

‘Strategic Resourcing’: Framing ASEAN's Cooperation with India and China on the Myanmar Post-coup Crisis

Abstract

The ASEAN-led Five-Point Consensus (FPC) framework called for an immediate end to violence, holding dialogue among all parties, and providing humanitarian assistance to address the post-coup political crisis in Myanmar. Such endeavours have yet to deliver substantively. This article argues that there is an opportunity for ASEAN to work with India and China through a framework of ‘strategic resourcing’ to break the impasse. Strategic resourcing does not seek to foster a trilateral framework between ASEAN, India, and China, but seeks to broker the comparative strengths of the two states across two-thematic domains, both of which are critical for the implementation of FPC: i) using Indian and Chinese borderlands to establish humanitarian corridors to deliver aid, and ii) using economic, political and normative leverage that India and China have on different political constituencies in Myanmar to bring an immediate stop to the violence and foster dialogue to seek a long-term solution. This article unpacks the prospects and possible institutional mechanisms for ASEAN to cooperate with India and China through the strategic resourcing framework as well as outlines some of the framework’s limitations. Conceptually, ‘strategic resourcing’ adds to and differentiates from the dominant framework of ‘hedging,’ which has been mooted to account for ASEAN’s international security cooperation. Practically, the article charts out policy options to strengthen and reform the current format of FPC, notably on the framework of the proposed dialogue process.

In April 2021, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) charted out the Five-point Consensus (FPC), as its policy framework to address the unprecedented humanitarian and human rights crisis following the military takeover in February 2021 in Myanmar. The repression by the military led State Administration Council (SAC), against its multiple oppositions, including the National Unity Government (NUG) formed by democratically elected candidates of the National League for Democracy (NLD) who challenged the military’s claim to power, the various Ethnic Armed Group (EAOs) who have fought decade-long insurgencies across the borderlands, and the various People’s defence forces that emerged post-coup has continued.¹ While the FPC stands distinct to both the ambiguous engagement of regional states like India and China, or the sanctions-centric engagement of Western states, it

has made limited progress in getting the junta to abide by any of its terms.¹ The post-coup deadlock in Myanmar has underscored the limits of the FPC, and raised questions over ASEAN's credibility leading to calls for ASEAN to scrap it.²

With the impasse in delivering on the FPC and the increased acknowledgement that ASEAN alone cannot help reverse the effects of the coup, there have been calls for greater cooperation between ASEAN and the United States (US) and the European Union (EU).³ This paper departs from this focus on Western states to look at how and why ASEAN could cooperate with its regional partners, India and China in addressing the Myanmar crisis. This article argues that ASEAN can cooperate with India and China on Myanmar not by bringing the two powers in a trilateral framework but rather by brokering their comparative strengths separately across thematic domains that are critical for the implementation of the FPC: i) utilising Indian and Chinese borderlands geography/space to deliver humanitarian aid; ii) using their economic, political and normative leverage on different political constituencies in Myanmar to call for an immediate stop to the violence and dialogue to seek a long-term solution. Conceptualised as 'strategic resourcing,' the article not only charts out motivations for both parties—India and China and ASEAN—to cooperate, but also highlights some limitations. A key caveat to note is that the framework of 'strategic resourcing' is a proposition of a policy option foregrounded on three key assumptions, detailed later in the article: that ASEAN can have a unified position; that India and China want to work with ASEAN; and that the balance of power within Myanmar continues to be fragmented, as will be discussed below.

¹ Regional states like India, Thailand, and China have been ambiguous—engaging the military despite the rhetorical statements on the need to stem violence and restore democracy, while Western engagement has been focused on sanctioning military officials, condemning human rights abuses, offering humanitarian aid, and calling on ASEAN to put further pressure on the junta-led regime in Myanmar to return to democracy.

The next section will situate the background to ASEAN's engagement and the Myanmar crisis, then unpack the framework of 'strategic resourcing'(SR henceforth) . The section that follows evaluates ASEAN's cooperation with India and China in Myanmar based on considerations of capacity, credibility, cost, and complexity. Next, India and China's motivations for engagement with ASEAN is examined, followed by a discussion on limitations, leading to the conclusion.

The Myanmar Crisis, and ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus

The five points include an *immediate end to violence, holding dialogue among all parties, the appointment of a special envoy, allowing humanitarian assistance by ASEAN, and allowing an ASEAN special envoy to visit Myanmar to meet with all parties.*⁴ To review the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting has delegated the task to the ASEAN Coordinating Council and the ASEAN Foreign Ministers.⁵ Unpacking the elements of the FPC, the meeting noted that the FPC has hit a roadblock. For one, violence and repression by the Myanmar military have increased. With the NUG's call for war in September 2021 asking varied ethnic groups to attack and the PDFs to target military assets in their respective areas, violence has been mainstreamed as a strategic tool.⁶ Similarly, despite ASEAN's pitch for dialogue, the NUG and other anti-military opposition have explicitly declined to engage in dialogue with the military.⁷ Similarly, while ASEAN has appointed two Special Envoys for Myanmar, the military-led SAC regime had not complied with recommendations made by the Envoys and has not permitted the Envoys to meet with the opposition leaders.⁸ Humanitarian assistance has been focused on COVID-relief. Multiple problems persist, including the SAC's restricting humanitarian access in some parts, concerns about ASEAN's use of the SAC's administrative channel to deliver aid inadvertently legitimising the junta, as well as the scale of the aid not matching up to the needs on the

ground.⁹ In this context, some commentators see the FPC to be “doing more harm than good by perpetuating the illusion that a viable political process exists, which confers a degree of legitimacy on the junta,”¹⁰ and even “buying time for the military.”¹¹

The recent Myanmar crisis and the pressure it has brought on ASEAN, however, has historic antecedents. Myanmar, since the early days of independence, has witnessed multiple armed conflicts waged by different EAOs on grounds of exclusion of ethnic communities at the hands of the Bamar majority, intersecting with decades of authoritarian rule.² The stifling of the democratic movements in the late 1980s led to widespread international condemnation and Western sanctions through the 1990s. Against this background, Myanmar joined ASEAN in 1997. In contrast to Western states, ASEAN’s ‘constructive engagement’ continued to engage military-led governments underpinned by the logic that promoting trade, diplomatic, and economic ties with the regime, would lead to socioeconomic progress and eventually political liberalisation.¹²

However, Myanmar’s internal record on the repression of democracy, and repeated failure to abide by ASEAN’s call to engage with all political groups, and work towards democratic transition created deep frustration within ASEAN.¹³ The Myanmar case divided ASEAN members³ testing the fundamental tenets of the ‘ASEAN way,’ which is rooted in the principle of non-interference, consensual decision-making, and constructive engagement.¹⁴ Equally, ASEAN’s commitment to the principle of non-intervention in members’ internal

² . The insurgencies waged by EAOs are centred on demands for a greater role in political decision-making processes, economic and social development, and prioritisation of cultural rights and religious freedoms. Since 1958, on grounds of instability unleashed by the insurgencies, the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) took charge, and under various guises, has governed the country.

³ Member states like Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia have seen the chaos as Myanmar’s internal affair and pushed for ASEAN not to be overtly interventionist, while others like Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have opposed the status quo calling for active engagement.

affairs was tested as it had to weigh in on Myanmar's international affairs given the implication on regional security.¹⁵

The Thein Sein government's opening-up by introducing nominal democratic reforms, including enlarged space for civil society, registration of political parties, the release of political prisoners, and a nationwide peace process in 2011.¹⁶ In the peace process, different EAOs were invited to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) which also committed to dialogue with the EAOs on key demands like federalism, and security sector reform—central to different ethnic movements.¹⁷ Despite the democratic progress with the NLD winning the 2015 elections, the peace process did not take off with many EAOs like the Kachin Independence Army not signing up the NCA, and NLD's own record of promoting inclusion being questioned.⁴ The NLD's raising the issue of constitutional amendments to reduce the role of the military in politics¹⁸ and its electoral gains in the 2020 elections is seen to have triggered the military coup.

The humanitarian catastrophe and the international condemnation that followed the coup have again placed pressure on ASEAN to act on Myanmar. ASEAN's engagement this time, however, faces competing claims of legitimacy from the SAC and the NUG, as well as unprecedented levels of fragmentation of the country with the NUG, multiple EAOs, and PDFs⁵ governing different parts of the country, and varying sets of equations⁶ between these groups.¹⁹

⁴ The NLD's inability to deliver on the peace process partly owed to the fact that the entire peace and democratisation process continued to be anchored by the 2008 Constitution, which ensured the military their special prerogatives, including 25 percent of seats in the national Parliament to the military, in addition to their retention of key ministries such as Home Affairs, Border Affairs, and Defence.

⁵ In many parts of the country, several People's Defence Forces and Local Defence Forces have been formed to protect the people from junta atrocities—the former recognised by the NUG, while the latter operates more autonomously.

⁶ For one, while EAOs like the Karen National Union, and the Kachin Independence Army have condemned the military coup and offered protection to protesters fleeing security forces, others like the United Wa State Army, have adopted a wait-and-see approach remaining quiet on the coup, but also refusing to make any deals with the military.

Situating ‘Strategic Resourcing’ as a Framework—ASEAN beyond Hedging

In this context of complex political transition in Myanmar and the ongoing deadlock in implementing the FPC, ASEAN will need to think beyond its current format. While commentators have called for scrapping the FPC, others have argued that the FPC is the ‘least common denominator’ of what is acceptable among ASEAN states and that there is unlikely to be a revision.²⁰ Understanding the centrality of the FPC, thus, ASEAN can rethink extending partnerships to deliver on the FPC rather than thinking of a fresh strategy. The new Indonesian chairmanship of ASEAN for 2023, and its recent formation of the ASEAN Chair’s Office of Special Envoy to Myanmar provide an impetus for new thinking on international partnership.²¹ The prospect for partnership is further strengthened by the fact that India and China have explicitly stated their support for the ASEAN-led FPC.²²

A partnership with India and China, neighbouring states that bring in untapped leverage, influence, and capacity to deliver on the FPC, at a time when Western states are preoccupied with the Ukraine conflict could be a potential strategy. This article puts forth the concept of SR to account for the cooperative partnership with India and China to deliver on FPC. SR as a policy framework enables ASEAN to harness the comparative strengths of India and China utilising two domains: i) geography/space to deliver humanitarian aid; ii) economic, political, and normative leverage on different political constituencies to call for an immediate stop to the violence and foster dialogue to seek a long-term solution. As laid out in Table 1, SR also allows for the delivery of both short-term goals of violence reduction, humanitarian response, and dialogue, as well as long-term objectives of inclusive democracy and peace through a broad-based dialogue between various political actors.

SR as a policy places ASEAN in the driver's seat for identifying individual strengths of China and India to support the delivery of the FPC and establish partnerships on these key thematic areas. Rather than responding to Indian or Chinese strategies or seeking to bring them into a trilateral cooperation model, it is about ASEAN 'sourcing' partnerships to engender a regional response. Conceptually, SR adds to the dominant framework of ASEAN's regional cooperation. 'Hedging' as a concept is mooted in International Relations to describe the behaviour of states seeking to guarantee their long-term interests by placing their policy bets on multiple, and possibly contradictory international alignment options, designed to offset risks.²³ It has been dominantly deployed to explain security dynamics in Southeast Asia, particularly to account for the behaviour of ASEAN states in navigating relations between China and the US.²⁴ SR differs from hedging in two accounts. One, SR positions ASEAN as a central player with the agency to design and devise its own cooperation choices based on regional needs, rather than simply responding to unfolding global power shifts. Second, while much of the literature has looked at ASEAN vis-à-vis China and the US,²⁵ SR decentres away from this Western lens to look at regional cooperation options.

Table 1: Elements of SR and how it contributes to the FPC

Elements of SR	Details	Short term contribution to FPC	Long term contribution to FPC
Mobilising space/ geography	Using Indian and Chinese borderlands, notably states of Mizoram and Manipur, India to deliver aid to Chin state and Yunnan province, China to deliver humanitarian aid to Shan, Kachin state as humanitarian corridors	Aid delivery of humanitarian support and formation of humanitarian corridors-central to immediate implementation of FPC	Institutionalise humanitarian mechanisms that serve long-term humanitarian and disaster relief purpose
Leverage-political, social, and economic networks to bring an immediate stop to the violence and foster dialogue to seek	Using leverage on different groups to i) call all sides to stop violence; ii) get them to dialogue; ii) support the dialogue processes to include long-term demands for federalism, inclusion to address the consequences	Working with India and China to reach out to diverse networks, including the military, NUG, as well as EAOs, and LDFs/ PDFS especially given their influence on cross-border networks to stop violence	Support inclusive dialogue and democracy by sharing experience and technical assistance on federalism, minority inclusion.

long-term solution	and cause of the post-coup crisis	Calling for dialogue mechanisms and supporting dialogue forums in financial and technical terms	
--------------------	-----------------------------------	---	--

To be a credible policy option, the two elements of SR, however, need unpacking, as will be done below:

Using Borderland for Humanitarian Assistance

ASEAN's use of the Indian and Chinese borderlands and their assistance can help not only address the immediate humanitarian crisis but also set a precedence for the instituting of a long-term humanitarian mechanism. The establishment of humanitarian corridors from China's Yunnan province and India's Northeast region into Myanmar can be useful for future humanitarian and disaster relief. This is important for ASEAN's policy focus on disaster relief in the region.

In the current context, such humanitarian corridors from India and China also help alleviate the pressures along the Thai-Myanmar borderlands which have historically hosted aid delivery channels into Myanmar since the days of Western sanctions in the 1990s. The extant humanitarian corridor through Thailand currently faces varied challenges, including the inconsistent Thai policy of supporting delivery of humanitarian assistance covertly rather formalising it, and even limiting international access to border areas;²⁶ the SAC's control of main road networks through the Thai border limiting the amount of aid that can flow through; and inability in reaching out to different new frontiers of humanitarian crises.²⁷ Multiple

corridors to provide aid, and multiple international partners to support the delivery of aid have been consistently raised as a key priority.⁷

ASEAN's working collaboration with China and India, who as countries sharing long borders can provide corridors to ensure aid is sent both to displaced people in the borderlands and also to hard-to-reach ethnic areas within Myanmar. In terms of delivering on such a policy, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) which is already leading in delivering humanitarian assistance could include India and China on three issues: i) initiate a pooled fund to address the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar with contribution from all regional partners; ii) convene a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with India and China to allow for the usage of their border towns for establishing humanitarian corridors to deliver aid in the borderlands but also within Myanmar; iii) forge a coalition of partners that include the United Nations (UN), local civil society partners within Myanmar, as well as non-state actors working on relief in India and China to review, assess and deliver on humanitarian assistance.

With the AHA largely focused on disaster management in the past, such a mechanism would also set future precedence for ASEAN's humanitarian response.⁸ Similarly, beyond the humanitarian corridors, for the AHA to be well-resourced, a pooled fund, used to receive

⁷ For instance, Chin state and the Magway and Sagaing regions are noted to be new frontiers with desperate humanitarian needs, adding to other conflict-affected regions in Karen, Kaya, Kachin, and Shan states.

⁸ AHA Centre's original mandate and procedures limits its ability to respond to the Myanmar crisis. Its mandate is centred on provision of assistance during natural disasters (and not politically triggered humanitarian crises). Its governing board which dictates its repertoire of work includes all ASEAN members, making it reliant on the consent of the country involved. Further, its mechanisms for delivery of assistance also relies on channelling aid through administrative channels of the government. For more details refer to: Mely Caballero-Anthony, 'ASEAN and the Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar: A Futile Exercise?' in Lina Alexandra (ed), *Seeking Strategic Options for Myanmar: Reviewing Five-Point Consensus and Anticipating the Future of Democracy in Myanmar* (Centre for Strategic and International Studies 2022).

contributions from multiple financial donors, India and China can allow for the provision of timely, coordinated, and principled assistance.²⁸ Such pooled funds would engender some form of ownership for India and China. Globally, such pooled funds have become an indispensable part of the humanitarian landscape, with more donors channelling funds through them, and more humanitarian actors looking to them as a means of financing.²⁹

While India's and China's bilateral humanitarian assistance and their support to international organisations have largely been limited and not well-institutionalised, an ASEAN-led regional initiative might be more acceptable. For one, such humanitarian assistance can help address their security concerns, in terms of managing refugee flows from Myanmar systematically, mitigating pressures on cross-border communities, and managing non-traditional security threats like diseases and pandemics. Second, the humanitarian response might not be as zero-sum and contested as other aspects like recognition of the NUG. Lastly, while institutionalised response might be new, humanitarian assistance from the Indian and Chinese sides has a precedent, that ASEAN can build on. For instance, despite the ambivalence of the Indian stance on the refugee crisis, the Indian state of Mizoram has openly welcomed refugees from Myanmar, issued refugee cards by the Mizoram state government, and permitted free movement within the state.³⁰ Similarly, during the decade-long reform period, when the government blocked humanitarian assistance across the Kachin region, where fighting was ongoing, the UN did channel aid through China.³¹

Using Networks and Leverage for Addressing Violence and Promoting Dialogue

This aspect of SR centres on using economic, political, and normative leverage that India and China have on different parties in Myanmar to firstly bring an immediate end to violence, and secondly, promote dialogue to find long-term solutions. India and China as key investors, diplomatic partners, and critical neighbours bring an innate sense of leverage among

all parties of the political settlement. The first political step in an ASEAN framework is seen to be addressing or stemming violence, however, is a short-term solution, and any long-term endeavour will need to not only foster dialogue between all sides including different EAOs and PDFs, but also ensure the dialogue achieves compromises and commitments to key demands, including democracy, federalism, civilian supremacy, and reform of the security sector. An ASEAN-led dialogue process with ASEAN's Special Envoy(s) as the primary facilitator, and with India and China along with other regional states as key guarantors, will create a broad international momentum that incentivises parties to agree to dialogue.

Dialogue as it stands, while central to the FPC, is not a popular option among key domestic parties, especially under the current military leader. The current framework for dialogue proposed by ASEAN focuses on SAC and the NUG. None of the two as it stands are willing or have accepted the terms of dialogue. However, with the stalemate and violence continuing, there is now a growing recognition that sooner or later 'dialogue' is necessary but under certain conditions.³² To that end, ASEAN Chair's Office of Special Envoy could serve as the lynchpin to facilitate the dialogue process. To be credible and accepted, the ASEAN-led dialogue process will need to set out a few pre-conditions: immediate stopping of violence and attacks on civilians, recognition of the NUG, pressure on the junta to restore democracy and outline future steps for non-engagement in politics, the release of political prisoners, and accountability.³³

Most importantly, the dialogue process needs to be broad-based, and only include the NUG, and the SAC, but also EAOs as well as bodies like the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC). Forging a broad-based dialogue process with multiple parties would enable the process not to be dominated by the military, at a time when a grand bargain between the NUG and SAC seems unlikely. ASEAN could build on similar dialogue processes that have been initiated by the NUG, as the NUCC which includes EAOs, political parties, groups

involved in the Civil Disobedience movement, and civil society to facilitate the writing of the new Constitution.³⁴ This broad-based approach also corrects the failures of the prior peace process in Myanmar, where a process led by the quasi-civilian government meant that the scale of change proposed in the peace process had to accommodate the military.³⁵

For ASEAN, rather than an Envoy-centric approach to facilitating dialogue, a more institutionalised approach would be promising. Within the ASEAN Chair's Office of Special Envoy instituted by Indonesia, a Dialogue Facilitation Unit could be set up which could bring together external actors under one institutional mechanism, and ensure technical, financial, and diplomatic support to the process. The Chair's Office of Special Envoy, in turn, could reach out to China's Special Envoy on Myanmar, and India's Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs as nodes for institutional cooperation. Such an institutional mechanism could also streamline the many regional initiatives for dialogue within and outside ASEAN. Such institutional mechanisms for dialogue have precedence in Myanmar, where institutions like the Myanmar Peace Centre (later National Reconciliation and Peace Centre) were set up as a 'one-stop shop,' to coordinate all peace initiatives, and for all stakeholders, including donors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) between 2012 and 2020.³⁶

ASEAN's Motivations for Security Cooperation with India and China

In brokering cooperation with India and China through SR as a framework, motivations for ASEAN and India and China need to be appraised. For ASEAN, SR provides a useful regional cooperative framework with India and China that can be mapped along the dimensions of capacity, credibility, cost, and complexity laid out in the introduction to this special issue.

Capacity

Cooperation with India and China enhances ASEAN's capacity at a time when there is an increased acknowledgement that ASEAN alone does not have enough leverage and "with other influential regional powers added to the mix, the junta might comply quicker."³⁷ A security partnership with the two builds ASEAN's capacity in two ways. One, it brokers institutional strengths to address the humanitarian crisis and initiates inclusive dialogue to fill the gaps that exist. On humanitarian assistance, for instance, the role of the AHA Centre is limited by a narrow mandate of aiding only in times of natural disasters.³⁸ Engaging India and China, at different levels-state, sub-state/provincial, and non-states agencies in these states, allows for greater options to deliver critical humanitarian assistance. Similarly, within an ASEAN-led dialogue framework, ASEAN could use India and China's access and leverage on different groups to establish channels of dialogue. While India and China already have leverage with the military, and different EAOs, they could also utilise the NUG's interests in engaging regional neighbours to discuss plans for dialogue.³⁹

Second, a coordinated stance with India and China allows for the strengthening of ASEAN's capacity to create sustained pressure on the SAC to comply, correct course, and not hedge its bets by courting different international actors. Getting the military to immediately cease violence will need Indian and Chinese pressure. Myanmar historically viewed its neighbour, China, as its principal diplomatic and economic patron, especially after Western sanctions were imposed in the 1990s.⁴⁰ There has, however, been a realisation in the Myanmar military about the asymmetric dependence on China.⁴¹ With this equation, India enjoys significant leverage over the Myanmar military and see India as a regional balance against over-reliance on China.⁴²

Credibility

In a fragmented context like Myanmar, with competing claims of legitimacy and governance actors, India and China have different forms of credibility across different political constituencies which ASEAN can leverage at three levels.

One, cooperation with India and China allows humanitarian assistance by ASEAN to be credible in both its reach and modality. Local humanitarian actors and civil society organisations (CSOs) have been effectively delivering much-needed humanitarian assistance to communities since the failed coup, along with the NUG and EROs.⁴³ Institutionalised mechanisms to channel ASEAN's aid through Indian and Chinese borders allow for greater reach. But more importantly, using through Indian and China borderlands, and accompanying cross-border organisations and ethnic groups to transfer aid allows ASEAN to not solely rely on SAC's aid channels and mitigate grievances about ASEAN's aid being state-centric and promoting the legitimacy of the military. ASEAN's humanitarian aid current modality has become contentious with some EAOs rejecting ASEAN's plan to direct such assistance through the SAC's administrative channels.⁹ Concerns over the weaponization of aid, where the SAC has denied access to food and medicine as a part of its counterinsurgency policy have been raised by groups like the Chin Human Rights Organisation.⁴⁴

Second, India's and China's support in leveraging different domestic groups to dialogue ensures that the dialogue is broad-based and enhances the credibility and legitimacy of the dialogue process. Broad-based inclusion of conflict parties, other marginalised groups, and civil society groups are increasingly recognised to be important not only for a peace settlement to emerge but also for peace to be durable and legitimate.⁴⁵ Within this framework, for instance, China who commands huge, albeit not unlimited, leverage on a range of EAOs across Northern Myanmar, who rely on China formally and informally for food, medicine, arms, and finances

⁹ The AHA Centre's operational mechanism relies on the junta for access and is dictated by a board consisting of the junta's representatives in the Myanmar Task Force.

can persuade groups to come to the dialogue table.⁴⁶ Post-coup, the Chinese Special Envoy has held several rounds of dialogue with the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC), a coalition of seven EAOS (EAOs) based in Northern Myanmar. Similarly, India's historic engagement and covert support for groups like the Chin National Front (CNF), Kachin Independence Organisation, and the National United Party of Arakan could be leveraged.⁴⁷

Both China and India can support an ASEAN-based framework that calls on all groups, particularly the military to cease violence, as a part of a broader dialogue mechanism. Since 2012, China has used its leverage multiple times to bring parties to the table, persuading both EAOs and the military to make concessions towards dialogue. In 2017, during Myanmar's peace process, China also arranged for all EAOs based on the Northern Myanmar-China border, to fly from Yunnan province in China to attend the 21st Century Panglong Conference in 2017.⁴⁸ China also managed to convince the military to allow such groups as the Arakan Army, Ta'ang National Liberation Army, and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army to come to the peace talks, something the military had not agreed to do.⁴⁹ 'Power' and leverage of international mediators and facilitators, rather than only their perceived neutrality, is increasingly being recognised as a pertinent factor for successful mediation.⁵⁰ Facilitators who have the power to 'enforce' the deal by altering the incentives to domestic parties have also been related to the success of mediation strategies.⁵¹ In this context, the engagement of India and China adds to making the process not only credible but perhaps even more successful.

Third, any ASEAN-brokered dialogue format will need to guarantee discussions on agendas of democracy, and civilian supremacy, and embed agendas that serve the long-term prospect of peace and democracy in Myanmar to be credible.⁵² Regional partners, like India in particular, will be able to assist with technical support, and sharing experiences and best

practices to facilitate such agendas. For instance, EAOs will want their demand for autonomy and federalism addressed in any tangible dialogue process, the NUG will want a discussion on a new constitution and civilian supremacy. These issues were central but also contentious even during the peace process initiated by Thein Sein in 2012.⁵³ Here, India has certain normative legitimacy with its democratic institutions, mechanisms for minority accommodation, and a deeply rooted practice of civilian supremacy over the armed forces.

Many EAOs and democratic opposition groups reference Indian institutions as models that could be borrowed to ensure federalism and democracy in Myanmar. Many EAOs want a model of federalism in Myanmar that reflects the ethnic diversity of the country, like India's.⁵⁴ During the peace process, even Western NGOs sought to facilitate capacity-building trips for EAOs who signed the NCA to go to India and learn about the Indian federal experience.⁵⁵ Similarly, many NUG leaders have called on India to uphold democratic values as the 'world's largest democracy' and delegitimise the junta⁵⁶—all of which point towards India being seen as a credible actor given its domestic institutional mechanism. Notably, even the SAC regime has sought to learn from India's experience on the conduct of elections, as the junta-led Union Election Commission sought technical assistance on issues including compiling voter lists to hold the election, inspections of political parties, and preparations to adopt a proportional representation system.⁵⁷

Costs

Cooperation with India and China on Myanmar will incur costs—financial, diplomatic, and institutional—in the short-term but also ensures greater cost-sharing in the longer term. Any cooperation needs to be undergirded by institutional arrangements backed by adequate financial capital and diplomatic commitment. To minimise such institutional and other related costs, the ASEAN Chair's Office of Special Envoy could, as the focal point, use existing

institutional forums like the annual summits and meetings at the Foreign Minister and Senior Official level, where ASEAN already has established institutions with India and China, to discuss updates and strategies, and review progress on Myanmar.

However, it needs to be noted that with two Envoys nominated and humanitarian assistance underway, ASEAN has already incurred costs, but has yet to see concrete outcomes. To increase the existing financial investment by bringing India and China on board through institutional mechanisms like the Dialogue Support Unit or a pooled fund led by the AHA Centre (proposed in the prior section) led by the ASEAN Chair's Office of Special Envoy, despite the added costs, might have more promising prospects. For instance, pooling funds through trust funds where multiple donors engage and co-fund, has internationally been seen to be cost-effective in the long term in fragile or post-conflict countries, like Myanmar.⁵⁸

Beyond financial and institutional costs, the thematic and issue-centric nature of the cooperation lowers autonomy and legitimacy costs. For instance, engaging with China might be a double-edged sword, when China is increasingly seen as a 'backer' of the junta, which fuels the already existing anti-China sentiment on the ground.⁵⁹ However, relying on China only on specific issues, and balancing that with engagement with India, diversifies the associated risks.

Complexity

SR involves a complex process of getting India and China on board. However, it also addresses the complexities that have impeded effective international response in at least four ways. One, it emerges as a regional-led response to the crisis, at a time Western states and their pre-occupation with multiple other crises, including the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the eruption of conflict in Tigray, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has pushed Myanmar further down the agenda.⁶⁰ Second, getting India and China onboard helps navigate the

complex fragmented terrain of Myanmar where any credible international engagement needs to engage multiple and often competing political constituencies.⁶¹ Historically, a failure of the international response has been a preoccupation with democratisation in Myanmar, which meant that international actors, until the 2010s, rarely factored ethnic insurgencies, and overlooked the diverse opposition to the military regime in Myanmar.⁶² With the diversity of EAOs increasingly being recognised as key parts of the solution, Indian and Chinese leverage and legacy of their engagement with different EAOs is likely to be important. It is also acknowledged that ASEAN representatives have little knowledge about the ethnic aspirations and movements, and thus, China's long-standing engagement with EAOs will aid FPC.⁶³

SR might also attempt to broker the intra-ASEAN divide on some modest steps concerning Myanmar. How to handle the Myanmar crisis is seen to have split ASEAN as a regional bloc between mainland authoritarian governments like Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand, and democratic maritime powers, like Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.⁶⁴ Similar differences among ASEAN states exist with regards to China, with many mainland governments like Laos and Cambodia leaning towards China, while others like Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia tilted towards the US in the US-China rivalry.⁶⁵

Cooperation with China and India, on the one hand, creates stronger regional mechanisms that countries, whatever their strategic leanings, will not want to undermine. On the other, having China on board creates incentives for ASEAN countries leaning towards it to collaborate, while invoking a partnership with India might be seen by the rest as a more balanced way to engage China, creating a coherent momentum for the FPC. As it stands, not only there are divisions but even countries like Thailand seem to be 'doing their own thing' with nominal or no involvement of ASEAN or other regional governments. For instance, Thailand in December 2022 hosted a meeting on the post-coup crisis that included the

Burmese junta's foreign minister, with attendance from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos but a notable absence of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore.⁶⁶

Lastly, with the competitive bilateral relations between India and China, owing to historic factors, including unsettled border disputes, China's alleged support for Indian rebel groups in the 1960s, and China's opposition to India's candidacy for permanent membership to the UN Security Council and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and India's informal emerging coalition with Japan, Australia, and the US as a counterbalance to China's dominance, complicates any joint engagement.⁶⁷ However, SR which involves thematic cooperation on distinct aspects of the FPC does not involve brokering trilateral cooperation, making a partnership with India and China less complicated.

India and China within SR: Motivations to Engage with ASEAN

SR also offers India and China incentives to cooperate with ASEAN on Myanmar. Unlike Western states who continued to impose sanctions, offered humanitarian aid, and took a strong rhetorical position opposing the coup, Indian and Chinese engagement post-coup has been marked by a sense of ambivalence.⁶⁸ While both have not explicitly recognised the junta, they have also not sanctioned the military and have continued to engage with the military owing to various strategic imperatives.

For China, a shared border of 1,357 miles has ensured multiple overlapping priorities ranging in Myanmar, ranging from cross-border stability, access to the Indian Ocean via Myanmar, obtaining alternative routes for the supply of oil and gas, and protecting its trade and investment.⁶⁹ Myanmar is deeply strategic as it provides alternative access to the sea, freeing China from its dependence on the Pacific Ocean for trade.⁷⁰ This access is more significant for landlocked provinces like Yunnan, which has not developed on par with coastal provinces, and at a time when the disparities between coastal and inland provinces are major policy occupation

in China.⁷¹ With the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) integral to it, the quest for cross-border stability is even more important.⁷² As much of the Sino-Myanmar borderlands are controlled by a host of EAOs, with the central state having a limited reach, China historically has adopted a dual position. On one hand, formal and informal networks in China continue to sustain the EAOs, while on the other China protects the army diplomatically, and economically aids and engages with them, thus strengthening both sides of the conflict.⁷³

In the current post-coup context, China, similarly, has been cautious in inviting military rulers to key multilateral forums like the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation summit but has continued with high-level visits (including Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit in July 2022), and the resumption of its geo-strategic economic projects through Myanmar—all indicating that China is ready to work with the generals.⁷⁴ However, the spreading of violence across Myanmar has brought deep anxieties about conducting business and investments. More so, Beijing's initial attempt to block UN sanctions on Myanmar at the UN Security Council has intensified anti-Chinese sentiment in Myanmar society, resulting in some cases of attacks on Chinese investments.⁷⁵ This has thus led China to seek rapprochement with other political groups. While China has not accepted or recognised the NUG, there is engagement at a technical level in areas where there are Chinese investments as Beijing has reached out to the NUG to secure Chinese interests.⁷⁶

India's engagement has likewise been parochial. Multiple strategic priorities including competition with China, leveraging Myanmar's position as a gateway to the rest of Southeast Asia, gaining access to Myanmar's gas fields, and the need for the Myanmar military's cooperation to deal with the ethnic insurgencies in its Northeast region bordering Myanmar ensures that India sees engagement with the government in Naypidaw—whomever is in charge—as essential.⁷⁷ India's trade, investment, and military aid in the last decade has been

on the rise, with agreements on infrastructure, energy, banking, the establishment of Industrial Training Centres, and the conservation of heritage sites, in addition to those on developing land border crossings.⁷⁸ Owing to such intricate interests, India, despite the rhetoric of supporting ‘reconciliation’ have continued with arms transfer, high-level visits, and development projects the NUG—all of which, has legitimated the SAC rule. India was among the eight states to attend Myanmar’s Armed Forces Day on March 27, 2021, an annual military parade held to honour Myanmar’s military. Bharat Electronics Limited, of which the Indian government is the majority stakeholder, exported a remote-controlled air-defence station to Myanmar in July 2021.⁷⁹ This is despite the fact that post-coup, unlike the China-Myanmar border which was sealed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, India witnessed a huge influx of refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that as of October 31, 2022, around 48,800 people had fled into the Indian states of Mizoram and Manipur.⁸⁰

This is a remarkable shift from the 1990s when in the aftermath of the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar, the Indian government was one of the most vocal opponents of the military junta, providing moral and material support to the pro-democracy activists.⁸¹ A policy reversal in 1993 resulted in India being back in partnership with the military, owing to the realisation in India that the former policy had failed, and the military was there to stay.⁸² Since then “India’s policy toward the country has been predicated on dealing with the government in power in Myanmar in pursuit of its most tangible security and strategic interests (embodied in its Look East and Act East policies), while continuing its support for democracy in principle.”⁸³ Post-coup, the Indian government has justified that its engagement with the military-government emanates from its policy:

to remain engaged with all countries in India’s neighbourhood ‘irrespective of the ruling establishment.’ India’s representative told the Special Rapporteur that the presentation of credentials was to create the diplomatic space whereby India can

*remain engaged with and influence the SAC...[and] that because of its 1,600 km land border and shared maritime space, India must engage in the interest of its foreign policy and security concerns.*⁸⁴

SR however, incentivises India and China to engage under the auspices of ASEAN for five core reasons. First, while the need to engage the military has persisted, both within India and China, association with the military regime is becoming a global liability, and not has even delivered on cross-border trade, which India and China have prioritised. For instance, the US Department of Commerce has sanctioned Chinese company Wanbao and its entities for supporting Myanmar's military regime.⁸⁵ In India, there have been calls to diversify and engage with the NUG on pragmatic grounds. If the protection of India's strategic and security interests is what sustains its relationship with the SAC, it has far from delivered. Rather, despite the repeated assurances, the Tatmadaw has been playing both sides to leverage the situation to its advantage. Last month, a unit of the Chin National Army, the armed wing of the Chin National Front, attacked a base run by Indian insurgents of the People's Liberation Army of Manipur that has reportedly been collaborating with the Tatmadaw.⁸⁶ The fact that most of the territory in Chin and Rakhine states where India's priority projects like the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway pass through are controlled by EAOs like the Chin National Force, PDFs, and Arakan Army, also necessitates a diversification of India's Myanmar policy.⁸⁷

Second, it helps with the strategic act of deference of responsibility towards ASEAN.⁸⁸ The acceptance of ASEAN's exercise of authority and accompanying central responsibility, while allowing it to de-prioritise or maintain an ambiguous policy. In an intricate crisis like Myanmar's, where multiple strategic and economic priorities intersect, deference allows for more policy options.

Third, SR comes at a time when both India and China are seeking to build greater cooperation with the regional bloc. Thus, partnership in Myanmar, however small, allows for a wider relationship to springboard. For India, its domestic initiatives like the Act East policy, Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, and its foreign policy drive to expand its strategic presence in Southeast Asia and the greater Asia-Pacific has led it to prioritise ASEAN-India strategic partnership across the political-security, economic and socio-cultural domains.⁸⁹ To that end, the upgrading of their existing strategic partnership to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership which seeks to enhance cooperation on maritime activities, counter-terrorism, transnational crimes among others is a testament to their strengthening relationship.⁹⁰

Similarly, increased China-US strategic rivalry in Southeast Asia, its economic and security imperatives, and the ongoing dispute with some ASEAN members on the South China sea have led China to continually engage ASEAN through incentives or coercion.⁹¹ The variations in the depth and breadth of their economic and diplomatic relations with China further suggest that the Chinese government can use its relations with individual ASEAN states strategically to split ASEAN on issues where the Chinese government prefers ASEAN not act collectively or, on the other hand, seek to promote ASEAN unity when that is in China's interest, such as over the Sino-ASEAN free trade agreement.⁹²

Fourth, it recognises and institutionalises building on the existing contribution that India and China have incurred, without demanding a drastic shift from their existing engagement. For instance, despite the ambivalence of the Indian stance on the refugee crisis, the Indian state of Mizoram has openly welcomed refugees from Myanmar, issued refugee cards by the Mizoram state government, and permitted free movement within the state.⁹³ China has shipped vaccines, medical workers, and construction materials for quarantine centres to various multiple rebel groups, across the Northern borderlands, including the Kachin Independence Organisation, and the Shan State Progress Party to increase vaccinations in rebel-

held territories.⁹⁴ Through the Chinese Red Cross, China has continued to provide COVID-relief in all of the China-Myanmar bordering regions, especially in EAO-held territories.

Lastly, a short-term ASEAN-led push on a temporary moratorium in defence equipment sales and transfer might help place India and China as more suitable enablers of the dialogue process in Myanmar. India has adopted a temporary weapon freeze as a diplomatic option in South Asia. In Nepal, in 2005, after the King took over absolute power and dissolved the Parliament, India along with other Western countries stopped weapon sales, transfer and defence cooperation with the Nepal Army.⁹⁵ While collaborating with ASEAN comes with economic costs and strategic costs for India and China, the temporary and thematic nature of the cooperation might help ameliorate perceptions of such risks.

Limitations

While promising, SR also has inherent challenges to being realised. One is ASEAN's limited institutionalisation and prioritisation of the Myanmar issue, which will define the scope and intensity of security partnerships with India and China on the issue. The Indonesian Chairmanship and the recent announcement of setting up an ASEAN Chair's Office of Special Envoy are promising, which would allow the crisis to move beyond Envoy-led high-level diplomacy to a more institutionalised approach. However, this Chair's Office of the Special Envoy carves out an "implementation plan for the 5PC, with measurable indicators and a specific timeline" will likely determine its effectiveness.⁹⁶ To that end, how the Office of the Special Envoy engages with existing institutions like AHA, institutionalises sub-bodies that can be tasked to lead on specific aspects of the FPC, like preparation and convening broad-based dialogue with anti-military forces, and actively calls for international partnership will define how India and China can be brought on board. And while Indonesian insistence on the SAC being barred from attending high-level ASEAN meetings is encouraging, Indonesia's

chair has vowed not to be "held hostage" by the Myanmar issue, which underscores that there are limits to how deeply the crisis will be prioritised.⁹⁷ There are also questions about the future of the ASEAN Chair's Office of Special Envoy. As it stands, it is an Indonesian construct, and not one governed by ASEAN's mandate, and whether the next ASEAN chair in 2024 will continue to build on to the work of this Office remains a question. If not, it is likely not to have the institutional continuity that FPC demands.⁹⁸

Furthermore, cooperation with India and China can be a double-edged sword. Partnership with them will stimulate progress in the FPC, but the perception among Myanmar citizens of India and China as 'backers of the junta' might dent broader ASEAN credibility. A key concern about the extant engagement of India and China is that they are seen to be strengthening the junta's access to means of violence through continued defence cooperation, high-level visits, and ongoing security cooperation with the SAC regime. Both China and India have supplied weapons and equipment that have been used for pervasive human rights violations in the country. Any cooperation with ASEAN on the FPC realistically will need to see a careful reduction in the scale of defence cooperation.

Relatedly, while SR presumes linking strengths of India and China to facilitate the FPC, however, a possible scenario could be only one of the states joining in ASEAN's cooperative arrangement. For instance, despite groups like the Karen National Union, Chin Nation Front, and others seeking more engagement with India, India has been cautious not wanting to 'rock the boat' in terms of its relationship with the military. Rather, despite calls by scholars and practitioners of abandoning the unilateral, partisan pro-junta policy and diversification of India's Myanmar policy by reaching out to other groups, it has yet to translate in practice.⁹⁹ Such apprehensions are likely to impede any further cooperation.

Likewise, beyond ASEAN or other external actors, the role of other internal political dynamics in Myanmar will be most critical for determining the political settlement, and how

states appraise their partnerships in Myanmar. First, tenets proposed by SR towards the achievement of FPC will need to be accepted by the primary political entities within Myanmar. For instance, while dialogue is central to the FPC, if the literature on negotiation and mediation is invoked, the time does not look ‘ripe’ for inter-dialogue as none of the groups has yet to accept it. However, this acceptance of the terms of ASEAN’s partnership with India and China to deliver on FPC by domestic actors is complicated given the evolving fragmentation and alignments between various groups. For instance, despite NUG’s support for ethnic agendas, it is being said that within NUG, and institutions like the NUCC there are divisions between unelected “federalists” (largely ethnic leaders) and the elected democrats (former NLD leaders) who have persisted.¹⁰⁰ Further, the division between NUG members within and outside the country is also said to be a key factor.¹⁰¹ Such divisions and the uncertainty around the political settlement that might emerge can ensure that states like India and China might want to ‘sit on the fence’ and weigh options, as per the changing landscape within the country.

Conclusion

Outlining the framework of SR, this article identifies a possible pathway for ASEAN to cooperate with India and China to address the crisis in Myanmar. In anchoring the framework to how ASEAN could leverage the strengths of India and China, as key regional players in the crisis, the article highlights possible institutional pathways for delivering on the FPC. In outlining institutions like the pooled funds for humanitarian relief, a Dialogue Facilitation Unit to support dialogue between groups, and chart conditions for the dialogue process, the article also engages with the critique that ASEAN does not have the institutional capacity of the framework that is needed to implement the FPC. The article underscores how SR as a framework for cooperation benefits both India and China, as well as ASEAN. In highlighting ASEAN’s motivations for a partnership with India and China, using the 4C matrix—capacity,

credibility, cost, and complexity—outlined in the Introduction to this special issue. The article also unpacks the limitations of the approach by arguing that ASEAN's institutional framework and the importance of evolving domestic dynamics among others are likely to be key factors impeding security cooperation between ASEAN, India, and China in Myanmar.

In highlighting these, the article makes key contributions to the extant International Relationship scholarship and the international policy engagement on Myanmar. One, it introduces a policy framework that focuses on ASEAN's agency on brokering key competencies to deliver on regional crises, decentring away from the dominant framework of 'hedging' to account for ASEAN's international engagement. While used in this article to look at the political crisis in Myanmar, the framework could be built further to look at other thematic areas of cooperation, including peacebuilding, humanitarian relief, and development assistance among others. The framework while helps use regional actors for regional crisis management, at a time when Western states who have traditionally been at the helm of crisis management across the world have either de-prioritised the region or deferred the responsibility to ASEAN. Second, while the limitations of FPC have been long-recognised, policy options on how to catapult its delivery are yet to be delineated. More so, at a time of divisions, with some critics calling for 'doing away with' the FPC, while others outlining that any replacement to FPC will not only be harder to materialise and bring further divisions within ASEAN. In this context, the article outlines a framework which assesses the prospects for a security partnership with India and China to further FPC, however, modestly, rather than scrapping it. The article also recognises that options put forth around dialogue and using political and economic leverage to get differing political groups, are neither popular nor straightforward. However, it reinforces emerging views among some quarters in Myanmar and the wider region that some semblance of 'dialogue' within and between the various groups, under strict preconditions to restrain the junta, is likely to be important, at least in the short term.

Endnotes

¹ Ingrid Jordt, Tharaphi Than, and Ye Lin Sue, *How Generation Z Galvanized a Revolutionary Movement Against Myanmar's 2021 Military Coup* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021).

² Shailaja Neelakantan, "Malaysia's Top Diplomat Broaches Junking ASEAN Consensus on Myanmar," *Radio Free Asia*, July 30, 2022, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/consensus-07302022162946.html>.

³ Luke Hunt, 'Myanmar Issue Hardens Divisions in ASEAN' *Voice of America News* (16 February 2022) <<https://www.voanews.com/a/myanmar-issue-hardens-divisions-in-asean/6442653.html>>.

⁴ ASEAN Secretariat. 2021. "Chairman's Statement on the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting." [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/Chairmans Statement-on-ALM-Five-Point-Consensus-24-April-2021-FINAL-a-1.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/Chairmans%20Statement-on-ALM-Five-Point-Consensus-24-April-2021-FINAL-a-1.pdf).

⁵ Lina Alexandra and Monalisa Adhikari, *Edinburgh Centre for Constitutional Law*, forthcoming.

⁶ Zin Mar Aung, "'We Will Remember Who Stood With Us,' Says Myanmar Shadow Govt's Foreign Minister" *The Irrawaddy* (5 April 2022) <<https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/interview/we-will-remember-who-stood-with-us-says-myanmar-shadow-govts-foreign-minister.html>>.

⁷ The Irrawaddy. 2022. "Myanmar's Civilian Govt Says No Talks With Junta Until It Stops Killing Civilians, Quits Politics," December 2, 2022. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/myanmars-civilian-govt-says-no-talks-with-junta-until-it-stops-killing-civilians-quits-politics.html>.

⁸ Alexandra and Adhikari, *Edinburgh Centre for Constitutional Law*, forthcoming.

⁹ Kamal Adelina, "Will ASEAN Take the Side of the Myanmar People?" *Fulcrum*, November 4, 2022, <https://fulcrum.sg/will-asean-take-the-side-of-the-myanmar-people/>.

¹⁰ Scot Marciel, "It's Time to Help Myanmar's Resistance Prevail," *United States Institute of Peace*, August 22, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/its-time-help-myanmars-resistance-prevail>.

¹¹ Chen Chen Lee, "ASEAN Summit on Myanmar and the 5-Point Consensus," *Asialink*, May 11, 2021, <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/insights/asean-summit-on-myanmar-and-the-5-point-consensus>.

-
- ¹² Stephen McCarthy, “Burma and Asean: Estranged Bedfellows,” *Asian Survey* 48, no. 6 (2008): 911–935.
- ¹³ Jurgen Haacke, “ASEAN and Political Change in Myanmar: Towards a Regional Initiative?” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 3 (2008): 351–378.
- ¹⁴ Ben Bland, “ASEAN Muddles through on Myanmar,” *The Interpreter*, October 22, 2021, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/asean-muddles-through-myanmar>.
- ¹⁵ Ruukun Katanyuu, “Beyond Non-Interference in ASEAN: The Association’s Role in Myanmar’s National Reconciliation and Democratization.” *Asian Survey* 46, no. 6 (2006): 825–845.
- ¹⁶ Aung SMT, ‘The Politics of Policymaking in Transitional Government: A Case Study of the Ethnic Peace Process in Myanmar’ in Nick Cheesman and Nicholas Farrelly (eds), *Conflict in Myanmar-War, Politics, Religion* (ISEAS Publishing 2016)
- ¹⁷ Christine Bell and others, ‘PA-X Codebook, Version 1’ <www.peaceagreements.org>.
- ¹⁸ Sithu Aung Myint, ‘Is Constitutional Reform a Journey to Nowhere?’ *Frontier Myanmar* (Myanmar, 4 March 2020) <<https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/is-constitutional-reform-a-journey-to-nowhere>>.
- ¹⁹ Andrew Ong, “Ethnic Armed Organisations in Post-Coup Myanmar: New Conversations Needed,” *Fulcrum*, June 16, 2021, <https://fulcrum.sg/ethnic-armed-organisations-in-post-coup-myanmar-new-conversations-needed/>.
- ²⁰ Alexandra and Adhikari, *Edinburgh Centre for Constitutional Law*, forthcoming.
- ²¹ Maulia, Erwida. 2023. “Indonesia to Set up Office of ASEAN Special Envoy on Myanmar.” *Nikkei Asia*, January 11, 2023. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Myanmar-Crisis/Indonesia-to-set-up-office-of-ASEAN-special-envoy-on-Myanmar>.
- ²² Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, ‘India Engages Myanmar’ *The Diplomat* (26 November 2022) <https://thediplomat.com/2022/11/india-engages-myanmar/>
- ²³ Antonio Fiori and Andrea Passeri, “Hedging in Search of a New Age of Non-Alignment: Myanmar between China and the USA,” *The Pacific Review* 28, no. 5 (2015): 679–702.
- ²⁴ John D. Ciorciari and Jürgen Haacke, “Hedging in International Relations: An Introduction,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, no. 3 (2019): 367–374.
- ²⁵ Lukas Maximilian Mueller, “Challenges to ASEAN Centrality and Hedging in Connectivity Governance-Regional and National Pressure Points,” *Pacific Review* 34 (5): 747–777.
- ²⁶ Interview by the author with EAO representative, March 27, 2023.

-
- ²⁷ Daniel Sullivan, ‘Paths of Assistance: Opportunities for Aid and Protection along the Thailand-Myanmar Border’ (Refugees International 2022)
<<https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2022/7/11/paths-of-assistance-opportunities-for-aid-and-protection-along-the-thailand-myanmar-border>>.
- ²⁸ Becky Carter, ‘Country-Based Pooled Funds for Humanitarian Financing’ (Institute of Development Studies 2018)
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c701a7fe5274a0ec9a1db86/486_Humanitarian_Country_Based_Pooled_Funds.pdf>.
- ²⁹ Manisha Thomas, “Understanding Humanitarian Funds-Going Beyond Country-Based Pooled Funds,” *Norwegian Refugee Council*, February 12, 2017,
https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/pooled_funds_2017_16mar2017_web_v2.pdf.
- ³⁰ Interview by the author with representatives of Nyan Corridor, a research organisation based in Myanmar, March 20, 2023.
- ³¹ Interview with UN representative, Myanmar, July 25, 2017.
- ³² Interview with EAO representative, March 27, 2023.
- ³³ Interview with EAO representative, March 27, 2023.
- ³⁴ National Unity Government, Myanmar. 2021. “Federal Democracy Charter.”
<https://crphmyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Federal-Democracy-Charter-English.pdf>.
- ³⁵ Thant Myint-U, *The Hidden History of Burma: Race, Capitalism, and the Crisis of Democracy in the 21st Century* (Main edition, Atlantic Books 2020).
- ³⁶ Myanmar Peace Monitor, "Myanmar Peace Center," n.d.,
<https://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/1439>.
- ³⁷ Angshuman Choudhury, ‘India, Myanmar and ASEAN: Can New Delhi Act as a Regional Mobiliser?’ in Lina Alexandra (ed), *Seeking Strategic Options for Myanmar: Reviewing Five-Point Consensus and Anticipating the Future of Democracy in Myanmar* (Centre for Strategic and International Studies 2022).
- ³⁸ Mely Caballero-Anthony, “ASEAN and the Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar: A Futile Exercise?” in *Seeking Strategic Options for Myanmar: Reviewing Five-Point Consensus and Anticipating the Future of Democracy in Myanmar*, ed. Lina Alexandra (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2022), 2–11.
- ³⁹ Aung, Zin Mar 2022. “‘We Will Remember Who Stood With Us,’ Says Myanmar Shadow Govt’s Foreign Minister.” *The Irrawaddy*, April 5, 2022.

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/interview/we-will-remember-who-stood-with-us-says-myanmar-shadow-govts-foreign-minister.html>.

- ⁴⁰ Robert Taylor, “Myanmar: Military Politics and the Prospects for Democratisation,” *Asian Affairs* 29, no. 1 (1998): 3–12.
- ⁴¹ Bertil Lintner, ‘The Geopolitics of Change in Myanmar’ in Subir Bhaumik (ed), *The Agartala Doctrine: A Proactive Northeast in Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford Scholarship Online 2016).
- ⁴² Choudhury, “India, Myanmar and ASEAN.”
- ⁴³ ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights. 2022. “Joint Open Letter Concerning ASEAN’s Approach to Myanmar.” <https://aseanmp.org/2022/10/25/joint-open-letter-concerning-aseans-approach-to-myanmar/>.
- ⁴⁴ Salai Za Uk Ling, “Why It’s Time to Talk about the Aid Void on the India-Myanmar Border,” *The New Humanitarian*, March 22, 2022. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2022/03/22/aid-void-India-Myanmar-border-Chin>.
- ⁴⁵ Desirée Nilsson, “Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace,” *International Interactions* 38, no. 2 (2012): 243–266.
- ⁴⁶ Chiraag Roy, ‘China’s Grand Strategy and Myanmar’s Peace Process’ (2020) 22 *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 69
- ⁴⁷ Avinash Paliwal and Paul Staniland, ‘Strategy, Secrecy, and External Support for Insurgent Groups’ (2023) 67 *International Studies Quarterly* 2.
- ⁴⁸ The Irrawaddy, “China Plays Its Hand in Burma’s Peace Process,” May 23, 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/china-plays-its-hand-in-burmas-peace-process.html>.
- ⁴⁹ The Irrawaddy, “China Plays Its Hand in Burma’s Peace Process.”
- ⁵⁰ Isak Svensson, “Mediation with Muscles or Minds? Exploring Power Mediators and Pure Mediators in Civil Wars.” *International Negotiation (Hague, Netherlands)* 12, no. 2 (2007): 229–248.
- ⁵¹ Kyle C. Beardsley, David M. Quinn, Bidisha Biswas, and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, “Mediation Style and Crisis Outcomes,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 1 (2006): 58–86.
- ⁵² The Irrawaddy. 2022. “Myanmar’s Civilian Govt Says No Talks With Junta Until It Stops Killing Civilians, Quits Politics,” December 2, 2022. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/myanmars-civilian-govt-says-no-talks-with-junta-until-it-stops-killing-civilians-quits-politics.html>.

-
- ⁵³ Su Mon Thazin Aung, "The Politics of Policymaking in Transitional Government: A Case Study of the Ethnic Peace Process in Myanmar," in *Conflict in Myanmar-War, Politics, Religion*, ed. Nick Cheesman and Nicholas Farrelly (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2016), 25–46.
- ⁵⁴ Interview with a Member of the Secretariat representing the EAOs in the peace talks, November, 14, 2018.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with the Programme Lead of a Peacebuilding NGO, Nov 2018, Yangon.
- ⁵⁶ Aung, "“We Will Remember Who Stood With Us.”"
- ⁵⁷ The Irrawaddy. 2022. "Interest in Regime’s Planned Election Reveals China and India’s Disguised Support for Myanmar Junta," April 27, 2022. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/interest-in-regimes-planned-election-reveals-china-and-indias-disguised-support-for-myanmar-junta.html>.
- ⁵⁸ Aung, "“We Will Remember Who Stood With Us.”"
- ⁵⁹ Joe Kumbun, "Under China’s Direction, Myanmar’s Peace Process Goes Nowhere," *The Irrawaddy*, September 27, 2019, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/under-chinas-direction-myanmars-peace-process-goes-nowhere.html>.
- ⁶⁰ Richard Horsey, ‘Myanmar’s Civil War: Military, Political, and Crime Dynamics’ (The Brookings Institution, 13 March 2023) <<https://www.brookings.edu/events/myanmars-civil-war-military-political-crime-dynamics/>>.
- ⁶¹ David Hutt, ‘Myanmar’s Message to the EU amid Ukraine Crisis: “Don’t Forget about Us”’ *Euronews* (16 March 2022) <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/03/15/myanmar-s-message-to-the-eu-amid-ukraine-crisis-don-t-forget-about-us>
- ⁶² Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan, *Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma: Understanding the Foreign Relations of the Burmese Praetorian State* (NUS Press in association with IRASEC 2013).
- ⁶³ Interview with EAO Representative, March 27, 2023.
- ⁶⁴ Hunt, "Myanmar Issue Hardens Divisions in ASEAN."
- ⁶⁵ Amitav Acharya, ‘Will the Pandemic Polarize Asia?’ (*The World Today*, 5 February 2021) <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2021-02/will-pandemic-polarize-asia>

⁶⁶ Sebastian Strangio, ‘Thailand to Convene Regional Meeting on Myanmar Conflict’ *The Diplomat* (20 December 2022) <<https://thediplomat.com/2022/12/thailand-to-convene-regional-meeting-on-myanmar-conflict/>>.

⁶⁷ Harsh V. Pant and R. Passi, “India’s Response to China’s Belt and Road Initiative: A Policy in Motion,” *Asia Policy* 24, no. 1 (2017): 88–95.

⁶⁸ Yun Sun, ‘Myanmar’s Civil War: Military, Political, and Crime Dynamics’ (The Brookings Institution, 13 March 2023) <<https://www.brookings.edu/events/myanmars-civil-war-military-political-crime-dynamics/>>.

⁶⁹ David I. Steinberg and Hongwei Fan, *Modern China-Myanmar Relations: Dilemmas of Mutual Dependence* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012); Chenyang Li and Liang Lye “China’s Policies towards Myanmar: A Successful Model for Dealing with the Myanmar Issue?” *China: An International Journal* 7, no. 2 (2009): 255–287.

⁷⁰ Ian Storey, *Southeast Asia and the Rise of China: The Search for Security* (Routledge 2011)

⁷¹ Steinberg and Fan, *Modern China-Myanmar Relations*.

⁷² Khin Khin Kyaw Kyee, *China’s Multi-Layered Engagement Strategy and Myanmar’s Realities: The Best Fit for Beijing Policy Preferences* (ISP Myanmar 2018).

⁷³ United States Institute of Peace. 2018. “China’s Role in Myanmar’s Internal Conflicts.” Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/ssg-report-chinas-role-in-myanmars-internal-conflicts.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Jason Tower, ‘China Bets Strategic Projects, Regional Stability on Myanmar Coup Regime’ (14 July 2022) <<https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/07/china-bets-strategic-projects-regional-stability-myanmar-coup-regime>>.

⁷⁵ Xue Gong, ‘Handle with Care: China’s Economic Engagement in Myanmar’ (*The Interpreter*, 16 February 2022) <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/handle-care-china-s-economic-engagement-myanmar>

⁷⁶ Sun, 2023.

⁷⁷ Udai Bhanu Singh, “Post-Coup Myanmar and India’s Response,” *Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*, May 21, 2021, <https://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/post-coup-myanmar-indias-response-ubsingh-210521>.

⁷⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, India, “Visit of External Affairs Minister to Myanmar,” May 11, 2018, <https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29889/visit+of+external+affairs+minister+to+myanmar+may+1011+2018>.

⁷⁹ Michael Martin, ‘Prime Minister Modi and Myanmar’s Military Junta’ (22 November 2021) <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/prime-minister-modi-and-myanmars-military-junta>>.

-
- ⁸⁰ Myanmar Country Office, “Humanitarian Situation Report No. 9,” *United Nations Children's Fund*, October 31, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/media/129801/file/Myanmar-Humanitarian-SitRep-31-October-2022.pdf>.
- ⁸¹ Thant Myint-U, *Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia* (First paperback edition, Faber and Faber 2012).
- ⁸² Shyam Saran, ‘India’s Strategic Interests in Myanmar’ (February 2011) <http://www.ipcs.org/issue_briefs/issue_brief_pdf/SR98-ShyamSaranInterview.pdf>.
- ⁸³ Gautam Mukhopadhyaya, ‘India Needs to Get Serious About the Crisis in Myanmar’ *The Diplomat* (4 February 2022) <<https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/india-needs-to-get-serious-about-the-crisis-in-myanmar/>>.
- ⁸⁴ UN-Human Rights Council. 2023. “Legal and Illegitimate: Examining the Myanmar Military’s Claim as the Government of Myanmar and the International Response.” <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/mm/2023-01-27/crp-sr-myanmar-2023-01-31.pdf>.
- ⁸⁵ Gong, “Handle with Care.”
- ⁸⁶ Anthony Davis, ‘India’s Ties With Myanmar Junta in Focus After Chin Group’s Attack on Manipur Rebels’ *The Irrawaddy* (Myanmar, 26 January 2022) <<https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/indias-ties-with-myanmar-junta-in-focus-after-chin-groups-attack-on-manipur-rebels.html>>.
- ⁸⁷ Sudha Ramachandran, ‘Angshuman Choudhury on India’s Robust Engagement of Myanmar’s Junta’ *The Diplomat* (20 March 2023) <<https://thediplomat.com/2023/03/angshuman-choudhury-on-indias-robust-engagement-of-myanmars-junta/>>.
- ⁸⁸ Tyler Pratt, ‘Deference and Hierarchy in International Regime Complexes’ (2018) 72 *International organization* 561
- ⁸⁹ Nehginpao Kipgen, ‘India-ASEAN Relations: The Initiatives, Successes, and Challenges’ (2020) 19 *India review* (London, England) 207.
- ⁹⁰ Press Information Bureau, “Vice President leads delegation at the 19th ASEAN-India Summit in Cambodia,” November 12, 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1875478>.
- ⁹¹ Huong Le Thu, ‘China’s Dual Strategy of Coercion and Inducement towards ASEAN’ (2019) 32 *Pacific review* 20.
- ⁹² Daniel C O’Neill, *Dividing ASEAN and Conquering the South China Sea: China’s Financial Power Projection* (University Press 2019).
- ⁹³ Interview by the author with representatives of Nyan Corridor, a research organisation based in Myanmar, March 20, 2023.

⁹⁴ Lucas Myers, “The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and China’s Determination to See It Through,” *Asia Dispatches*, May 26, 2020, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/china-myanmar-economic-corridor-and-chinas-determination-see-it-through>.

⁹⁵ Prashant Jha, *Battles of the New Republic: A Contemporary History of Nepal* (C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd 2014).

⁹⁶ Sharon Seah and Moe Thuzar, “Indonesia Takes the Lead on Myanmar: The Clock is Ticking,” *Fulcrum*, February 17, 2023, <https://fulcrum.sg/indonesia-takes-the-lead-on-myanmar-the-clock-is-ticking/>.

⁹⁷ The Jakarta Post, “ASEAN unity won't be held hostage by Myanmar crisis: Retno,” January 11, 2023, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/world/2023/01/11/asean-unity-wont-be-held-hostage-by-myanmar-crisis-retno.html>.

⁹⁸ Interview with an Indonesian expert on ASEAN, March 30, 2023.

⁹⁹ Gautam Mukhopadhyaya, “India Needs to Get Serious About the Crisis in Myanmar,” *The Diplomat*, February 4, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/india-needs-to-get-serious-about-the-crisis-in-myanmar/>; Avinash Paliwal, “Interview: Avinash Paliwal on Challenges Posed to India by the Taliban and Myanmar’s Military Coup,” *Scroll India*, May 22, 2021, <https://scroll.in/article/995448/interview-avinash-paliwal-on-challenges-posed-to-india-by-the-taliban-and-myanmars-military-coup>.

¹⁰⁰ Interview by the author with two civil society representatives within and outside Myanmar between October 2021-Jan 2022.

¹⁰¹ Min Zaw Oo, ‘Myanmar’s Civil War: Military, Political, and Crime Dynamics’ (The Brookings Institution, 13 March 2023) <<https://www.brookings.edu/events/myanmars-civil-war-military-political-crime-dynamics/>>.