding to this debate within the first study cluster. They explicated the efforts of constructive engagement and their effectiveness at both the ASEAN and member-state levels in championing Myanmar's political system's transformation toward democracy (Fan, 2012; Jones, 2008; Lim, 2008; Aryani, 2019). Most observed Myanmar's democratization between the late 2000s and early 2010s.

Nevertheless, a coup in 2021 that ended the ten years of transition to Myanmar's democracy reveals that one of the weaknesses of constructive engagement studies on the issue of democratization and Myanmar's political crisis is that it focuses too much on civil society engagement, increasingly irrelevant in dealing with the current reality of Myanmar's military junta. Sonu Trivedi's study (2013) strengthens this assumption that Myanmar's democratization was hindered by the division of civil society's voices due to the presence of reformists and conservative sympathizers of Myanmar's military regime. Trivedi's study of this reality ironically depicts that a constructive engagement approach study must allow engagement with those in power and accept their point of view as part of implementing constructive engagement, which must be passed and guarded. In other words, a study regarding constructive engagement on this issue, even though it aims to analytically explain and promote

the possibility of ending the democratization of a political system (civil government), also requires military and political perspectives.

To fill the literature gap, this study brings the paradigm that a constructive engagement approach is very likely to involve the perspective and role of the military from Myanmar's partners to achieve productive-constructive results. The choice of Indonesia as the object of discussion and perspective of this study is to juxtapose its experience of democratization and military reform directly and indirectly with the situation in Myanmar. This study is expected to enable constructive engagement between the two countries' military sectors to create a shared understanding of the military's role in democratic civil politics.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Constructive engagement is an approach to security and strategy concerns based on the idea that it is possible to apply pressure on other parties to create constructive change without utilizing coercive methods on a party. The approach concentrates on the dynamics of internal change and the process (Vodanvic, 1991). The refusal to employ coercive methods, such as sanctions and isolation strategies, is rooted in effectiveness assumptions. Historically, the US initially utilized it to respond to the problem of its relationship with South Africa between the 1970s and 1985. It was adopted, as a foreign policy, in a world in which the Cold War and the nuclear deterrent shaped the security debate and policy initiatives. The two superpowers essentially controlled the nuclear balance of power. This policy responded to the contentious debate over sanctions and South Africa's isolation that the liberal constituency in the West demanded at the time. It provided an alternative and mediating strategy that acknowledged the illegitimacy of the apartheid regime, thus recognizing and responding to the concerns of the domestic lobby in the US while avoiding the isolation of South Africa. Instead, the objective was to utilize the continuing relationship and the inclusion of South Africa in the Western international community to influence its internal policies (Masilamani & Peterson, 2014).

Moreover, it is essential to note that constructive engagement is based on an "ASEAN Way" principle, often known as the *non-interference* policy. It means that ASEAN countries do not interfere in the internal affairs of each other, neither by openly criticizing them nor by supporting opposition groups. To understand the origins of ASEAN's founding concept of *non-interference*, it can be traced back to its history. Colonial control and the Cold War led Southeast Asian states to view sovereignty as crucial in securing domestic and regional stability (Masilamani & Peterson, 2014). It is one of the reasons why ASEAN countries prefer formal meetings and discussions, such as constructive engagement, to direct force (e.g., providing money and military forces to solve their problems) regardless of their sovereignty's disruption or violation.

Following the constructive engagement approach, a strong relationship exists between the political and economic aspects, which cannot be separated. The economic aspect includes creating economic cooperation between parties to support political change within a country (Vodanvic, 1991). This economic cooperation can lead to economic growth and encourage national development. In return, economic stability will support the sustainability of the political transition and the democratic process of a country (Masilamani & Peterson, 2014).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted qualitatively through the case study method. Initially, Indonesia's democratic transition was analyzed, especially from the placement of military agents in the government bureaucracy until the reformation era in 1998, which significantly replaced the military regime. This study also identified the track of the military rule in Myanmar through the years with the dynamic of the democracy movement to date (2022). Subsequently, it compared Indonesia's response to Myanmar (one case) to the other ASEAN countries' responses (multiple cases). Moreover, it highlighted how Indonesia differs from the "non-interference policy" of other countries through the analytical concept of constructive engagement. The data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Five key figures

were interviewed, including but not limited to the Head of the Center for Policy Strategy for Asia Pacific and Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the Director of Foreign Policy and International Development Cooperation, the Ministry of the National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia, the Head of the Asia Pacific Division, Defence Strategic Installation Agency, National Defence Agency, the Rear Admiral of the Indonesian Military (Retired), Professional Staff for Strategy and International Relations and Diplomacy of the National Defence Institution of the Republic of Indonesia (LEMHANAS RI), and the expertise academics from Myanmar. The secondary resources were collected from official documents of both governments, research articles, reports, databases, and many more.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

MYANMAR'S 2021 CRISIS AT A GLANCE

Myanmar's military coup d'état in February 2021 has reversed a decade of this country's democratization. The coup happened out of the military's response to their "major lost" during the 2020 general election in November 2020, where Myanmar's military-backed USDP lost its majority in both the lower and upper houses of the legislative body. The military accused the NLD, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, of voter fraud in the November 2020 election when their representative party was defeated by NLD, which achieved an overwhelming re-election victory. After the coup, the military regime enforced a supposedly one-year state of emergency that legitimized their rule, superseding the civilian one. The Army Head, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, was given control by the military following the coup. He had long exercised enormous political authority, effectively retaining the Tatmadaw's (Myanmar's military) power when the country attempted to transition to democracy. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing stated that the military would build a "genuine and disciplined democracy" on behalf of the people and promised to hold a "free and fair" election.

In addition, the military leadership has been continuing to violently repress and persecute the people of Myanmar to crack down on dissent and maintain

control of the country. To prevent the junta from succeeding, widespread protest and opposition movements frequently employed both nonviolent and violent means. In addition to instability, Myanmar's economy has been in freefall, the national currency has collapsed, health and education systems have failed, and the poverty rate has escalated. According to the 2021 UNDP Report, 12 million people will live under the poverty line by 2022, rising to 25 million, more than half of the country's population. Despite the dire circumstances and significant consequences of having a failed state in the heart of the Indo-Pacific, international interest has waned. With Covid-19 and Russia's military aggression in Ukraine, international attention on Myanmar has retreated after a year of persistent protests and civil unrest. The international community, particularly the Western countries, expects ASEAN as the main regional block to take more initiative and responsibility for Myanmar's ongoing crisis (Ratcliffe, 2021).

The military regime, also known as the State Administrative Council, began to attack its opponents and their friends and supporters. The military's originally moderate response to the first waves of pro-democracy demonstrations grew increasingly violent, culminating in a devastating assault on the movement. Their soldiers regularly executed and tortured detainees, including minors, and indiscriminately attacked cities and towns with heavy weapons. Opposition activists created the Civil Disobedience Campaign (CDM) to help organize strikes and mass demonstrations against the coup. The military utilized shooting live bullets, water cannons, and rubber bullets to take them down. What began as civil disobedience has now devolved into civil strife across Myanmar, making the ongoing long-term conflict between the military junta and ethnic armed organizations worsen. Local militias known as the People's Self-Defense Forces (PDFs) attacked military convoys and assassinated government leaders. The government retaliated against the PDFs with violence, including the torture and murder of 40 citizens in the opposition stronghold in Sagaing County in July 2021 (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Myanmar government in exile formed by the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), a group of elected lawmakers and members of parliament ousted in the 2021 Myanmar coup d'état, formed the National Unity Government (NUG) and declared a "people's patriotic war" in September 2021, calling on civilians across the country to rebel against the military junta. Resistance forces continued to ambush military convoys daily, bomb regime-related targets, and assassinate regime-appointed local officials who were suspected informants, and others believed to be loyal to the ruling junta. Although the NUG lacked military capabilities, their claims did not lead to the hoped-in escalation. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), since the military dictatorship came to power, 1,503 people have been killed, jailed, or detained by the military. Following Aced, a US-based organization, about 12,000 people could have been killed, aggregating data from news sources and publications of human rights organizations (BBC, 2022).

ASEAN'S APPROACH TO MYANMAR

The Myanmar question tests ASEAN unity and its effort to resolve the stagnant condition in Myanmar. Since its inception, ASEAN has institutionalized a framework for its member states to manage differences and disputes. The subsequent institutionalization of ASEAN produced several essential mechanisms classified into two categories: (1) formal and (2) informal or normative. The common formal mechanisms are an institutionalized framework of discussion and consultation on common concerns, long-standing bilateral mechanisms and processes, and legal tools to prevent and resolve disputes. ASEAN summits, ministerial meetings, and senior officials' meetings are examples of wide-range consultation forums addressing regional and international issues (Caballero-Anthony, 2005). ASEAN has relatively successfully utilized those mechanisms to resolve the conflict between member states, contributing to a more stable regional order. The problem is when ASEAN requires or is forced to resolve conflict within its member states.

The debate over how to deal with the crisis in Myanmar is a long-standing issue that began in 1988 when the military junta came to power, and Myanmar was not yet a member of ASEAN. One approach is to punish and isolate Myanmar's regime. Western countries and various democratic and ethnic groups in Myanmar have endorsed this approach. Another approach is to engage in an open-door policy, encouraging investment and trade while recognizing the military junta to promote liberalization (Ungar, 1985). ASEAN has long maintained that constructive engagement is rational and sensible, considers existing realities, and produces political change in a controlled and manageable manner. This so-called "constructive engagement" means countries with conflicting interests must consult regularly. This approach, which Thailand initiated, was selected as it aligned with the "ASEAN Way" spirit and adhered to ASEAN legal frameworks, such as ASEAN Declaration 1967, the ZOPFAN treaty, TAC, and the ASEAN charter. These treaties are morally binding for ASEAN members with the principles of mutual respect for all nations' independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity (Masilamani & Peterson, 2014).

The constructive engagement began to be adopted by ASEAN in 1991 as a soft diplomacy approach to encourage diplomatic relations and economic cooperation between ASEAN member countries and Myanmar to elevate domestic economic and social development that, in return, will influence political liberalization and democratization in Myanmar. This constructive engagement implies that states with conflicts of interest are committed to consultation (Masilamani & Peterson, 2014). ASEAN has maintained that its use of constructive engagement involves encouraging Myanmar to modify policies through frequent contact and quiet diplomacy rather than hurting its lower and middle classes through sanctions. Many scholars argue that this constructive engagement approach has at least managed to bring democracy back to Myanmar in 2011, even though it failed to survive when a military coup brought down the civilian government in February 2021.

Since then, ASEAN's non-interference has been under scrutiny. ASEAN's strict definition of the UN Charter of state sovereignty and non-intervention was questioned since other prominent international community principles of "Responsibility to Protect (R2P)" emerged and challenged the old definition of state sovereignty. However, as Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi emphasized after Myanmar's military junta took over, even though the ASEAN principles of non-interference must be respected, the ASEAN Charter also has other equally crucial values that, at the same time, uphold and implement the values of democracy, respect for human rights, good governance, the rule of law, and constitutional government. Hence, she insisted that the principle be treated with the same commitment as the other values enshrined in the ASEAN Charter (Septiari, 2022). It is the first time that Indonesia has subtly challenged the unquestioned norms of the non-interference policy to maintain regional peace and stability while simultaneously attempting more flexible engagement—in this case, by employing constructive engagement as soft diplomacy. However, it should be noted that "challenge" here refers to Indonesia's behavioral shift from "dogmatic compliance" to "pragmatic" one, as seen in further explication about Indonesia's stance on Myanmar's military junta.

INDONESIA'S APPROACH TO MYANMAR'S MILITARY CRISIS

Indonesia has adopted a constructive approach to support the resolution of the problem of democracy in Myanmar. With this approach, Indonesia has prioritized constructive efforts built on solidarity, closeness, brotherhood, and partnership in various fields. The Indonesian government utilized constructive engagement as a persuasive diplomacy strategy to promote Myanmar's democratization. In realizing the concept, Indonesia has employed both open and closed approaches toward Myanmar. The open approach was performed through diplomacy, while the closed one was a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) equipped to go there. Indonesia also has arranged for its military to privately conduct

privately conduct military-military diplomacy with Myanmar (Mangindaan, 2022). In addition, it is crucial to note Indonesia's involvement in Myanmar's crisis by adhering to the principle of non-interference.

Moreover, Indonesia's approach to Myanmar's crisis has been taken in various ways: bilateral, regional, and multilateral. In bilateral relations, Indonesia is the first country in the ASEAN region to take the initiative with "shuttle diplomacy" by serving as an intermediary and visiting its partners sequentially. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Retno Marsudi, has visited Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand to collect support for more concerted regional action for an inclusive democratic transition on the situation in Myanmar (Strangio, 2022).

Meanwhile, Indonesia has conducted various dialogue steps with Myanmar in bilateral relations. Initially, the dialogue between President Thein Sein and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) occurred in 2021 in Myanmar as part of the ASEAN Summit series. President SBY committed during the meeting to push Myanmar to carry out its pledge to lead the world in terms of democracy and support democratic causes. Before this, President SBY engaged in second-track diplomacy by writing to the Head of Myanmar's Armed Forces, General Than Shwee. The letter aimed to establish a close bond with Myanmar, hoping that Myanmar could work with other nations. In addition, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia Retno Marsudi and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met in 2016, which resulted in an agreement between Myanmar and Indonesia to improve interfaith cooperation discussed at the meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to further the commitment made by both countries to enhance their cooperation in democracy, human rights, and good governance.

Furthermore, on 25 January 2017, Retno Marsudi and Aung San Suu Kyi met again and discussed the cooperation on capacity building. Indonesia, let alone the fact that both countries share a common history, has been seen by Myanmar as a good laboratory for studying democratic transition processes. Finally, a meeting was held again between Aung San Suu Kyi and Retno

Marsudi on 4 September 2017, in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, in response to the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine (Hanggoro, 2017). Indonesia has recognized the significance of resolving the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine as a crucial component of enhancing democracy, particularly concerning enacting human rights principles in Myanmar.

At a regional level, Indonesia has encouraged ASEAN members to play more actively in Myanmar's political turmoil. Some efforts in persuading ASEAN members were to agree on an action plan that would hold Myanmar's junta to conduct elections in a year as promised, deploy monitors to ensure that they are fair and inclusive, hold a special ASEAN summit to address the country's crisis, and call for ASEAN to facilitate dialogue between the junta and the burgeoning anti-coup protest and civil disobedience movement. Apart from that, Indonesia has also maintained communication with foreign ministers from other countries such as the US, China, India, Japan, Australia, the EU, the UK, and France to update the situation in Myanmar and the efforts being conducted. Communication was also regularly carried out with the Secretary General of the UN (Bonasir, 2021). Western countries might be concerned about adopting Indonesia's and ASEAN's constructive engagement, given that sanctions and isolation have not worked effectively in other authoritarian countries.

On the one hand, Indonesia has attempted to open the tap for dialogue with the regime by respecting the non-interference principle—meaning no actual sanctions and the isolation of the military junta. The willingness to open the dialogue can be seen in the step of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia Retno Marsudi, who met directly with Myanmar's Minister of Foreign Affairs, chosen by the military junta, Wunna Maung Lwin, on 24 February 2021, in Thailand. On the other hand, it is no doubt that under the humanitarian and democracy issue, the Foreign Affairs Minister emphasized Indonesia's position to be with the people of Myanmar. It is evident through capacity-building activities in the Institute for Peace and Democracy (IPD) forum. In other words, such political and democratic assistance from Indonesia aims

to incrementally transform a foreign nation's political system into Indonesia's preference.

Indonesia was the host country to conduct the Dialogue on Leadership and Political Party Reform in Bali on 9-10 November 2013. Participants from Myanmar came from various institutions, including political parties, parliament members, and many more. Afterward, the Indonesian Embassy in Yangon, in cooperation with IPD, also paid a visit during the Myanmar 2015 election (Adian., 2018). According to IPD's Executive Director I Ketut Putra Erawan, Indonesia's President SBY played a significant role in Myanmar's democratic transition. SBY, Indonesia's first directly elected president and a former general, helped mediate conflicts between the Myanmar government and ethnic minorities, provided input on drafting democratic laws, and invited officials to learn about democratic institutions in Indonesia (Nirmala, 2021). Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) is Indonesia's strategy created in President SBY's era in December 2008. As part of its strategy and mission to support the growth and promotion of democracy in Asia, Indonesia organizes this forum. BDF is an open forum that welcomes participation from all nations, not just Asia but also those from other continents. A member of ASEAN, Myanmar, has been present at this forum. Each participating nation, including Myanmar, has collaborated through this forum to share experiences and best practices to strengthen non-forced democracy, develop internal strength, and grow as a nation. By participating in this forum, Myanmar has actively contributed to the discussion and spreading democracy without external pressure or interference. It is possible because Indonesia, the initiator, has continued to advocate for the ASEAN norm that governs member countries' relations: the principle of non-intervention (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2014).

It is interesting to note that Indonesia and Myanmar have quite a long relationship and similar political history. Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, was recorded as one that reached out after Indonesia proclaimed independence. After Myanmar's first military coup in 1962, the two were not very close. However,

during the tenure of President SBY, Myanmar took Indonesia as an example, especially given a similar political history. Thus, after General Thein Sein's government announced a strategy for democratic reform in 2011, SBY continued to advise the Myanmar military closely (Nirmala, 2021).

Both states tried to apply liberal democracy early in their independence. In Indonesia, for example, democratization after the reformation era in 1998 successfully changed the power structure. The military determination in politics had declined significantly, despite the military still holding power to influence political and economic affairs. Meanwhile, in Myanmar, democratization resulted from a long-term transition previously planned by the military regime; even the military held control over politics and tended to maintain its authority within the new face of the democratic system (Priamarizky, 2017).

Indonesia, with its leadership in ASEAN, has been considered to have a vital role in giving more lessons for the democratic transition in Myanmar continuously. Although respecting the principle of non-interference is mandatory, it is also vital for Indonesia to implement other principles and values in the ASEAN Charter, such as democracy, human rights, good governance, the rule of law, and constitutional government. Constructive engagement has been considered the best option to keep urging Myanmar to change its policies through long-term contacts and persuasive diplomacy, rather than isolating the country or applying economic sanctions, despite low effectiveness.

Indonesia should maintain ASEAN's constructive engagement approach that effectively promotes democratization in Myanmar. Moreover, considering its track record of mediating Southeast Asia's disputes and its ability to transition seamlessly, Indonesia is expected to succeed in the democratic transition in Myanmar. Indonesia has prepared three scenarios to predict the democratic process in Myanmar. The scenarios are based on Indonesia, Thailand, and Egypt's experience. All scenarios have their challenges for Myanmar. According to Muhammad Takdir, the Head of the Center for Policy Strategy for the Asia Pacific and Africa Region, the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Indonesia needs to keep building constructive communication and coordination with other ASEAN members to initiate a better mechanism for the stability of Myanmar and Southeast Asia (Muhammad Takdir, 2022). However, the problem lies in the Myanmar military or Tatmadaw's unwillingness to accept democratic transition, as evidenced by its reluctance to amend the 2008 constitution that gives so much power to the military, with any effort to do so will lead to another military coup.

Finally, constructive engagement has become a strategic choice for the Indonesian government in supporting democratization in Myanmar. It is because the decision to utilize the constructive engagement strategy is not detached from Indonesia's efforts to implement the "ASEAN Way" value, which is a form of diplomacy implemented between ASEAN member countries. It includes the involvement of dialogue, consensus-building, consultation, and strict implementation of non-interference principles. In this case, constructive engagement is part of the "ASEAN Way" initiated in 1991 as ASEAN's diplomatic approach toward Myanmar in response to the country's democratization and human rights issue.

REFLECTION ON INDONESIA'S DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS, A CONTRIBUTION TO MYANMAR TODAY

Interestingly, Indonesia became one of the world's largest democracies in 1998 after undergoing a political transformation. This stance has an impact on how regional democracy develops, particularly on how Indonesia handles this issue. Consequently, Indonesia has been regarded as an unlikely role model for the peaceful democratic transfer of power in the region. One of the critical reasons for the success of Indonesia's democratic transition is the reform of the military. The military is willing to reform itself from within and secure some of the most strategic transformations. The military no longer has a seat in the parliament, no civilian post while active, no private business, and planning and budgeting are under civilian control. Even though the

reform is ongoing, the military is now one of the country's most trusted institutions, ahead of the president (Chin, 2021).

Historically, Indonesia's successful democratization process, which gradually changed from a military dominance regime into a civilian rule, came from four factors implemented in continuity: (1) the creation of political and constitutional institutions, (2) consolidation of interest groups and political parties, (3) change in attitude and the presence of new actors, and (4) embedding democratic values. Furthermore, the government of Indonesia preceded the democratization process by making a political development vision of 2005 – 2025. The consolidation of democracy is controlled under five directions of development policy. The direction covers the political structure, the role of the state and society, the culture and political process, international affairs, and communication and information (Utomo, 2022).

In detail, how does Indonesia manage to transform into democratic governance and reform its military? One of the most critical points is the willingness of the military itself to change. Many of Indonesia's military leaders were Western-educated and were exposed to democratic-civilian rule. They supported Security Sector Reform (SSR), which, according to DAC, it is defined as "the transformation of the 'security system'—which includes all the actors, their roles, responsibilities, and actions, working together to manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance" (Sedra, 2010).

Through Indonesia's stages of SSR, it can be seen that military reformation could push the democratization process at the same time. The civil bureaucracy and society had a significant role, especially in bringing demand for democratization, eliminating injustice actions, and addressing human rights abuse during that time. The progressive maneuverer of legislative and executive created strategic laws and regulations to limit military movement. Furthermore, the military has been willing to support the reformation by implementing seven mandatory aspects under TAP MPR

No.VII/MPR/2000 and Law No. 34 of 2004: (1) respect toward human rights and civil supreme, (2) compliance toward government's policies and political decisions, (3) a discipline against military operations other than war, (4) rotation of the commander position of Indonesian National Armed Forces, (5) guarantee of a decent income, (6) prohibition of occupying civil office, and (7) prohibition of engaging in practical politics and business activities (SETARA Institute, 2019). This gradual but rapid reformation would not have been easy if the military did not have the mindset and mentality to change.

Nowadays, Indonesia has been a consistent performer in an otherwise weak and turbulent global economy after 20 years of reform. Since 2003, the economy has grown at an annual rate of 5.5%. It has proven remarkably resilient, surviving numerous shocks, such as the global financial crisis of 2008–2009, the end of the China-fueled commodity boom in late 2011, acute market pressures during the May 2013 'taper tantrum', China-US trade war, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the economic hardships, Indonesia's democratic governance stood its ground.

Indonesia has been assisting Myanmar since the beginning of its democratic transition. The assistance has been provided through various means, such as bilateral dialogue, multilateral dialogue, and regular and consistent capacity building. These, however, only strengthened civil governance and civil society in Myanmar. They did not encourage the initiative and the mindset to change within the military elites—the mindset and mentality required to foster Myanmar's smooth democratic transition.

The military coup in February 2021 illustrates that Indonesia's assistance has failed to persuade military reform from within. Indonesia must work with Myanmar's military elites and prove to them that economic progress requires political stability. Myanmar's military elites must understand that they cannot achieve economic progress while consistently holding onto power and spending years fighting insurgents or, worse civil war. Rather than only benefitting from the larger size of a small cake, the army should focus on making an

enormous cake from which everyone benefits, including itself. It should realize that the country will remain ungovernable unless people see progress and long-term benefits. Myanmar's people do want to go back under military rule. They have tasted democracy, and whether arguably it still has some flaws, economic progress has come with Myanmar's democratic transition.

It is a fact that the military position in Myanmar is still at the top, unlike in Indonesia, which has been on the margins. In Indonesia, the military has organs and measurable rules for its involvement in a democratic country. It needs to be transferred to Myanmar through a platform on how we deal with radicalism, mass protest, and the rise of extremism sponsored by outsiders. Indonesia's involvement was narrow, where the Indonesian military participated and was not the one who should bring changes there because there would be worries and concerns if Indonesia became a pawn of other countries.

Indonesia might be reluctant to take the lead, as SBY once said that Indonesia did not lecture. Indonesia might not want to lecture Myanmar but show examples that subtly encourage Myanmar's military elites to look at Indonesia's progress since the reformation demonstrates that the military is not left behind or marginalized under the civilian rule but remains robust, prosperous, and powerful. It could be realized by several Myanmar Army officers studying in Indonesia, just as Indonesian Army officers studying in the US or Australia. It may take years, but learning from Indonesia's experiences has encouraged more civilian-minded leaders in the military.

Colonel A.R Purwoko, the Head of the Asia Pacific Division, Defence Strategic Installation Agency, National Defence Agency of the Republic of Indonesia, revealed the experience of Indonesia's defense cooperation with major democratic countries. To become a professional military in democratic civil-military relations, a military organization (which itself is a "political institution"), in building its expertise, needs to absorb a system of values and norms, as well as belief in democratic principles. It can be obtained from the practices of democratic countries derived from defense cooperation. In the context of Myanmar, the same process experienced by the

Indonesian military can serve as a model to help its military become professional and uphold democratic values (Colonel A.R Purwoko, 2022).

Thus, Indonesia must exhibit its political stability and economic progress since Suharto's military regime's collapse and help Myanmar achieve the same advancement. Indonesia must convince Myanmar through its reformed military that the rising tide raises all boats. If political stability is achieved, including peace with ethnic armed groups, economic progress will come with it, and Myanmar's military will also benefit from the whole progress of the country. In this competitive era of digital disruption, Myanmar should realize the need to change to keep up with the rest of the world and can no longer be left behind. However, the transition to military reform will be challenging without guaranteeing that the subsequent civilian government will not legally pursue human rights abuses conducted by the military junta. Both parties must agree on reconciliation and a clean slate to avoid another military coup.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia can become a leader for ASEAN to maintain ASEAN's constructive engagement approach as an effective way of promoting democratization in Myanmar. Instead of changing its traditional ASEAN way, which has maintained the peace and stability of the region by focusing solely on civil society institutions and capacity building, Indonesia must become a role model for the Myanmar military, demonstrating that being under civilian rule does not make Myanmar's military weaker, less stable, less prosperous, or less valued as the country's bonding agent, but rather the opposite. However, a tougher stance might be required as well in order to be taken seriously by Myanmar's military junta. Recent developments depict that Indonesia has subtly challenged the traditional approach of non-intervention policy by regarding other ASEAN values, encompassing democracy, good governance, and respecting human rights as equally as important as the non-interference.

To accomplish the objectives, Indonesia should play a more active role as a leader in Southeast Asia to assist Myanmar in transforming the country's military into a

professional military institution of a democratic country. Indonesia needs to keep building constructive communication and coordination with other ASEAN members to initiate a better mechanism for the stability of Myanmar and Southeast Asia. In addition, the Indonesian military could engage more with the Myanmar military and let them learn about what Indonesia has achieved. Thus, the Indonesian military engagement with Myanmar should be enhanced. The Indonesian military could serve as a model to help the Myanmar military become professional and uphold democratic values. Meanwhile, the Myanmar military should consider the Indonesian military engagement. Even though Indonesia is still under civilian rule, the military remains powerful, professional, and even stronger today.

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