Constructivism and Realism and the Crucial Nature of Security: ASEAN and Myanmar (1991-2012)

Ludovica Marchi[1]

This research aims to explore constructivist and realist perspectives regarding the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) three, distinct, security oriented policies on Myanmar from 1991 to 2012. Close reading of recent literature on the security challenges in Southeast Asia reveals space for the present research. Applying constructivist and realist perspectives, this article explores ASEAN's Myanmar policies, which may be grouped and designated as a balance of power policy, policy of communication, and ASEAN's policy of restructuring itself. Analysis shows that the most important dimension of ASEAN's actions concerning Myanmar was the pursuit and maintenance of security in the region. This investigation ultimately encourages other researchers to consider ASEAN's interactions with countries in the region, or to implement a different methodology, and confirm, supplement, or disprove the present findings.

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[1] Ludovica Marchi (pen name of Ludovica Marchi Balossi Restelli) (PhD, University of Reading, UK) is a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for International Studies, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK. She visited universities in Seoul, Tokyo, Macau, Taipei, Shanghai and Singapore, where she discussed her research. She published articles in peer-reviewed journals, which include, among others, *US-China Law Review*, *Asia-Pacific Journal of EU Studies*, and *Australia New Zealand Journal of European Studies*. She published four books, the last being (ed.) *The European Union and Myanmar: Interactions via ASEAN* (Routeldge 2020). http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/view/creators/Marchi=3ALudovica=3A=3A.html

Introduction

Persistently increasing threats in East and Southeast Asia, particularly in the region around Myanmar formed by the countries belonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (hereafter ASEAN or the Association),[2] prompt us to recall that Myanmar is part of a crucial geopolitical environment. The unpredictability of certain actors and the risks regarding their use of nuclear arsenals, coupled with tensions elicited by division-reunification dynamics of the Korean Peninsula, underline the significant security dilemma for ASEAN. From 1991 to 2012, specific challenges posed by Myanmar also weighed on ASEAN. For example, Yangon's (the capital of Myanmar) favorable attitude towards Beijing was perceived as a threat to ASEAN's unity and security. In addition, the risk of Myanmar's domestic matters spilling over into the surrounding region caused security concerns for ASEAN, while the prospect that actors external to the region would encroach on Myanmar affairs preoccupied not only Yangon, but also ASEAN. In addition, the aspiration for greater recognition in international politics was an ambition underlying ASEAN's activities. These challenges imply that security was an important dimension of ASEAN's actions regarding Myanmar. Furthermore, economic, trade, financial, and cultural dimensions of ASEAN's Myanmar policy during this time period were fundamentally important to the country's development. Yet, security was imperative to safeguarding the expansion of the economic and commercial developments of both Myanmar and the region. All of these reasons explain why the security focus is vital to this research paper.

This investigation on ASEAN's role as a regional actor aims to explore ASEAN's actions concerning Myanmar before and after the latter's accession.[3] This period was marked by Myanmar's 1991 entry into ASEAN's official dialogue, which led to Yangon's bid to join ASEAN, and then the country's 2012 by-elections and transfer of power to a civil-

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[2] ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967, in Bangkok, by the five original member countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Later, other nations joined: Brunei Darussalam (8 January 1984), Vietnam (28 July 1995), Laos and Myanmar (23 July 1997) and lastly Cambodia (30 April 1999).

[3] Mely Caballero-Anthony, "Understanding ASEAN's centrality: bases and prospects in an evolving regional architecture," *The Pacific Review* 27, no. 4, (2014): 563-584; Robert Yates, "ASEAN as the 'regional conductor': understanding ASEAN's role in Asia-Pacific order," *The Pacific Review*, 30, no. 4, (2017): 443-461; Alice Ba, "Institutional divergence and convergence in the Asia-Pacific? ASEAN in practice and theory," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 27, no. 2 (2014): 295-318; Evelyn Goh, "Institutions and the great power bargain in East Asia: ASEAN's limited 'brokerage' role," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 11, no. 3 (2011): 373-401.

ian military-sponsored government. It may appear that ASEAN acted mostly as a homogeneous entity, but this is far from the truth.[4] Among other things, some ASEAN member countries were also ruled by strong governments, or enjoyed deep political ties to China, leading to divisions within the organization, and tolerance of Yangon's authoritative and repressive system. Hence, there existed dissenting views on how to intermingle with Myanmar. However, in terms of pushing to boost interactions with Myanmar Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore were particularly active within the Association, particularly in expressing dissatisfaction with the junta.

This investigation avails itself of archival primary sources and official documents produced by ASEAN leaders at their meetings and at the Asia-Europe Meeting (hereafter ASEM). Observations from this research analysis are derived from interviews with ASEAN officials and security analysts conducted by the author between 2014 and 2019 in Myanmar, Singapore, Shanghai, and Macau. These interviews have been organized under the agreement that the anonymity of the interviewees is maintained in accordance with the Chatham House Rule

The present investigation first explores how scholars have treated ASEAN's affairs in Southeast Asia and how their work contributes to the present study. In particular, how recent literature on security challenges in Southeast Asia has revealed space for the present research to employ constructivist and realist perspectives in explaining ASEAN's actions in post-Cold War Southeast Asia. It subsequently focuses on the methodology of the present research and justifies these two perspectives' use. It then groups ASEAN's actions on Myanmar and regional security into three policy categories: balance of power policy, policy of communication, and ASEAN's policy of restructuring itself, and analyzes each from constructivist and realist perspectives. Following this, the complementarity of these policies is discussed. The conclusion outlines the findings and reasserts that maintaining security was an important dynamic of ASEAN's Myanmar policy.

The Literature
In the late 1990s, ASEAN affairs became the focus of intense debate

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[4] Jurgen Haacke, "Myanmar and ASEAN," *The Adelphi Papers*. No. 46, (2007): 41-60; Lee Jones, "Democratisation and foreign policy in Southeast Asia: the case of the ASEAN Interparliamentary Myanmar Caucus," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, No. 3, (2009): 387-406.

among scholars. Several believed ASEAN policies would be best understood from a realist perspective. Realism, they claimed, challenged traditional constructivist ideas concerning the creation of ASEAN.[5] Others argued that realism offered a logical interpretation of ASEAN's affairs.[6] Still, others within the academic community maintained that both perspectives of realism and institutionalism provided a coherent explanation of what occurred within the Southeast Asian region.[7]

Other studies of ASEAN's security challenges or general foreign relations policies as a regional actor rejected realist and institutionalist perspectives,[8] and similarly found the theoretical contributions of realists and constructivists unhelpful.[9] These studies claimed that state-centered analysis was no longer meaningful owing to changes in the international security environment and the growth of trans-national connections. Investigating ASEAN within Asia's regional security architecture, these studies defined in detail the notion of centrality and of leadership.[10] Centrality and leadership are justified by ASEAN's ability to deal with powers more influential than ASEAN itself (the US, China) and behave as a wise and prudent actor engaging in maintaining peaceful balance in the region. In this strand of research, wherein a social network approach was employed, scholars argued that both the density of networks and the links that ASEAN established were evidence of centrality's guidance.[11] Other research considered centrality as it related to ASEAN's contribution to the Asia-Pacific regional order.[12] Again, this research argued that a social network approach, this time situated in the English School's conceptual framework, may provide the flexibility necessary to explain ASEAN-great power negotiations.[13] Still other research considered geopolitics as an alternative model of regionalism in theory and practice.[14] This other research also incorporated the idea of ASEAN as a "diplomatic conduc-

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[5] Jurgen Ruland, "ASEAN and the Asian Crisis: Theoretical Implications and Practical Consequences for Southeast Asian Regionalism," *The Pacific Review* 13, no. 3, (2000): 421-451, 421.

[6] Sheldon Simon, "Realism and neoliberalism: International relations theory and Southeast Asian security," *The Pacific Review* 8, no. 1, (1995): 5-24, 6.

[7] Amitav Acharya, "Realism, Institutionalism, and the Asian Economic Crisis," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 21, no. 1 (1999): 1-29, 1.

[8] Caballero-Anthony, "Understanding ASEAN's centrality;" Yates, "ASEAN as the 'regional conductor'"; Ba, "Institutional divergence and convergence in the Asia-Pacific?"; Goh, "Institutions and the great power bargain in East Asia."

[9] Jones, "Democratisation and foreign policy", 402.

[10] Caballero-Anthony, "Understanding ASEAN's centrality".

[11] Ibid, 563.

[12] Yates, "ASEAN as the 'regional conductor'".

[13] Ibid, 444.

[14] Ba, "Institutional divergence and convergence in the Asia-Pacific?", 295.

tor" that effectively engaged external actors more powerful than any single ASEAN member state.[15] Moreover, the literature overwhelmingly recognized "ASEAN's ability to transcend the Cold War circumstances from which it had been born."[16]

Several studies refute the realist and constructivist perspectives on ASEAN's efforts to deal with the problems in the region. They contend that alterations in the global and regional security sphere "helped to transform the dynamics of governance."[17] They do, however, concede that both constructivist and realist perspectives helped to explain the regional order in Southeast Asia that dominated in a specific area: the aftermath of the Cold War.[18] Moreover, they recognized that both perspectives "created a healthy debate" in a field where realism alone had "dominated by default."[19] With regard to "major shortcomings" of the realist and constructivist perspectives, specifically concerning the prevailing security paradigm, the present investigation considers a time period prior to certain changes in the global security environment. [20] These security challenges include the transnational nature of terrorism, and the role of security actors beyond the state. Given the present study's attention to a post-Cold War Southeast Asia, specifically the 1991 to 2012 time period, both constructivism and realism emerge as helpful perspectives from which to understand ASEAN's actions, as they have been described. Scholars proposed combining both constructivism and realism in interpreting ASEAN's affairs.[21]

Methodology: Why Analyze ASEAN's Myanmar Policy From Two Perspectives?

While ASEAN states have expanded cooperation (a characteristic of constructivism) through newly created institutions, ASEAN's basic structure continued to be shaped by member states' different capabilities and potentials (characteristics of realism).[22] The constructivist perspective recognizes cooperation as the basis of ASEAN's policies. That said, cooper-

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[15] Ibid, 296.
[16] Ibid, 304.
[17] Mely Caballero-Anthony, *Negotiating Governance on Non-Traditional Security in Southeast Asia and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 24.
[18] Ba, "Institutional divergence and convergence in the Asia-Pacific?" 303.
[19] Ibid, 306, a position that contrasts Jones' view quoted above (Jones, 2009, 402).
[20] Caballero-Anthony, *Negotiating Governance on Non-Traditional Security*, 7.
[21] Ruland, "ASEAN and the Asian Crisis: Theoretical Implications," 424.
[22] Ibid.

ation is only effective if member states' expectations converge, since co-operation demands that member states accept other member states' absolute gains. Realism will continue to persist in Southeast Asia as ASEAN states face mutually unresolved conflicts where no consensus exists. An example is the lack of agreement on "whether external threats to regional order exist or who they may be."[23] Given that ASEAN's conduct was motivated by both constructivist and realist motivations, employment of constructivist and realist perspectives may help to explain its actions as they concern Myanmar and regional security.[24]

The Constructivist Perspective

Myanmar joined ASEAN three decades after it established itself as a regional group.[25] Constructivists had developed an "evolutionary, auto-dynamic concept" of integration and cooperation, believing that the latter encouraged the formation of collective identities, and the search for shared principles, values, and traditions, which characterized ASEAN's policy of the so called "ASEAN Way."[26] These theorists' understanding of transnational conditions and the regional order held that security dilemmas and power politics are socially constructed phenomena. They argued that rapid propagation of transnational economic connections in the Asia-Pacific region underpinned regional stability. Constructivists engaged with Myanmar's governance according to the concept of spillover, which is based on trust in a "process-oriented concept" of integration, as well as the notion of "functional cooperation" that produces greater harmonization leading members of a group to adapt to normative behavior.[27]

Under these premises, Myanmar was expected to benefit from spillover and a new inclination to cooperate. With that said, Yangon's repression of ethnic minorities, imprisonment of political opponents, use of forced labor, and similar misconduct were not invisible to ASEAN. ASEAN had affirmed adherence to "justice and the rule of law" and loyalty to the United Nations Charter, but also respect for the sovereignty of

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[23] Simon, "Realism and neoliberalism: International relations theory," 7.

[24] Ruland, "ASEAN and the Asian Crisis: Theoretical Implications," 423; Simon, "Realism and neoliberalism: International relations theory," 6.

[25] Thanks to the Bangkok Declaration, 1967, Bangkok Declaration, August 8, 1967, accessed October 30, 2019. https://asean.org/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration-bangkok-8-august-1967/

[26] Acharya, "Realism, Institutionalism, and the Asian Economic Crisis," 4-5; Narayan Ganesan and Ramses Amer (eds.). *International Relations in Southeast Asia. Between Bilateralism and Multilateralism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010).

[27] Ruland, "ASEAN and the Asian Crisis: Theoretical Implications," 422-3.

its members.[28] Though ASEAN desired changes within Myanmar for more lawful governance, ASEAN declined to engage in coercion, instead permitting gradual maturation. In various sections of the present investigation, the constructivist perspective revealed that ASEAN trusted that increased regionalism would bring both economic strength and stability to the region, and in turn, to Myanmar. It also accounted for the discretion ASEAN gave Myanmar, relying on the beneficial effect of practical cooperation, hoping that Yangon would absorb and harmonize with the group.

The Realist Perspective

After the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, key elements of realism were resuscitated, particularly the notion that stability depends on how power is distributed among a region's main actors. Realists believed that as the Cold War was concluded the "conflicts that had been suppressed by superpower dominance" would be unleashed and affect the region.[29] ASEAN member states were increasingly inclined to engage in practical "self-help" and to build up individual state military capabilities.[30] Realists assumed that the excessive creation of transnational economic links carried a "substantial conflict-causing potential." They expected "trade-wars and competition for resources and investment" to proliferate.[31] The clearest indication of realists' pragmatist approach to ASEAN-Myanmar's affairs was their critique of ASEAN's enlargement in 1997.

Realists had argued that a crucial factor for a successful and viable Southeast Asia-Ten was the economic convergence of mainland Southeast Asia and the new entrants.[32] In late 1997, the crisis had reached the economically less integrated Myanmar, which was considerably reliant on Asia's mainland with regard to trade and economics. The military junta had, in that year, freshly concluded a new Sino-Myanmar trade agreement.[33] The extent to which Myanmar seemingly relied more on China than on the Association reinforced the realists' prime argument that the hastened enlargement had been a mistake: economically, Myan-

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[28] As signatory of the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, 1976, Accessed October 3, 2019. https://asean.org/treaty-amity-cooperation-southeast-asia-indonesia-24-february-1976/
[29] Acharya, "Realism, Institutionalism, and the Asian Economic Crisis," 1, 3.
[30] Simon, "Realism and neoliberalism: International relations theory," 5.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Acharya, "Realism, Institutionalism, and the Asian Economic Crisis," 4.
[33] Ruland, "ASEAN and the Asian Crisis: Theoretical Implications," 435, quoting *The Jakarta Post*, May 31, 1997, accessed October 18, 2019. https://www.thejakartapost.com

mar relied more on China than to ASEAN member states.[34] It also increased tension within ASEAN over its own limited influence.[35]

ASEAN member states were seemingly gripped by a deeply rooted pre-colonial conception of the world at large. This worldview, realist in nature, was particularly strong among the military elites and influenced their foreign policy formation. For example, Myanmar's ruling junta affected unstable interstate relations with its strong sense of nationalism and ethno-centrism.[36]

In this investigation, the realist perspective will reveal ASEAN's preoccupations with external threats and their potentially destabilizing effects, and the fear that China's control of the region would have negative consequences for the safety and freedom of ASEAN member states and Myanmar itself. It will show that Yangon's bilateral relations with non-ASEAN member states demonstrated Myanmar's diminished trust in ASEAN. It will also reveal ASEAN's attitude as less prone than the constructivists to rely on potential benefits of the cooperation with regard to Myanmar. Overall, due to their promise to offer logical explanations of ASEAN's actions, the constructivist and realist perspectives are used to explore ASEAN's efforts with Myanmar to maintain security in the region. These efforts can be distilled into three interconnected policies identified as: balance of power policy, policy of communication, and ASEAN restructuring policy.

ASEAN's Three Myanmar Policies

Balance of Power Policy

ASEAN member states' uncertainty, as it concerned the region's geopolitical fate in a post-Cold War Southeast Asia, was due to their belief that China had aspirations to become the region's absolute power, and thus, opt for military intervention. This act would have had deleterious effects in the region in terms of states' security and independence. Some of ASEAN's actions were to prevent China, or other global hegemons, from

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[34] Author's interview with ASEAN leader (A), Macau, July 2014; Author's interview with security analyst (F), Shanghai, July, 2019.
[35] An important consequence that was raised at the: Author's interview with security analyst (B), Singapore, February 2014.
[36] Relevant points that have been argued at the: Author's interview with security analyst (C), Yangon, August, 2015.

constraining or endangering member states.[37] ASEAN's actions demonstrate that it has always sought to maintain a balance of power.[38] While essentially realist, these efforts were not characterized by material propagation and military build up.[39] The Myanmar regime, like ASEAN, feared domination by external threats and displayed paranoia about subversion inside the country. It was particularly suspicious that insurgent and ethnic groups, helped by their foreign sponsors, were planning attacks.[40] Myanmar's suspicion was discernable on several occasions, most recently when the military junta refused international assistance in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis' destruction in 2008 for fear of external intrusion in the country's affairs.

The Political Challenge China's provocations in Southeast Asia were characterized by military, air, and naval power projection. States that had minorities in China and/or territorial conflicts with it (among which included Malaysia and Indonesia) engaged in a mixed strategy of cooperation and independent military development. Despite its distrust of foreign actors, Yangon, encouraged by the late 1980s Western sanctions that isolated Myanmar, developed a foreign policy receptive to Beijing.[41] There came to be a widespread Sino business and migrant presence in Northeast Myanmar.[42] An additional result of Yangon's accommodation to Beijing's policies was increased trade with China and economic and military assistance, and Beijing's physical access to the Indian Ocean.[43]

       In the early 1990s, the Myanmar military junta's connection to China caused tension within ASEAN, exemplifying balance of power concerns. It also generated disagreement among ASEAN members about the ASEAN Way principles. This situation influenced the context of

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[37] Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia* (London: Routledge, 1989).

[38] A position that was discussed at the: Author's interview with ASEAN leader (A), Macau, July 2014.

[39] Haacke, "Myanmar and ASEAN" (2007): 52.

[40] This judgment was confirmed during the following interviews: Author's interviews with security analyst (B), Singapore, February 2014;Author's interview with security analyst (C), Yangon, August, 2015.

[41] Simon, "Realism and neoliberalism: International relations theory," 15; Marchi, Ludovica, "Myanmar's Diversification of its Foreign Relations: The European Union," *Asia-Pacific Journal of EU Studies* 15, no. 1, (2017): 15-32, 20, 22.

[42] Joseph Liow, *Dictionary of the Modern Politics of Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge Fourth Edition, 1995): 29.

[43] Thant Myint-U, *Where China meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

ASEAN's policies.[44] "A subregional identity" would have helped to ease tensions; however, a common identity was not easy to promote because of what may be perceived as important in terms of identity (values, beliefs, priorities, interests, and needs) by one member state may be found to be insignificant by another.[45]

Easing Tensions By acceding Myanmar in 1997, ASEAN engaged more openly in balancing extra-regional influences. In theory, realists would have suggested greater economic consistency, such as fewer economic differences, between the new participant, and the old member states in order to ensure a more sustainable Southeast Asia-Ten. Diverging from constructivists, realists opposed the early invitation of Yangon. However, like constructivists, they argued that "membership of ASEAN [had] evident practical utility by comparison with the problems which could arise in its absence."[46] Preventing China's excessive control of Myanmar was a worthwhile endeavor. ASEAN attempted to do so by providing aid and development to Yangon.

At the same time, ASEAN had concerns that internal dissent within Myanmar might cause spillover and destabilize the region. Although it chose not to interfere with its member states' internal decision-making by underwriting the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, such official obligation did not prevent ASEAN from making it clear to the military junta in Yangon that it should undertake steps to initiate a democratic transition process via the provision of reforms.[47] This was its policy of communication.

Policy of Communication

In order to maintain security and stability in the region, ASEAN practiced a policy of communication. This policy goal was relevant to both the constructivist and realist perspectives for the reason that security and stability were values these perspectives held as important. In contrast with ASEAN's balance of power policy, however, this approach concerned Myanmar's internal affairs. ASEAN requested the military junta introduce reforms and adopt greater respect for essential freedoms. This

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[44] These themes were debated at the: Author's interview with ASEAN leader (A), Macau, July 2014.
[45] Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia,* 157.
[46] Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia*, 143.
[47] A position that was supported during the: Author's interview with security analyst (B), Singapore, February 2014.

action was driven by the fear that Myanmar's internal affairs undermined the region more broadly. The warnings issued by ASEAN, specific to Myanmar, were a deliberate and motivated choice. [48] The non-interference discourse that characterized the ASEAN Way was regularized because member states had no desire to renounce sovereignty, and wished to avoid external inquiry about the legitimacy of ASEAN member governments, rife with dictatorship, politics corrupted by money, human rights abuses, and recurring coup d'états.[49]

The Spillover Effect ASEAN recognized the risk that problems internal of an ASEAN member state could expand, migrate outside its borders, and infect the region's affairs.[50] It is well known that the main contribution the Southeast Asian states could provide to the regional order was to demonstrate capability in resolving internal debilities.[51] It is, likewise, recognized that regional security "rest[s] on the ability of Southeast Asian states to put their political house in order."[52] Spillover of a regime's internal dissension is generally caused by fragile states governed by insecure regimes that tighten their domestic grip. Such action occurs at the expense of their neighboring states and leads to strain and resentment.[53] As one of ASEAN's central concerns was stability of the region, it embarked on a policy of communication to Yangon.

ASEAN's Message As part of its policy, ASEAN requested the military junta promote peoples' participation in public life, and fulfill responsibilities outlined in the "democracy" and "transition" emphasis of its address at the ASEAN 36th Ministerial Meeting in Phnom Pen.[54] This was the

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[48] This opinion was strengthened at the: Author's interview with ASEAN leader (A), Macau, July 2014.

[49] Pavin Chachavalpongpun, "Neither Constructive, Nor Engaging: The Debacle of ASEAN's Burmese Policy,".in Johan Lagerkvist (ed.), *Between Isolation and Internationalisation: The State of Burma*. (Stockholm: Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Working Paper 4 2008: 201-222), 203.

[50] As discussed during the Author's interview with International Relations analyst (D), Yangon, August, 2015.

[51] Michael Leifer, *Foreign relations of the new states* (Camberwell: Longman Australia, 1974): 109.

[52] Alan Chong, "Southeast Asia: Theory between modernization and tradition?" In Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan (eds.) *Non-Western International Relations Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010): 117-147, 133; Leifer, Michael, "The Security of Southeast Asia," *Pacific Community: An Asian Quarterly Review* 7, no. 1, (1975): 14-27, 26-7 as reported in Chong (2010): 133.

[53] Amitav Acharya, *Rethinking Power, Institutions and Ideas in World Politics. Whose IR?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014b): 100.

[54] ASEAN ministers Joint Communiqué. ASEAN 36th Ministerial Meeting. Phnom Penh, June 17, 2003, accessed September 28, 2019. https://asean.org/joint-communique-of-the-36th-asean-ministerial-meeting-phnom-penh/

first time that the words 'democracy' and 'transition' towards a democratic form of governance were employed in an ASEAN declaration. These kinds of messages pervaded ASEAN's discourse.[55] ASEAN expressed its desire for the junta to restructure,[56] and even spoke strongly about its lack of reforms.[57] ASEAN did not hold itself back from giving directions. Among the instruments ASEAN adopted in its communication policy with the military junta, ASEAN requested that the junta comply with commitments it had already made, facilitate society's increased involvement in the country's matters, and accelerate its democratic transformation. ASEAN's strength materialized as it ended the junta's practice of avoiding questions about the legitimacy of its governance. This messaging was largely motivated by ASEAN's desire to limit the junta's domestic conduct in affecting the broader region, and to maintain security and stability.

A further threat to the unity of ASEAN was Yangon's potential disenchantment with ASEAN. A weakened ASEAN would have endangered its desire for greater recognition within the international arena. It would also imperil the prospect of security in the region. ASEAN thus sought to encourage Yangon's more active participation and contribution for group cohesiveness.[58] ASEAN tried to motivate Yangon to conform to the ASEAN Charter, develop good governance and foster an "ASEAN Community" through ASEAN's efforts to restructure itself (hereafter

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[55] Such as in the ASEAN Declaration Concord II, Bali, October 7, 2003, accessed October 17, 2019. www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Transnational/2003Declaration.pdf For example the demand that Yangon should be excluded from the Association unless certain conditions were met (Malaysia' Prime Minister; Year in Review, 2003), or the call for 'every ASEAN leader [to] send a strong individual message to Yangon' (Siang 2003); Lim Kit Siang, "Malaysian Democratic Action Party," (2003) accessed September 29, 2019. http://dapmalaysia.org/all-archive/English/2003/sep03/lks/lks2650.htm

[56] An indication of this was the offer, by Thailand's Prime Minister, to mediate between the military junta and the larger regional and international society, and discuss a 'roadmap towards democracy' with all of the countries concerned.

[57] For example, by announcing its opposition to the junta's assumption of the rotating chair of the group's Standing Committee in 2006-7 (ASEAN, Cebu, 2005), and by warning the junta that investment in Myanmar would rapidly cease unless political restructuring were set in motion (ASEAN, Singapore, 2007; Jones, 2009, 392); ASEAN meeting of Foreign Ministers, Cebu, the Philippines, April 2005, accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/speeches/view-html?filename=2005041101.htm; ASEAN, Chairman's Statement of the 13th ASEAN Summit, One ASEAN at the Heart of Dynamic Asia, Singapore, November 20, 2007, accessed October 3, 2019. https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/formidable/18/2007-Chairmanâ%C2%80%C2%99s-Statement-Of-The-13th-ASEAN-Summit.pdf
Jones, "Democratisation and foreign policy," 392.

[58] A fundamental view supported at the: Author's interview with ASEAN leader (A), Macau, July 2014; Author's interview with official (F) ASEAN Secretariat, Singapore, August, 2015.

'ASEAN's restructuring policy').[59]

ASEAN's Restructuring Policy
In keeping with its goal of developing "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" as proposed in its Charter, ASEAN sought to re-vitalize itself.[60] "After suffering a major blow from the Asian financial crisis, ASEAN ha[d] made a recovery, and [wa]s slowly reforming, and perhaps reinventing itself."[61] Following the reorganization of the economy, ASEAN refocused on its old ambition and vital interest to bolster its reputation globally, and to enhance its role as a regional actor.

ASEAN's Ambition ASEAN's enhanced role might have taken shape if Yangon were to have fully recognized itself as a member of the Association. This recognition would have served ASEAN's aim of preserving regional security. However, Myanmar's solidarity with ASEAN began to diminish. Some member states believed that if ASEAN placed too much pressure on Yangon, the latter might react by abandoning the group.[62] Yangon had already demonstrated its dissatisfaction with ASEAN by being the only state not to attend the inaugural ASEAN defense ministers' formal meeting in May 2006. Also, by concentrating on state-to-state bilateral relations with neighboring countries, Yangon signaled that ASEAN's relevance to Myanmar's foreign policy had deteriorated.[63] If Myanmar were to have left the group, ASEAN would be less representative of the region as a whole, with repercussions for its ability to provide regional security.[64]

The ASEAN Charter and the Community's Social Responsibility Despite concerns ASEAN could not effectively represent its member states,

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[59] The ASEAN Charter was published in 2007 by the ASEAN Secretariat in Singapore. Subsequent reprints have been made, as the 21st Reprint of May 2017 which is used in this paper as a source, p. 4. It fixed the six fundamental principles that ASEAN members adhere to. See:
https://asean.org/storage/images/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf accessed October 5, 2019.
[60] The ASEAN Charter: 29.
[61] Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, Third edition (London: Routledge, 2014): 264.
[62] A relevant opinion sustained at the: Author's interview with ASEAN leader (A), Macau, July 2014.
[63] Haacke, "Myanmar and ASEAN," 58, 60.
[64] A judgment confirmed by the: Author's interview with official (E) ASEAN Secretariat, Singapore, August, 2015.

ASEAN made new efforts to support its Charter.[65] Myanmar had been judged to have poor "capacity for cooperation ventures."[66] ASEAN sought Myanmar's cooperation and hoped it would forge deeper connections with the group. ASEAN also hoped that Myanmar would "realise an ASEAN Community" that was "socially responsible,"[67] and comply with the Charter's resolution to "enhance good governance,"[68] and join cooperation initiatives, including matters of security. ASEAN demanded that Myanmar demonstrate greater solidarity in its contribution to the Association's evolution and transformation.

Indications emerged that allayed fear of Yangon's disillusionment with both the Association and its demands. Though several of its measures failed, Yangon eventually responded positively to ASEAN.[69] President Sein's 2011 reforms were enacted, the April 2012 by-elections were held, and there was subsequent agreement on a semi-civilian government. Ultimately, ASEAN's goal concerning Myanmar's significant political change was partially met, managing to make Myanmar more cohesive to ASEAN. At the same time, ASEAN gained some credit internationally as a guardian of security in the region.

The Complementarity of ASEAN's Policies

The afore-described policies of balance of power policy, policy of communication, and restructuring policy characterize ASEAN's response to security challenges posed by Myanmar and the region more broadly. As demonstrated, each of these policies are interconnected. The balance of power policy and the policy of communication are mutually supportive, and evolved from security concerns. While the former related to external developments, domestic matters motivated the latter. Taken together,

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[65] Author's interview with official (E) ASEAN Secretariat, Singapore, August, 2015.
[66] Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community*, 58.
[67] ASEAN Charter, accessed October 5, 2019.
 https://asean.org/storage/images/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf, 2.
[68] Ibid, 4.
[69] Yangon was expected to engage in a process on national consensus (ASEM7, Beijing, 2008) and accept all political parties' participation in the 2010 general elections (14th ASEAN, Cha-am Hua Hin, Thailand, 2009, paragr. 42) and move towards a 'civilian system of government' (ASEM8, 2010, paragr. 73). ASEM7. Chair's Statement of the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting. Beijing, October 24-25, 2008. Accessed October 8, 2019.
https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/asem/asem7/index.html; ASEAN. Chairman's Statement of the 14th ASEAN Summit. ASEAN Charter for Asian Peoples. Cha-am Hua Hin, Thailand. February 28–March 1 (2009). Accessed September 20, 2019. https://asean.org/chairman-s-statement-of-the-14th-asean-summit-asean-charter-for-asean-peoples-cha-am-28-february-1-march-2009/; ASEM8. Chair's Statement of the Eight Asia-Europe Meeting. Brussels, October 4-5, 2010. Accessed October 4, 2019. https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/asem/asem8/pdfs/chair_state.pdf

these two policies aided in comprehension of ASEAN's behavior concerning regional security.

      The policy of communication and ASEAN's restructuring policy must also be taken together. Both helped ASEAN grow its role in the region and, consequently, raised its profile as an international actor. To comply with this aspiration, Yangon's capacity for cooperation was crucial. Without the policy of communication, it remains unclear as to whether Myanmar would have faced its responsibilities of lawful governance, showed efforts and capability to sustain the cohesiveness of the Association, and joined the cooperation and security initiatives in the region requested by the restructuring policy.

      ASEAN's restructuring policy and balance of power policy are likewise mutually supportive. In restructuring, ASEAN established its Charter and supported the ASEAN Community. In doing so, its intention was to both strengthen and consolidate the Association and to inhibit outside actors' interference with the group and the region. This was also the purpose of the balance of power policy.

      These three policies, considered separately and together, contribute towards a better understanding of ASEAN's conduct and stressed the role that pursuit and maintenance of regional security played in guiding ASEAN's actions with Myanmar.

The Constructivist and Realist Perspectives
The realist perspective, applied in the given time period, reinstated its vital features of stability as reaction to the distribution of power among the regional actors. The realist perspective, so understood in ASEAN's balance of power policy, demonstrated that ASEAN's neighbors' ideologies, past inheritances, and military and economic supremacy interfered with Myanmar's policy. It has shown the relevance of regional geopolitics, where China was the dominant actor. It led to the perception of ASEAN as a robust group, one that could balance the influence of other powers, especially China. The realist perspective, applied to ASEAN's policy of communication, helped to unveil ASEAN's concerns that Myanmar's internal policies of discontent had destabilized Myanmar's neighbors. It detected ASEAN's desire to inform Myanmar about the changes expected of that country's domestic governance. It also described ASEAN's behavior as contrasting with the non-interference policy normally adhered to by ASEAN. It also recognized the ASEAN chair's admonishment of the military junta in 2007, making clear that, unless a political

restructuring were set in motion, investment in Myanmar would have rapidly decreased. The realist perspective, applied to ASEAN's restructuring policy, again recognized the centrality of regional security as a core goal of ASEAN. It revealed that, in interacting with Myanmar more closely, ASEAN sought to ensure that the Association was a capable guardian of security governance.

The constructivist perspective was motivated by the positive influence of practical cooperation on Myanmar, and its ability to share and learn from ASEAN. The constructivist perspective, as applied to the balance of power policy, revealed how ASEAN balanced regional influences by supporting Myanmar's membership, enlarging the group, and boosting its presence in the region. This perspective, as applied to the policy of communication, revealed ASEAN's belief in the beneficial effects of cooperation. The constructivist perspective was the basis for ASEAN insisting that the military junta cooperate with Myanmar's society, offer freedom of expression, and engage in reform. The restructuring policy revealed ASEAN's conviction that, to maintain security in the region, Myanmar must become an active member of the ASEAN Community and participate in the security projects devised by ASEAN.

The constructivist and realist perspectives helped to uncover how ASEAN's three policy categories interacted. Given that the post-Cold War dynamics of power politics and the prosperity of the ASEAN-Way characterized that time period, constructivist and realist assumptions "created a healthy debate" to the investigation of ASEAN's actions concerning Myanmar.[70]

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore ASEAN's Myanmar policies from 1991 to 2012, as they relate to regional security from realist and constructivist perspectives. Threats to stability in Myanmar's surrounding region are a remainder of the country's critical geopolitical location. These challenges imply a complex variety of ways in which ASEAN has acted with Myanmar. It is thus important to place them into focus. In doing so, the present study focused on ASEAN's security-oriented behaviors. After review of the academic literature's explanatory frameworks of ASEAN's affairs in post-Cold War Southeast Asia, the present investigation found

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[70] Ba, "Institutional divergence and convergence in the Asia-Pacific?" 306.

that employing both the constructivist and realist perspectives improved the understanding of ASEAN's actions. Applying these two perspectives to ASEAN's Myanmar policies, the investigation's findings led to two main conclusions. First, ASEAN's actions, as they related to Myanmar, could be logically grouped into three policy categories: balance of power policy, a policy of communication, and ASEAN's restructuring policy. These policies were complementary. If any of the three were omitted, ASEAN's actions would remain unclear. Consideration of these complementary policies revealed that the most important dimension of ASEAN's actions with Myanmar was the pursuit and maintenance of security in the region. Second, the constructivist and realist perspectives, coupled with contributions made by interviewees, were instrumental in making sense of the basis for ASEAN's Myanmar policies. They revealed that ASEAN's strategy of expansion was calculated, ASEAN perceived Myanmar as having diminished faith in the Association, the impact of the ASEAN chair's rebuking of Myanmar, ASEAN's desire to positively impact Yangon, ASEAN's consolidation of Myanmar in the wider ASEM sphere, and lastly, ASEAN's desire to maintain regional security. Finally, in terms of its contribution, this investigation encourages other researchers to widen the discussion concerning ASEAN as a regional actor by focusing on its interactions with different countries in the region, either debating how ASEAN dealt with the challenges or employing a different methodology, confirming, supplementing, or disproving the findings proposed here.

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