

ASEAN'S ROLE IN THE MYANMAR COUP 2021

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Abstract ASEAN as a regional organization has basic principles that underlie all activities carried out by member countries. This basic principle was recorded in the 1976 TAC (Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia). However, in February 2021, Myanmar's ASEAN member states faced a crisis as a result of Myanmar's military coup. ASEAN has a basic principle that keeps member states from intervening. The Myanmar crisis can affect other member states and cooperation in the ASEAN region. The aim is to find out how ASEAN's cooperation in dealing with the Myanmar crisis is based on the ASEAN principle. The study concluded that ASEAN's principles in contrast with the issues that have occurred have made it difficult for ASEAN to approach foreign policy making to deal with the issue of the Myanmar military coup. Furthermore, this analysis also concludes that ASEAN actively addresses regional problems through smooth ASEAN Way diplomacy, adhering to ASEAN Charter principles. The military coup in Myanmar violates international law, and ASEAN's actions promote non-corruption and non-violence. However, ASEAN's non-corruption principle faces challenges in Myanmar's implementation.

Keywords: *ASEAN, Myanmar Coup, Diplomacy, Foreign Policy*

INTRODUCTION

On 8 August 1967, five leaders – the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – sat down together in the main hall of the Department of Foreign Affairs building in Bangkok, Thailand and signed a document. By virtue of that document, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was born. The five Foreign Ministers who signed it – Adam Malik of Indonesia, Narciso R. Ramos of the Philippines, Tun Abdul Razak of Malaysia, S. Rajaratnam of Singapore, and Thanat Khoman of Thailand – would subsequently be hailed as the Founding Fathers of probably the most successful inter-governmental organization in the developing world today. And the document that they signed would be known as the ASEAN Declaration. It was a short, simply-worded document containing just five articles. It declared the establishment of an Association for Regional Cooperation among the Countries of Southeast Asia to be known as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and spelled out the aims and purposes of that Association. The idea is for economic, social, cultural, technical, educational and other cooperation, and in the maintenance of justice, the rule of law, and commitment to the ideals of the UN Charter, as well as in the promotion of regional peace and stability. It stipulated that the Association would be open for participation by all States in the Southeast Asian region subscribing to its aims, principles and purposes. It proclaimed ASEAN as representing “the collective will of the nations of Southeast Asia to bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation and, through joint efforts and sacrifices, secure for their peoples and for posterity the blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity”.¹ In addition, ASEAN also has basic principles which form the foundation of diplomatic activities that must be carried out by each member country. The fundamental tenets of ASEAN are laid out in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). The first is the idea of respect between members. The second point is related to each member state's freedom to decide how to run its own affairs without outside influence. Third, in reference to ASEAN's policy of refraining from meddling in member nations domestic affairs. Fourth, help each member nation's problems and differences be resolved amicably. The third and last tenet is effective ASEAN cooperation.

At present the problems in a country are not spared both internally and externally. The problem of a country can be a problem that does not affect international circumstances, but it can also be an issue that affects world peace and order. Not infrequently in realizing the interests and goals of the country, conflict often occurs, where this conflict can be triggered by several factors such as internal political conflict, political, economic, religious and socio-cultural crises. Often the presence of conflict can result in disrupting security and order in the country. The threat of conflict, such as the case of military intervention, has an impact on the coup.² The coup is an act of power reversal against someone who is authorized in an illegal manner and is often brutal, unconstitutional in the form of "the taking of power", "overthrowing power" of a state government by attacking (political and strategic) then, an overthrown government's submission of power is intended to be accepted by the legitimacy of the government. The coup will be successful if you can first consolidate in building legitimacy as an agreement from the people and have received support or participation from non-military and military (army) parties. The coup is a key for a military officer to be able to take over the power

¹ *The Founding ASEAN*. Diakses pada tanggal 20 Januari 2023. <https://asean.org/the-founding-of-asean/#:~:text=The%20Association%20of%20Southeast%20Asian,%2C%20Philippines%2C%20Singapore%20and%20Thailand.>

² Firdaus Muhamad Iqbal dan Indah Dwiprigitaningtias. (2021). Kudeta Militer Myanmar Dalam Perspektif Hukum Internasional, *Jurnal Dialektika Hukum*, 3(1), 114.

of the state which then the coup is called a military coup. The military has a dominant role in political life in a country. The position of the national military in a country has a very important role as a country's protector from various threats, especially military threats. The military has a role as a country's defense, in other words, the military has a duty in the defense.³

An unexpected incident occurred that affected one of the ASEAN members, notably Myanmar, at the beginning of February 2021. The military in Myanmar staged a coup against the government in this instance, imprisoning newly elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi (BBC, 2021). The coup carried out by the Myanmar military led to massive demonstrations by the people of Myanmar and not a few victims fell due to the response from the Myanmar military in violent ways. Goldman (2021) also explains that the coup that occurred in Myanmar was triggered by the military's distrust of the election results won by Aung San Suu Kyi's party. The Myanmar military felt that there was fraud in the election. The TAC agreement states that ASEAN members have the right to resolve their own internal political disputes without interference from outsiders. The coup episode that took place in Myanmar falls within this provision. In addition, ASEAN member countries may not intervene in the internal affairs of other ASEAN member countries. However, the military coup that occurred in Myanmar claimed many victims and this is a violation of international law and human rights. Retno Marsudi, the foreign minister of Indonesia had started a movement among ASEAN participants to assist Myanmar in handling the coup. Of course, this action deviates from the basic principles held by ASEAN, namely the principle of non-intervention among ASEAN members.⁴ As a result, this study will attempt to illustrate the problem of how ASEAN handles the crisis of the Myanmar coup. Based on the ASEAN principle that there should be no interference from other countries regarding internal problems between fellow ASEAN member countries as happened in Myanmar. The author will provide an explanation of the pattern of cooperation carried out by ASEAN in helping to resolve the military coup in Myanmar with limitations due to being bound by the basic principles of ASEAN.

RESEARCH THEORY

The authors of this report adopt the 'Foreign Policy' point of view. A policy's foundation is the achievement of goals, decision-making, principles, and actions to be done by state actors who will deal with outside parties, according to the definition of foreign policy.⁵ The creation of foreign policy is based on the national interests of each country in meeting their needs. Foreign policy can also represent a statement on international issues. Without a foreign policy, a country cannot interact with other countries globally.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

By using case studies, this study employs qualitative methodology. To draw the appropriate conclusions, the data in this study will be carefully examined utilizing the relevant elements. References from journal articles, online news stories, and data will be used by the author.

³ *Ibid.* Firdaus Muhamad Iqbal dan Indah Dwiprigitaningtias. (2021). 115.

⁴ Alvela S. Putri, Putri Jasmine, Riana Salma, dkk. (2021). *Dampak Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar ASEAN Terhadap Pola Kerjasama ASEAN Menghadapi Krisis Kudeta Myanmar*, *Journal of International Studies*, 4 (1), 118-119.

⁵ Webber, M. & Smith, M. (2002) *Foreign Policy in Transformed World*. Routledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research conducted by Firdaus Muhamad Iqbal and Indah Dwiprigitaningtias entitled “*Kudeta Militer Myanmar Dalam Perspektif Hukum Internasional*” explained the military coup that occurred in Myanmar based on the perspective of international law and from a historical point of view, the Myanmar military often carried out coups, so this became like a habit carried out by the Myanmar military. Then, previous research conducted by Faustina Ivana S.D.J, Euneke Dewi T, and Fiki Rahmatina N entitled “*Kudeta Myanmar: Junta Militer di Era Modern*” explained that the military coup in Myanmar was caused by the military forces that still controlled this country for a long time. The military coup in Myanmar was caused by the weakness of democracy, so that the military forces controlled and dominated the government in Myanmar. While this research looks at the involvement of international organizations which is ASEAN as an organization that embodies the countries of the Southeast Asian region, so that has a responsibility to maintain regional peace and security. ASEAN through its diplomatic steps has always been at the forefront of resolving conflicts that occurred in Myanmar.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Myanmar Military Coup Conflict

Myanmar is a country in the Southeast Asian region, which gained its independence on January 4, 1948 from the British through peace between the British colonial government and the Burmese nationalists, who at that time were led by Thakin Nu. At first, Myanmar was known as Burma, but in 1989, there was a name change from Burma to Myanmar. Since the government of Myanmar has been dominated by the Myanmar Military Junta regime, also known as the Tatmadaw. The Myanmar military junta with its authoritarian leadership system gained power through a military coup that occurred in 1962. This military coup was the beginning of the collapse of the democratic system in Myanmar. Since the transfer of power to the military, all aspects of government and society have also been taken over by the military. Since then, the Tatmadaw has maintained its power by blocking all opposition parties and taking over all business and industrial activities under their control, which then resulted in Myanmar's economic conditions getting worse, and poverty and unemployment rates increasing. The Tatmadaw is known for its dictatorship which often draws criticism from the international community. Since 1962, Burma's political record has been one of the worst in the world, due to the Myanmar military building its strength through repression, arbitrary detention and execution, torture, rape, forced labor, the use of child soldiers, the use of civilians as coolies and mine sweepers.⁶

The strong power of the Myanmar Military Junta made it almost unchallenged, until in the end the people of Myanmar were involved in the uprising that occurred on August 8, 1988. In this action, students and pro-democracy activists called for protests against the military Junta. However, this rebellion attempt did not end as expected by the community. In this incident, many civilians were killed, tortured, and imprisoned because of their involvement. However, the existence of this rebellion gave birth to the National League for Democracy which later became a major party that voiced the need for democracy in Myanmar politics. NLD leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, demanded that the military call elections in 1990. Despite this, the Tatmadaw still dominates most of the government of Myanmar and continues to hinder

⁶ Zahratunnisa Ramadhani dan Maburrah. (2021). Pengaruh Prinsip Non-Intervensi ASEAN terhadap Upaya Negosiasi Indonesia Dalam Menangani Konflik Kudeta Myanmar, *Global Political Studies Journal*, 5 (2), 134.

efforts to democratize the Burmese people. In this regard, military involvement in democratization efforts also occurred in 1990, at which time General Saw Maung annulled the election results of May 27, 1990 which resulted in a victory for the National League for Democratization (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi. The election results prove that democracy is what the people of Myanmar want, as shown by the NLD's victory, where the NLD won around 60% of the popular vote and 392 seats. Unfortunately, the military refused to recognize the election results and instead arrested Aung Suu Kyi. After that incident, Myanmar was again ruled by a military junta under the leadership of General Than Shwe. Until 2003, under the rule of General Than Shwe, the political, social and economic life of the people of Myanmar was still heavily dominated by the military. Then in February 2011, the world of Myanmar politics underwent a significant change, where Thein Sein was elected president through the 2010 elections, ending the authoritarian regime previously controlled by a military junta government that had ruled for 50 years. During his leadership period, Thein Sein issued several major policies that put forward a democratic system. One of his policies was to release political prisoners who during the previous administration were arrested, the great figure Aung San Suu Kyi and his friends were among those freed by Thein Sein.⁷

The Myanmar Military Junta deemed the November 2020 election results to be fraudulent. The military junta has the power to overthrow the elected official government with ease, this happens because the influence of the military is still strong. On Monday, 1 February 2021, as the winner of the 2020 elections, Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD) Party should have started their term for a second term. In the past five years, the Thousand Pagoda Country has implemented a democratic government system under Aung San Suu Kyi. But on the day he started his position, the military in Myanmar overthrew the elected government and put Suu Kyi and her ally officials under house arrest. The people of Myanmar swiftly reacted to the coup d'état, as though experiencing *déjà vu*.⁸ Myanmar has long been fighting military rule, poverty, and ethnic minority groups in its territory. In 2011, the military junta was disbanded, the dissolution of the military junta is expected to be a better transition of government, especially in Southeast Asia. However, the Tatmadaw has always interfered in all internal affairs of Myanmar, one of the Myanmar military's interventions was to commit genocide against Rohingya Muslims in the western region, Rakhine.⁹

Within weeks of the coup, large-scale protests broke out all over the country. Tens of thousands of people, including health workers, bankers, and teachers, joined what was originally a peaceful civil disobedience movement, refusing to go to work until the elected government returned to power. Eventually, the National Unity Government (NUG), an alternative administration made up of expelled NLD politicians, protest leaders, and activists from many minority groups, came into being. It aims to bring together the disparate groups opposed to the junta, foster greater unity among ethnic groups, create an agenda for a post-junta Myanmar, and cultivate support from foreign governments. The NUG created the People's Defence Force, an armed division, and declared war against the junta in September.¹⁰ The coup that occurred in Myanmar has united various groups to protest against the refusal to live under military leadership for the next year. The coup that occurred in Myanmar has killed 138 demonstrators in the Yangon region. The UN also stated that the Myanmar military had

⁷ *Ibid.* Zahratunnisa Ramadhani dan Maburrah. (2021). 135.

⁸ Faustina Ivana S.D.J, Euneke Dewi T, Fiki Rahmatina N. (2021). Kudeta Myanmar: Junta Militer di Era Modern, Jurnal Pena Wimaya, 1 (1), 54.

⁹ Lindsay Maizland. (2021). *Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict*. Diakses pada tanggal 20 Januari 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/background/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya>

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

violated human rights.¹¹ The coup plunged Myanmar into turmoil, prompting mass demonstrations and strikes to which the military junta responded with lethal force. While the pace of killings has slowed as protests have fragmented, casualties are rising as armed resistance grows in both urban and rural areas, and the military intensifies its attacks on ethnic armed groups in outlying regions of the country. Many of those killed were gunned down during the large protests that took place in the weeks following the coup; others have died in custody or under torture from regime operations. Members of the security forces have also been killed, especially as instances of local armed resistance grow, but the AAPP (*Assistance Association for Political Prisoners*) does not include them in its count.¹²

The conditions that occurred in Myanmar had influences both from within the country and abroad, such as countries that have bilateral relations with Myanmar. At least 38 people were killed in the burning of the Chinese factory burned by the demonstrators. Demonstrators' claim that China supported the recent coup and military dictatorship was the impetus for this. Protesters are demanding the military hand back power to civilian control and are calling for the release of Suu Kyi and other government figures. Myanmar's many ethnic groups, which have long fought for greater autonomy for their lands, are also demanding the military-written 2008 constitution be abolished and a federal democracy be established. Suu Kyi and other government officials are being demanded to be released by protesters, who are also demanding that the military return authority to civilian rule. The numerous ethnic groups in Myanmar, who have long battled for more control over their territories, are also calling for the repeal of the 2008 constitution, which was drafted by the military, and the establishment of a federal democracy.¹³ All nations have been impacted by the coup in Myanmar, but particularly the ASEAN nations. ASEAN is a regional organization with non-intervention ideals, however given the happenings in Myanmar, ASEAN should offer Myanmar-specific remedies.

A number of political analysts predict that the coup in Myanmar would have an effect on ASEAN's security environment (Republika.co.id, 2021). The stability of ASEAN could be shaken, according to Priyambudi Sulistyanto, a Southeast Asia scholar from Flinders University in Australia, if the Myanmar situation is allowed to continue. If the international community does not respond decisively, the consequences of the coup that took place in Myanmar would affect the bloc and may further worsen the situation for the Rohingya ethnic group. People have to leave Myanmar in order to restore the political climate of 1988. In the end, the coup that occurred in Myanmar will have an impact on the regional region, a decline in democracy in the Southeast Asian region, and possibly the birth of a new uprising in the Myanmar region to end the coup that took place.

Implementation of ASEAN principles in the Myanmar coup

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional organization that was officially established through the signing of the Bangkok Declaration which was held on August 8, 1967. One of the initial goals of the formation of ASEAN is to promote regional peace and stability. As set out in the ASEAN Declaration, the aims and purposes of ASEAN are; accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the

¹¹ DW. (2021). *Myanmar: 56 Dead Over Weekend, 138 Since Coup, Says UN*. Diakses pada tanggal 20 Januari 2023. <https://www.dw.com/en/myanmar-56-dead-over-weekend-138-since-coup-says-un/a-56881039>

¹² Sebastian Strangio. (2021). *Myanmar Post-Coup Death Toll Tops 1,000: Activist Group*. Diakses pada tanggal 20 Januari 2023. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/myanmar-post-coup-death-toll-tops-1000-activist-group/>

¹³ Helen Regan. (2021). *Chinese factories set on fire and at least 38 killed in Myanmar's Deadliest Day Since Coup*. Diakses pada tanggal 20 Januari 2023. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/15/asia/myanmar-deaths-chinese-factories-intl-hnk/index.html>

foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asian Nations, promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter, promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields, provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative spheres, collaborate more effectively to encourage further growth in the agriculture and industry, and trade sectors. This includes improving transportation and communications facilities and conducting studies on international commodity trade with the overarching goal of raising the living standards of ASEAN peoples, promote Southeast Asian studies, and maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves.¹⁴

As a regional organization in the Southeast Asian region, ASEAN certainly has a great urgency to be involved in resolving conflicts that occur in the Southeast Asian region, especially those involving humanitarian issues, where this is in line with one of ASEAN's main goals, which is increasing regional peace and stability by respecting justice and law order within countries in the ASEAN region. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), which was signed on February 24, 1976, states that relations between members are based on a fundamental principle, which is to respect each nation's freedom, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity. It also states that each country has the right to regulate its own administrative procedures. The fact that this article exists supports the non-intervention principle within the framework of ASEAN cooperation.¹⁵ In interacting and solving problems among fellow members, ASEAN has its own way, this method is known as the ASEAN Way of Diplomacy. The formation of this diplomatic method is a form of implementing the rules contained in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which provides guidance for ASEAN member countries to act based on the principle of non-intervention and mutual respect for each other's sovereignty. According to Hiro Katsumata, the main principles of the ASEAN Way consist of four points, specifically *the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of other members, quiet diplomacy, the non-use of force, and decision-making through consensus*. The first point of the ASEAN Way, that regarding the principle of non-intervention which provides clear boundaries in the pattern of cooperation of ASEAN members. This principle makes policy processes related to issues or conditions of other member countries must go through the permission of the country concerned and other countries may not adopt policies that would undermine the togetherness among ASEAN members. Second, the principle of quiet diplomacy is ASEAN's way of interacting by carrying out diplomacy on sensitive issues secretly or bilaterally. Third, the non-uses of force principle, this principle makes relations between ASEAN members more familial, this principle avoids the use of military force in solving existing problems, and is resolved by means of the last point, namely decision-making through consensus. Thus, ASEAN members will avoid disunity and create a peaceful political atmosphere within the region. However, the ASEAN Way principle is considered to have little impact on solving sensitive issues because this principle tends to result in avoiding issues on the grounds of maintaining a sense of kinship within ASEAN membership.¹⁶

¹⁴ ASEAN Aims. Diakses pada tanggal 22 Januari 2023. <https://asean.org/what-we-do#asean-aims>

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Zahratunnisa Ramadhani dan Maburrah. (2021). 136.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Alvela S. Putri, Putri Jasmine, Riana Salma, dkk. (2021). 130-131.

The non-interference principle applied by ASEAN in efforts to resolve conflicts places more emphasis on diplomatic and familial methods. As the prime minister of Thailand said at the 42nd ASEAN meeting in Thailand, that the smooth approach (*ASEAN Way*) is more effective than using sanctions against Myanmar. The ASEAN Way is a method of interaction between the ASEAN member nations, as a means to alleviate tensions between them, involving the use of tools like informal dialogue, extensive consultation, and consensus building, in order to develop intramural security. The ASEAN Way propagates the use of three principles by its member states, viz, restraint, respect, and responsibility. Another approach to the ASEAN Way is the concept of flexible consensus, that does not require unanimity between the ASEAN states, as long as there is no damage caused to the interests of all the member states.¹⁷ The ASEAN Way is also known as the “Hands-off Policy”, and is reinforced by a decision-making process that is based on “consultation and consensus” and a focus on the peaceful resolution of inter-state disputes, but remains silent on resolving intra-state conflicts of ASEAN member states.¹⁸ However, over time, the effectiveness of the non-intervention principle seems to be increasingly being questioned, due to the many new challenges and issues that have arisen from the globalization process, as well as the growing demands for democratization, and the increasing international attention to humanitarian issues compared to issue of state sovereignty. In its efforts to maintain its effectiveness and legitimacy both domestically and internationally, ASEAN's traditional way of conducting regional affairs is increasingly reaping pros and cons, where the existence of the principle of non-interference is seen as a stumbling block to ASEAN's capacity to respond to internal problems and external challenges.¹⁹

ASEAN Steps Against Myanmar Coup

As of right now, ASEAN is still having trouble deciding how to proceed with the military takeover in Myanmar. This is evident from the divergent perspectives of other members, as seen in how Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia publicly expressed their concerns about the coup that occurred in Myanmar, while Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam generally prefer to adhere to the non-interference principle. Indonesia itself as a country that is quite vocal in voicing its concerns about the coup in Myanmar has made several efforts to encourage ASEAN to take action against the coup crisis that hit Myanmar under the directors of the Indonesian foreign minister – Retno Marsudi. At first Retno Marsudi had an agenda to visit Myanmar and speak to high-ranking military rebels, but one of the government documents contained information leaks regarding the agenda for Retno Marsudi's arrival to Myanmar, so the meeting was canceled because the meeting agenda was supposed to be private and not known to the public.²⁰ In early August 2022, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations held the 55th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM-55). The ASEAN Foreign Ministers discussed multiple issues, including developments in the political crisis in Myanmar and the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, which was reached at the ASEAN Special Summit held two months after the coup d'état occurred in Myanmar in February 2021. Then one of the five ASEAN consensus is “*Considering that the situation in Myanmar remains critical and fragile, with growing violence as a major concern which affects not only Myanmar but also ASEAN's Community-building efforts, ASEAN is committed to assist Myanmar in*

¹⁷ Harsh Mahaseth and Aryan Tulsyan. (2021). The Myanmar Coup and The Role of ASEAN. 8-9

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Zahratunnisa Ramadhani dan Maburrah. (2021). 137

²⁰ *Ibid.* Alvela S. Putri, Putri Jasmine, Riana Salma, dkk. (2021). 133-134.

finding a peaceful and durable solution to the current crisis.”²¹ This point proves that ASEAN is serious about resolving the conflict in Myanmar, it has become natural for ASEAN as an organization that embodies the countries of the Southeast Asian region to play a central role in resolving conflicts in the region.

During the meeting, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers expressed concerns about the prolonged crisis and deep disappointment with the limited progress in carrying out the Five-Point Consensus, which calls for immediate cessation of violence, constructive dialogue among all parties concerned, the ASEAN Chair’s special envoy facilitating mediation of the dialogue process, humanitarian assistance, and a visit to Myanmar by the special envoy to meet all parties concerned. The ministers also noted a lack of commitment of the Naypyidaw authorities to the consensus. Their negative sentiments are understandable. The sluggish implementation of the Five-Point Consensus has diminished ASEAN in the eyes of the clairvoyants both inside and outside the region. Critics may argue that ASEAN is not credible and able to manage its internal issues in order to exert its central role in shaping the regional architecture, especially in the face of emerging geostrategic challenges caused by the major power strategic competition and the rise of minilateral arrangements such as the Quad and AUKUS.²² More seriously, the lack of progress on resolving Myanmar’s crisis poses a daunting obstacle for the association to accomplish the purposes and the principles enshrined in the ASEAN Charter to build an ASEAN community that champions rules of law, good governance, democracy, and people-centered orientation. Although the five-point consensus made by ASEAN has stagnated and has not met the expectations of regional countries, Since the Myanmar crisis began in February 2021, ASEAN has acted swiftly and decisively. Following the coup in Myanmar, ASEAN hurried to release a chairman's statement that emphasized recalling the objectives and tenets of the ASEAN charter and urging communication, rapprochement, and a return to normalcy for the benefit of the people of Myanmar. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the ASEAN foreign ministers held an informal online meeting. They expressed their concern and asked all parties not to interfere and must exercise complete restraint, seek peaceful solutions, establish constructive dialogues and active reconciliation in the interests of the Myanmar people.

The ASEAN leaders had to convene in a Special Summit to make precise choices, leading to the Five Point Consensus, as the situation in Myanmar kept getting worse and flagrantly violated the ASEAN Charter. The Myanmar junta leader, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, was invited to attend the summit. But his presence was not taken to mean that he was recognized as Myanmar’s head of state at the meeting. He listened and heeded the decision from the ASEAN leaders. As the ASEAN Chair's special representative for Myanmar, Erywan Yusof of Brunei Darussalam was chosen among four candidates at the AMM-54 in August 2021 after extensive consultation within ASEAN and a request for consensus from Myanmar. The international community, including the U.N. secretary general and a sizable number of nations, strongly supported the nomination, which was the first step in implementing the Five-Point Consensus. Because ASEAN is seen as the most suitable mediator who can assist Myanmar to overcome the problem, the globe was keeping a careful eye on the situation. But because the junta was reluctant to meet him, there was little movement made about the special

²¹ ASEAN Leaders’ Review and Decision on the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus. Diakses pada tanggal 23 Januari 2023. <https://asean.org/asean-leaders-review-and-decision-on-the-implementation-of-the-five-point-consensus/>

²² Thuc D. Pham and Hoai Nguyen. (2022). ASEAN’s Efforts to Mediate the Myanmar Political Crisis Deserve More Recognition, The Diplomat. Diakses pada tanggal 23 Januari 2023. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/08/aseans-efforts-to-mediate-the-myanmar-political-crisis-deserve-more-recognition/>

envoy's travel to Myanmar after that.²³ The political crisis triggered by the coup is one of the biggest challenges to ASEAN in recent times, with Amnesty warning in May that the military crackdown had led thousands of people to flee elsewhere not only to find safety, but also for work because of the deteriorating economy. Nonetheless, crafting a tougher response is exposing differences within an organization whose members are divided not only by wealth, but by political inclination.²⁴

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, the authors can conclude that ASEAN, as a regional organization, has played an active role in solving problems that occur in the region. ASEAN has its own way of dealing with conflicts in the region, through smooth ASEAN Way diplomacy in accordance with ASEAN principles contained in the ASEAN Charter. The situation of the military coup that is currently engulfing Myanmar is of particular concern to ASEAN. Given that it utilized violence against civilians and disturbed regional security in Southeast Asia, the military coup in Myanmar most definitely broke international law. In this instance, ASEAN adopted a tactful stance, pleading with the Myanmar military to put an end to the coup and release Aung San Suu Kyi promptly. The writers observed that ASEAN's initiatives through ASEAN Way diplomacy were guided by non-violence and anti-corruption values, preventing the fragmentation of ASEAN's members and fostering a peaceful political environment in the area. The ASEAN member state's implementation of the process to end the war in Myanmar, however, is complicated by the non-corruption principle, so any effort should be made if the country wants to use it should open the door for others to help resolve the internal conflict.

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²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ Al Jazeera Staff. (2022). *Why is the Myanmar crisis such a challenge for ASEAN?* Diakses pada tanggal 25 Januari 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/3/why-is-the-myanmar-crisis-such-a-challenge-for-asean>

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