

## Why Indonesia's Political Attitude not Strong in Myanmar's Military Coup? Regional Political Studies for Elections and Democracy

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### Abstract

The Indonesian government has taken steps to reduce the level of political violence in Myanmar. This effort is one way of political and humanitarian responsibility for the advancement of democracy in the Southeast Asian region. This effort is one of the unusual actions because it is outside the agreement made by countries in the Southeast Asian region. The actions of the Myanmar military junta who have committed murders against their own citizens cannot be seen with a blind eye by their neighbors, namely Indonesia. Thousands of citizens who support Myanmar's democratic government have been forced into detention by the military junta that carried out the coup. The Activist Group Organization for Assistant Political Prisoners (AAPP) reported that as of Wednesday, April 7, at least 581 civilians who were demonstrating were killed by the Myanmar Military Junta. The purpose of this study is to find out and reveal why the Indonesian government dared to offer the initiative to stop political unrest in Myanmar and how it affected Indonesia. The informants of this research consisted of officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, international political observers, and lecturers of international relations.

**Key words:** Military coup; Indonesia's efforts; Myanmar elections; Human right

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The political coup action carried out by the Military Junta occurred on February 1, 2021 when the military rejected the election results and concluded that the election was fraudulent on November 8, 2020. The election was won for the third time by the democratic party led by the very influential charismatic leader, Aung San Syu. Ki, since the 2010 2015 and 2020 elections. As a result of these elections, the military junta that lost the election, through the United Development and Solidarity Party (USD), arrested and detained the President of Myanmar, the charismatic leader Aung San Syu Ki, and Myanmar leaders from the League of National for Democracy (NLD).

As a result of the military coup action, civilians opposed and rejected the military coup action. Of course, since 2010 Myanmar's youth have felt the pleasures of democratic freedoms that were free from the repressive military actions of the previous decades. The courage of young people to fight is certainly at stake in the affairs of life. And unmitigated, the risks that must be borne by the citizens of Myanmar who oppose the military junta coup, until Wednesday 7 April 2021, 581 demonstrators have been killed by the Military Junta. Thousands of residents were later arrested, some detained and many missing. Myanmar's chaotic state began in early February 1, 2021, Myanmar's security forces arrested a number of elected political leaders, ministers and activists in the nation's capital, Naypyidaw, and across the country. There is no sign of stopping the fighting.

As a friendly and neighboring country, as well as a country that is considered the de facto leader of ASEAN, Indonesia certainly will not remain silent about the fate of the citizens of its neighboring country, namely Myanmar. But on the other hand, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia said to always respect and strive to uphold the principles and other values in the Asean Charter, including efforts to develop democratic values, respect

for human rights, good governance, respect on the rule of law, and promoting constitutional government is equally important. "If it fails to respect and apply these principles, Indonesia is worried that Asean will not be able to provide maximum service to its people. Indonesia also emphasizes the importance of humanitarian access for all people in need, including political prisoners," said Marsudi.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi along with nine other Asean foreign ministers who met specifically to discuss developments in Myanmar via video conference. The meeting was held when Indonesia continued to conduct consultations with a number of countries during visits to Brunei Darussalam, Singapore and Thailand. The results of the meeting will be announced by Brunei Darussalam as the Chair of Asean this year.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Methodology** This research uses descriptive qualitative research, namely a description that uses an observational background, includes actions, and conversations. data collection is carried out directly from the original source. The courage of citizens to resist the military junta's coup can be seen from the increasingly widespread use of social media among young people around the world which can be seen in the Dramaturgical Communication Theory of the thinker Erving Goffman in his book *The Presentation of Everyday Life* (1959) with an emphasis on how the individual's presence emerges in the world. social information sharing.

The fundamental question of Indonesia's involvement in the Myanmar conflict, of course, is: what makes Indonesia feel entitled to intervene in the affairs of citizens in Myanmar? Why did Indonesia take the initiative to hold discussions with leaders in the ASEAN region regarding Myanmar?

There are five speakers whose views are stated in this manuscript, namely: Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Dupito Darma, official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Kornelius Purba as Senior Journalist and ASEAN Political Observer from *The Jakarta Post*, Marzuki Darusman as Former Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia in Myanmar and former member of the UN's International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, and Philips Vermonte an Executive Director of the Center Strategic for International Studies (CSIS) who understands Myanmar's political conflict.

This study uses political communication theory by three major thinkers, namely: The Theory of Prominent Social Reality Construction initiated by Peter L. Berger, Dramaturgy Communication Theory with Assumptions, Essence, and Concepts initiated by Erving Goffman, and Theory of Hegemony by Antoni Gramsci.

## 3. INDONESIAN AS THE BIGGEST HOPE

As a very influential country in Asean, Indonesia is expected to be a party that garners support for ASEAN countries and countries outside Asean to help resolve internal conflicts in Myanmar. Kornelius Purba said that Myanmar's current situation cannot be separated from its past history. The background of Myanmar's backwardness in democratic affairs was conveyed by Kornelius Purba when Myanmar had hidden itself for about 50 years because it was in total isolation from pressure from the outside world when the country was fully controlled by the Myanmar military. Democracy began to emerge in Myanmar when in 2010, Aung San Syu Ki was released from house arrest and later the party led by Aung San Syu Ki won the election, but was always not fully accepted by the army.

The political story of Aung San Syu Ki is very similar to Megawati Soekarno Putri's political journey in Indonesia. Aung San Syu Ki's father, Aung San, was the founding father of the State of Myanmar. When a second general election was held in 2011, Aung San Syu Ki's party won again. Then the army compromised much like Suharto where the Myanmar law stated that the Myanmar military automatically controlled 25% of the seats in Parliament without the need to take part in elections. Opportunity for the military in Parliament to pass legislation for the purpose of preventing Aung San Syu Ki from becoming President or Prime Minister, the reason being that Aung San Syu Ki's now deceased husband is a British citizen. So Aung San Syu Ki will never be the prime minister or President of Myanmar, so it is always referred to in political terms that Aung San Syu Ki is the de facto leader of Myanmar. Myanmar was recently accepted as a member of ASEAN in 1997, along with Cambodia and Laos.

As a fellow strongly influenced by the military, the military-led government of Myanmar greatly admired and followed Suharto's style of power which used the dual function of ABRI, namely the Golkar Party as a mixture of the military and the bureaucracy. So what is really happening now is that in the context of extending the power of the military leaders, the military leaders are involved politically because they are about to retire, namely the Myanmar Army Commander wants to retire in May 2021. Of course, after retiring, military leaders want to become President, but lose the general election, so no there is no other way than to overthrow the legitimate government.

The military rejected the November 2020 election results and accused multiple frauds in Aung San Syu Ki's third consecutive victory. Aung San Syu Ki's Nationali for Democracy party won 87% of the vote, accused by the military of being a fraud. For Myanmar's youth, 2020 is the year of freedom to use social media, which is the same as that of young people around the world. Social media

has been enjoyed by the public including young people, a situation that has been very different from previous years compared to the 2010 and 2015 elections, which the military did not realize.

The situation of the coup in Myanmar in Berger and Luckman's theory is a reality that is not scientifically shaped or revealed by God, but a combination of human formations and constructions. Humans construct the reality that exists in society because reality is dynamic and often has multiple faces. Everyone will have a different construction of reality. Its emergence is based on experience, preferences, education, environment and interactions between individuals, and then each person interprets social reality with their respective constructions.

So it is true that the Dramaturgy Communication Theory by Erving Goffman is that social interaction is interpreted the same as a performance or theater on stage. The appearance of humans interacting on the stage of life by using various symbols for certain purposes. Dramaturgy theory explains the comparison of the human world with the world of theater with actors or actors on stage.

What happened in Myanmar, explained by Dupito Darma as a new dilemma. According to Dupito, it has always been difficult for Myanmar to enter ASEAN because it does not want to follow the democratic diplomacy roadmap agreed in the Asean Charter. Western countries don't want to call it Myanmar but as Burmese. What is happening now is the history of the past repeating itself, namely the Myanmar military is returning to its identity as the political guardian of the Myanmar state and nation. Myanmar's military wants to return to power that began 60 years earlier.

If you look at the identity of the Myanmar military in the language of Gramsci's theory, it can be seen that there is hegemony in addition to the relationship of domination by using power, but also using political and ideological leadership when the Myanmar military returns to its natural habitat as guardians of the state and nation of Myanmar. Hegemony is the victory of the ruling class that is obtained through a consensus mechanism from various socio-political forces. Hegemony appears when the lower class, including the proletariat, accepts the pattern of life, character of thinking, and views of the elite group that dominates and exploits it. Hegemony, according to Gramsci, breeds obedience by accepting the situation as it is without questioning it critically.

Regarding Indonesia's position at the forefront of efforts to resolve the settlement of Myanmar, Dupito urged the need for reform of the Asean Charter. According to Dupito, Indonesia's position is still constructive as a gateway. Although it is possible for some people to think that Indonesia's attitude is less useful or effeminate. Because hard work alone doesn't solve the problem, especially if Myanmar moves away from us and can no longer talk to each other. Indeed, this is an ongoing dilemma. Therefore, the Asean Charter should be revised,

updated, for example, that there is no need for full consensus on issues that violate human rights. The current state of emergency is sufficient with the approval of a majority of regional members so that with the number of those who agree, 7 to 8 Asean member countries can make quick decisions on behalf of Asean. So that if the Myanmar issue is discussed at the United Nations, it is sufficient for the group that is the representative of Asean to represent Asean whether to intervene or not. If it is only in its current position, of course, Asean will be in trouble because it can only adhere to normative principles, namely the peaceful path.

In terms of democracy, Philips Vermonte criticized the Tatmadaw's military rule for too long, namely 60 years in power. The current situation in itself made it very difficult to find a solution. It should be the goal of the international community to play a role in helping Myanmar. It is hoped that Indonesia can have a better solution to stop the conflict. Philips offered to explain that it is imperative that armed groups and civilians have to stop the bloody situation as well. They have to sit down and negotiate. Because we have faced situations especially in the 80's and 90's. Vermonte proposes to return power to Myanmar's election results. The Tatmadaw will of course demand something to negotiate by asking for an amnesty which will certainly not be published.

In addition, Philips proposed the release of all political prisoners and of course the main character who was detained, namely Aung San Syu Ki. It is very possible that there will be a sharing of power between the two sides, a very difficult solution for the people of Myanmar. They needed to overcome the Tatmadaw's political power as quickly as possible. Similar to the scenario in the military political power in Thailand. Another scenario is the importance of external forces, namely among the international community. If the deaths of the demonstrators continue with an unstoppable very high death rate, an international force is urgently needed within the scope of the UN mechanism. It is also necessary to consider the importance of the presence of Asean as a conflict solution, because Asean has come a long way in trying to resolve conflicts.

On the possibility of international community crackdown on Myanmar, Kornelius Purba emphasized that Indonesia needs to consider the possibility of gathering support not only for an economic boycott, but also to provide a strong deterrent effect to the Myanmar military. If the economic boycott is not effective, for example it is not allowed to sell Myanmar's exports to the boycott country, it can be ineffective because China will buy all of Myanmar's merchandise. Because China needs Andaman port to entrance to the Indian Ocean.

According to Kornelius, an international crackdown is urgently needed against the two acts most feared by the leaders of the Myanmar Military Junta. First, if the military assets and bank accounts of the generals will

be frozen by America. If the problem is only the lack of domestic state budget, the Myanmar military government doesn't care. So the assets of Myanmar soldiers and generals must be frozen. If America freezes all its banks, surely all the other banks will join because they are afraid. If US President Joe Biden has frozen all the accounts and military assets of the Myanmar generals, that is what the Myanmar army fears the most.

Second, the issue of the Rohingya Muslim issue needs to be raised because the United Nations has designated Myanmar as the perpetrator of the crime. Crimes against humanity against the Rohingya are classified as crimes against humanity. The general who carried out this coup was very afraid of being brought to the Human Rights Court in The Hague, Netherlands, and if that happened, the generals would automatically go to prison, many cases have been proven. Just look at the Congolese leader, the Bosnian leader, the Serbian leader, they are all imprisoned. Of course it will be a great fear and the most feared by the military junta leaders if they go to prison for crimes against the Rohingya. At the same time, this is also a big challenge and obstacle. Indonesia needs four and three other Asean countries namely Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to fear Indonesia because Indonesia really cares about humanitarian cases in the Rohingya.

It must be admitted that Indonesia cannot be too harsh because Indonesia is very concerned with the Rohingya issue in Myanmar, while the Myanmar army has carried out acts of killing humanity against the Rohingya as decided by the United Nations. Indonesia could be accused of keeping shrimp behind a rock, for the sake of the Rohingya. What is now important for Indonesia and the international community is how in Myanmar there has always been strong resistance by civil democracy and that is the most important factor and has been implemented. Domestic demonstrations are teamed up with Facebook and Twitter and as a result, now that Facebook and Twitter have been banned in Myanmar, civil society must continue to be encouraged to fight the coup.

Kornelius emphasized that there must be international diplomacy that is not visible because America has an interest in Myanmar's economy, which is controlled by China. For Joe Biden it is very important to prioritize human rights along with the economy, and of course Joe Biden will be fussy about pressing this issue. America has frozen the accounts of the son of the general who led this coup and the 1 (one) billion dollars that have been frozen by America. If the generals' accounts were frozen, the Myanmar military would be seriously disturbed.

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#### **4. DIFFICULT WAY FOR INDONESIA'S EFFORTS**

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The big difficult road challenges hinder the goodwill of Indonesia and Asean countries to take a stand against

Myanmar's bloody military coup. The problem in particular arises from the main enforcement of the principles formulated in the Asean Charter which are binding on all member countries. Regarding this difficult problem, Dupito Darma explained that ASEAN is indeed difficult, which is different from the European Union organization. In the European Union, it does not apply by consensus, while in Asean everything is through the principle of mutual agreement. As a result, it becomes very difficult to discuss sensitive issues in the Asean region such as cases that may occur similar to those in Myanmar today. Statements issued on behalf of Asean must be approved by all ASEAN member countries. This is different from what happened in the European Union, where an executive is appointed who speaks on behalf of the European Union. Indeed, Asean organizations are not legal entities, including in the decision-making process with the NTA, in cooperation with Australia, all Asean members must sign an agreement, otherwise it is invalid. This trait is a very rough compromise and always happens.

Dupito explained other difficulties that occur in Asean countries. For example, Thailand was controlled by the military regime because of a military coup as well. Another problem with Hun Sen in Cambodia, Hun Sen is also a dictator in Cambodia who has been in power for decades. Of course these two countries will not want to issue criticism of Myanmar. Moreover, Myanmar has support from the Chinese block because Myanmar is directly adjacent to China. Relations between Chinese and Myanmar military officials have been unbroken since long ago.

From all these conditions and situations, what should Indonesia do? Will Indonesia always remain silent? Is it enough what the Foreign Minister has done in communicating with the Foreign Minister from the Junta? Will Indonesia give endorsement to the military junta. The biggest challenge, of course, is how Indonesia can have a dialogue with the junta. If Indonesia's interest is to save democracy, save human rights in Myanmar, then like it or not, Indonesia must continue to have dialogue by reminding Myanmar that what the Myanmar military has done has violated Asean principles.

So learning from the facts that happened in Myanmar, if the Asean charter is still as pure as it is today, namely there must be a 100% pure agreement meaning every country has a veto right, it will be very difficult for Asean to develop in terms of handling human rights and democracy. because, it is impossible for Asean countries to agree on something that is not in line with what Asean wants. Dupito noted that of course Malaysia will support Indonesia's efforts, but Malaysia is also naughty because he has other interests. Malaysia has repatriated asylum seekers to their respective countries, but not Rohingya asylum seekers due to religious sentiments. The actions taken by Malaysia are certainly very contrary to the

principles of international law, namely if the asylum seekers will face a situation that endangers, harms, or even endangers their lives, the host countries cannot return the asylum seekers. This principle is outlined and it is the duty of the United Nations as an institution to regulate it. Dupito strongly believes that a superpower like America, which is currently led by the Democratic Party, will not remain silent. America will definitely take action to stop the mass killing of the people. If Asean does not come out of this case well, then Asean's name will be very bad.

On the need for a firm attitude and action by Indonesia, Kornelius Purba holds that Indonesia as the de facto leader of ASEAN must be firm. According to Korneliius, there is indeed an ASEAN principle of non-intervention, that other countries should not interfere in domestic conflicts. But what is happening in Myanmar is exactly like the conflict in our homes or neighborhoods. When there are neighbors whose children and wives are beaten to death until they bleed, should we just be quiet and watch? Kornelius suggested that Indonesia should take a stand even though it is indeed very difficult to gather ten de facto ASEAN leaders to discuss Myanmar. The Thai leader will be difficult because the current Thai leader Prayut Chan-ocha is the result of a coup also by the army from the hands of Prime Minister Yinluck Sinawatra who was taken over by the current prime minister. Thailand definitely refuses to intervene, because the result of the current government is result of the coup. While the leaders of Laos and the leaders of Cambodia along with the leaders of Vietnam certainly don't want to be involved because these countries are the same Buddhist countries as Myanmar.

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## 5. THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS

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What political efforts have been made by Indonesia? Indonesian Foreign Minister, Retno Marsudi, said that when the military took over the government on February 1 and rejected the November 2020 election results, all Southeast Asian countries and the international community were trapped with mixed feelings, especially shock, disbelief and disappointment. Myanmar's promise since joining Asean in 1997 does appear to be getting further and further away.

ASEAN's response was immediate on February 1, when the ASEAN Chair issued a statement based on discussions with all ASEAN member countries. In a climate of uncertainty, the situation on the ground is unclear and the chair's evolving statements provide direction to Asean member states, and provide something the international community can do.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi is at the forefront as the center of diplomatic efforts in the region and its surroundings. Retno continued to communicate with the Foreign Ministers of Asean member countries,

with key countries outside the region, with the United Nations, with key organizations, and other figures. Minister Retno's repeated diplomacy in February to Brunei, Singapore and Thailand helped lay the groundwork for the informal Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting which then took place earlier this month on March 2, 2021.

The holding of the informal AMM (Asean Foreign Ministers Meeting) meeting is important because it shows ASEAN highlighting acts of military violence, the need for each party to refrain from seeking peaceful solutions through dialogue and reconciliation, as well as affirming ASEAN's readiness to help peacefully and constructively.

The region's position in the one month period since the outbreak of this situation has grown significantly to bring together common views, and that is for one Asean country, Myanmar, to listen, understand and respond to the views of the other nine ASEAN member states. It is important for Asean member countries including Indonesia to clarify their views that the situation in Myanmar is detrimental to regional stability.

Currently the UN Security Council, UN Human Rights Commission, UN Human Rights Council, Asean Partners, and civil society are the main forces, and various other organizations support Asean's efforts to find a resolution. Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi understands the situation well and will continue to work over the phone and through virtual meetings to maintain and build support. Concern for the humanitarian situation in Myanmar is very important and it is necessary to consider the impact of this situation on the future of the country and regional security and prosperity. Indonesian President Joko Widodo this week also called for a meeting of Asean leaders. The President spoke with the Chairman of ASEAN His Excellency Sultan Bolkiah from Brunei Darussalam to convene a meeting at the High Level Conference (KTT).

For Indonesia, the results of the summit should provide clarity on how ASEAN will handle the conflict situation in Myanmar with the spirit of non-intervention, as well as the principles of the goals, and provisions of the Asean Charter, and the spirit of Asean as a family, and Myanmar needs to be given the opportunity to inform other countries. other Asean member countries how to fulfill their obligations under the Asean Charter and the responsibility to achieve stability in the Asean region.

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## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Seeing how heartbreaking the bloody conflict by the military coup in Myanmar is, we conclude and make recommendations:

- 1). It is very necessary for ASEAN countries to raise support for ending the bloody conflict in Myanmar. International support from non-ASEAN countries, such as the European Union and the United States is urgently needed to act decisively in the name of humanity to stop

the deadly violence carried out by the Myanmar military junta and other similar actions.

2). The ethical responsibility of the whole country not to allow the Military Junta to kill unarmed civilians. Civilians are only using their democratic rights to demand the return of democracy to Myanmar which has been running since 2010.

3). Regarding the case of Myanmar and other similar cases that are very likely to arise in the Asean region, it is time to ratify the Asean Charter which provides an opportunity for countries in the region to seek a firm peaceful solution.

4). Policies in the Asean region are very appropriate if they follow the format of the European Union which authorizes formal institutions to intervene in conflicts that occur among member countries. The Asean Association should follow the policy format.

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This research is of course not very complete and is only a small part of efforts to increase respect for human rights at the ASEAN regional level. Learning from the case of Myanmar will benefit this research in the importance of a friendly and respectful regional face for human dignity and upholding democratic issues. Intervention on behalf of Asean organizations is urgently needed in internal conflicts which are complex in nature and contrary to respect for human dignity, such as the case of Myanmar. complex as happened in Myanmar.

The weakness of this research is, of course, that there have not been many researches on Asean cases for similar conflicts to serious humanitarian cases in the Asean region. So it is very important to appear other research or continuation of this research. Similar research will encourage the ASEAN region to become more democratic and respect human rights enforcement as Asean's main responsibility, so that Asean is not just an organization that only creates harmonization between regional countries, but is also given the opportunity to intervene in gross human rights violations.

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