

ASEAN Digital Diplomacy in Responding to the Myanmar Crisis for Regional Security

Lu'lu' An-Najah

University of Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia
luluan-najah88@student.hi.unida.gontor.ac.id

Abstract: The 2021 military coup in Myanmar created political instability and posed significant challenges to regional security in Southeast Asia. As a regional organization, ASEAN has sought to address the crisis through various diplomatic efforts, including the use of digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy has become an important instrument for facilitating communication, coordination, and cooperation among member states in responding to regional conflicts. This study aims to analyze the role of ASEAN's digital diplomacy in responding to the Myanmar crisis and its contribution to maintaining regional security stability in Southeast Asia. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method using a literature review approach. Data were collected from academic journals, books, official ASEAN documents, reports from international organizations, and other relevant sources related to digital diplomacy, the Myanmar crisis, and regional security. The findings indicate that ASEAN has utilized digital diplomacy through virtual meetings, online consultations, digital communication platforms, and official statements to coordinate responses to the Myanmar crisis. These efforts have contributed to strengthening regional cooperation, facilitating dialogue among member states, and preventing further escalation of instability in the region. However, the effectiveness of ASEAN's digital diplomacy remains constrained by the principle of non-interference and differing political interests among member states. Despite these challenges, digital diplomacy has become an important mechanism for supporting ASEAN's efforts to maintain regional security stability in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Digital Diplomacy; ASEAN; Myanmar Crisis; Regional Security; Southeast Asia.

INTRODUCTION

Advances in information and communication technology have brought about significant changes in various aspects of life, including the practice of international relations. Advances in digital technology enable countries to communicate, coordinate, and cooperate more quickly and effectively without being limited by geographical distance. In the context of diplomacy, these developments have given rise to the concept of digital diplomacy—the use of digital technology, social media, and online communication platforms by countries and international organizations to achieve diplomatic goals, strengthen international relations, and build cooperation among nations (Triwibowo, 2023). As digitalization in international relations continues to grow, digital diplomacy has become a key tool for addressing various global and regional issues, including political and security conflicts.

One issue that has drawn the international community's attention in recent years is the political crisis in Myanmar following the military coup on February 1, 2021. The coup carried out by the Myanmar military against the civilian government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) has triggered political instability, a wave of public protests, human rights violations, and a protracted conflict between pro-democracy groups and the military junta (Gunawan, 2024). This situation not only affects Myanmar's domestic affairs but also raises concerns about security and stability in the Southeast Asian region. The ongoing conflict has the potential to trigger a humanitarian crisis, cross-border refugee flows, and disruptions to the region's political and economic stability (Alvela Putri, 2021).

As a regional organization dedicated to maintaining peace, stability, and security in the region, ASEAN has a responsibility to respond to developments in Myanmar. ASEAN views the crisis in Myanmar as an issue that not only affects a single member state but also has implications for regional security as a whole. In response to the crisis, ASEAN leaders agreed to the Five-Point Consensus in 2021, which calls for an end to violence, constructive dialogue among the conflicting parties, the provision of humanitarian aid, and the appointment of an ASEAN special envoy to facilitate conflict resolution (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). In its efforts to carry out these various initiatives, ASEAN has increasingly turned to digital diplomacy as a means of communication and coordination among member states. ASEAN high-level meetings, which were previously held primarily in person, have begun to utilize

virtual conferences and digital platforms to discuss developments in Myanmar. In addition, various official statements, diplomatic consultations, and the dissemination of information related to the crisis in Myanmar are also being carried out through digital media and ASEAN's online communication platforms. The use of digital diplomacy demonstrates an adaptation to technological advancements while also serving as a tool that supports the effectiveness of regional communication and coordination (Asrudin, 2025).

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to link ASEAN's digital diplomacy to the mechanisms of liberal institutionalism and its contribution to regional security in the context of the Myanmar crisis. Previous research on Myanmar has largely focused on ASEAN's response through the Five-Point Consensus, the principle of non-interference, and ASEAN's limitations in promoting conflict resolution. Haacke, for example, demonstrates that the Five-Point Consensus represents a significant development in expanding the scope of ASEAN's diplomatic engagement with Myanmar, but its implementation continues to face challenges regarding effectiveness and differing views on the limits of ASEAN's involvement. (Haacke, *Reassessing ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus: On Shifting Boundaries of Legitimate Involvement and a Contested Consensus*, 2025) Meanwhile, studies on digital diplomacy focus more on the transformation of diplomatic practices resulting from digitization and changes in the way diplomatic actors conduct international communication (Bremberg, *Practice Approaches to the Digital Transformations of Diplomacy: Toward a New Research Agenda*, 2021).

This study views digital diplomacy not merely as a technological development in diplomatic practice, but as an instrument that enables regional institutions to maintain communication, information exchange, policy coordination, and diplomatic engagement when conventional diplomatic mechanisms face political obstacles. Triwibowo demonstrates that digital diplomacy can expand access to information and facilitate dialogic communication, thereby transforming how diplomacy is conducted; thus, digitalization is not merely about the use of technology but also involves changes in diplomatic practices. Consequently, this study positions digital diplomacy as an instrument that operates through regional institutions, rather than as a standalone technological factor.

From a liberal perspective, international cooperation and the role of international institutions are crucial elements in maintaining international peace and stability. Liberal theory posits that states can reduce the potential for conflict through communication, dialogue, and cooperation facilitated by international institutions (Keohane, 1984). In the context of the crisis in Myanmar, ASEAN serves as a regional institution that seeks to build consensus and promote conflict resolution through diplomatic approaches. Digital diplomacy has thus become an instrument that supports this process by providing a faster, more open, and more efficient communication channel for ASEAN member states.

Several previous studies have examined digital diplomacy and its role in international relations. Research conducted by Elsa Hedling and Niklas Bremberg shows that digital transformation has transformed traditional diplomatic practices, making them faster, more flexible, and based on digital technology. Digital diplomacy is considered capable of enhancing the effectiveness of communication and coordination among international actors in addressing various global issues (Bremberg, *Practice Approaches to the Digital Transformations of Diplomacy*, 2021). In addition, research conducted by M.M. Lebedeva and E.S. Zinovieva explains that digital diplomacy plays a crucial role in strengthening international cooperation through the use of digital communication technologies. The study also highlights challenges such as information security and the spread of disinformation, which can affect the effectiveness of digital diplomacy (Zinovieva, 2019).

In the context of international security, Khedidja Ziani's research explains that digital diplomacy is closely linked to global security stability. The use of digital technology in diplomatic activities enables improved international communication and coordination, but it also poses risks in the form of cyber threats and the spread of inaccurate information (Ziani K. , 2025). Meanwhile, Jürgen Haacke's research on ASEAN's response to the crisis in Myanmar shows that ASEAN has sought to maintain regional stability through various diplomatic mechanisms, including the establishment of the Five-Point Consensus as a framework for conflict resolution. However, the implementation of this policy continues to face various obstacles due to differing political interests among ASEAN member states (Haacke, *Myanmar's Coup and ASEAN's Response*, 2022).

Based on these studies, it is evident that there has been extensive research on digital diplomacy and ASEAN's response to the Myanmar crisis. However, research that specifically links ASEAN's digital diplomacy to efforts to maintain security and stability in Southeast Asia in the context of the Myanmar crisis remains relatively limited. Most studies focus more on digital diplomacy in general or the effectiveness of ASEAN's policies toward Myanmar without conducting an in-depth examination of digital diplomacy's contribution to regional security. Therefore, this study aims to address this research gap by analyzing how ASEAN's digital diplomacy has been employed in responding to the Myanmar crisis and to what extent these efforts have contributed to the security stability of the Southeast Asian region.

Based on this background, how has ASEAN's digital diplomacy been utilized in responding to the Myanmar crisis, and to what extent have these efforts contributed to regional security stability in Southeast Asia? The objective of this study is to analyze the role of ASEAN's digital diplomacy in addressing the Myanmar crisis and to explain its contribution to efforts to maintain regional security stability in Southeast Asia.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to analyze the role of ASEAN's digital diplomacy in responding to the crisis in Myanmar and its contribution to security stability in the Southeast Asian region. The research method used is library research, utilizing secondary data sourced from scientific journals, books, academic articles, official ASEAN documents, and reports from international organizations relevant to the research topic. The collected data was analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques through the processes of data collection, categorization, and interpretation. This study employs liberalism theory as an analytical framework to explain how international cooperation, communication, and the role of regional institutions such as ASEAN can support conflict resolution and maintain regional security stability. Through this method, the study aims to provide an understanding of ASEAN's use of digital diplomacy in addressing the Myanmar crisis and its impact on regional security in Southeast Asia. To enhance the systematization of the literature review, the selection of sources in this study was based on several criteria. First, sources must have direct relevance to one of the study's main themes: digital diplomacy, ASEAN's response to the Myanmar crisis, liberal institutionalism, and Southeast Asian regional security. Second, the study prioritizes peer-reviewed academic journal articles, academic books, official ASEAN documents, and reports from international organizations that are directly relevant to the research subject. Third, empirical sources regarding the Myanmar crisis and developments in digital diplomacy were prioritized from publications between 2019 and 2026 to capture contemporary developments, while older theoretical works were still utilized when they served as primary references in explaining the concepts of liberalism and institutional cooperation. The use of the most recent literature is important because digital diplomacy practices evolve alongside technological advancements and changes in the diplomatic environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Crisis in Myanmar and Its Impact on Security in the Southeast Asian Region

The military coup that took place in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, has become one of the greatest challenges to political stability and security in the Southeast Asian region in recent decades. The coup was carried out by the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw), which overthrew the civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD). (Gunawan, 2024). This event sparked a massive wave of protests by the people of Myanmar, who demanded the restoration of democratic governance. The military junta's repressive response subsequently led to an escalation of violence, human rights violations, and armed conflict between the military and pro-democracy groups. The impact of this situation was felt not only within Myanmar but also had consequences for the stability of the Southeast Asian region (Haacke, Myanmar's Coup and ASEAN's Response, 2022).

The crisis in Myanmar has evolved from a mere domestic political issue into a regional security concern. From a non-traditional security perspective, a country's internal conflict can have cross-border implications that affect neighboring nations. The protracted conflict in Myanmar has the potential to

increase the flow of refugees to neighboring countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Furthermore, ongoing political instability could fuel an increase in transnational crime, human trafficking, and the activities of armed groups operating in border regions. Therefore, the crisis in Myanmar can no longer be viewed as a purely internal matter; rather, it has become a threat to the security of the Southeast Asian region. (Alvela Putri, 2021).

From ASEAN's perspective, the crisis in Myanmar is also testing the organization's credibility in maintaining regional stability. ASEAN has long been known as a regional organization that upholds the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of its member states. However, the scale of the crisis in Myanmar has put significant pressure on ASEAN to take more active measures. Many observers believe that if ASEAN fails to respond effectively to the crisis in Myanmar, the organization's credibility as a pillar of regional security will be called into question. (Acharya, 2014). This indicates that Myanmar's political stability is directly linked to the stability and reputation of ASEAN as a whole.

In addition to its political implications, the crisis in Myanmar also has social and humanitarian implications. According to a United Nations report, millions of Myanmar citizens have been displaced and are in need of humanitarian aid as a result of the protracted conflict (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2022). This situation has the potential to cause regional instability if neighboring countries are forced to deal with an increase in the number of refugees and the need for cross-border humanitarian aid. In the context of human security, the crisis in Myanmar demonstrates that threats to individuals and communities can escalate into threats to regional stability if not effectively addressed.

The crisis in Myanmar also poses a challenge to ASEAN's regional integration. One of ASEAN's primary objectives is to create a peaceful, stable, and prosperous region through cooperation among member states. However, the ongoing conflict in Myanmar highlights ASEAN's limitations in addressing security issues involving its own member states. Differences in perspective among ASEAN countries regarding the approach to take toward Myanmar often hinder the achievement of a more decisive collective policy. As a result, ASEAN's decision-making process becomes slower and less effective in responding to developments on the ground (Abiyyu Ahnaf Bayana Abi, 2025).

From a liberal perspective, these conditions highlight the importance of regional cooperation in maintaining security. Liberal theory posits that security can be achieved through communication, dialogue, and cooperation facilitated by international institutions. As a regional institution, ASEAN plays a crucial role in creating forums for dialogue and coordination among member states to reduce the risk of broader conflicts. Therefore, ASEAN's response to the crisis in Myanmar aims not only to help resolve the conflict in Myanmar but also to maintain the overall security and stability of the Southeast Asian region. (Keohane, 1984).

The Implementation of ASEAN Digital Diplomacy in Response to the Crisis in Myanmar

Advances in information and communication technology have transformed the way international organizations and countries conduct diplomatic activities. In the context of ASEAN, the use of digital technology has become increasingly important in supporting communication and coordination among member states, especially when facing regional crises such as the one in Myanmar. Digital diplomacy enables ASEAN to continue performing its diplomatic functions through various digital platforms, virtual conferences, and online communication channels without having to rely entirely on in-person meetings (Triwibowo, 2023). This approach has become increasingly relevant following the COVID-19 pandemic, which has driven an increase in the use of digital technology in international relations.

One way ASEAN has implemented digital diplomacy in response to the crisis in Myanmar is through the organization of high-level virtual meetings. Since the military coup in 2021, ASEAN has actively held various online meetings involving heads of state, foreign ministers, and other high-ranking officials to discuss developments in Myanmar. These meetings have served as an important means of aligning perspectives, formulating joint strategies, and coordinating the diplomatic steps to be taken by ASEAN. (Bremberg, *Practice Approaches to the Digital Transformations of Diplomacy*, 2021). The use of digital platforms enables communication to take place more quickly than through traditional diplomatic channels.

The implementation of ASEAN digital diplomacy was also evident in the process of formulating and disseminating the Five-Point Consensus (5PC), which was agreed upon in April 2021. This consensus serves as ASEAN's primary framework for addressing the crisis in Myanmar (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). Through the official ASEAN website, virtual conferences, and various other digital communication channels, ASEAN actively disseminates information on the progress of the 5PC's implementation to member states and the international community. Thus, digital diplomacy serves not only as a means of internal communication but also as an instrument of public diplomacy aimed at building international legitimacy and support for ASEAN's efforts (Manor, 2019).

Based on this framework, ASEAN's use of digital technology should be understood not merely as a shift in communication media, but as part of a mechanism for institutional engagement. Digital diplomacy enables ASEAN to maintain engagement when formal diplomatic processes face obstacles. Its primary function in the context of Myanmar is to keep communication channels open so that ASEAN still has room to conduct consultations, convey a common position, and coordinate responses to developments in the conflict.

The strategic value of digital diplomacy in this context lies not primarily in technology's ability to directly change the junta's behavior, but in its ability to sustain the process of institutional interaction. As long as communication continues, ASEAN still has room to conduct diplomacy, exchange information, and build coordination. This aligns with the liberal institutionalist view that institutions can help maintain patterns of cooperation by providing relatively stable mechanisms for interaction.

In addition, ASEAN leverages digital diplomacy to support the role of the Special Envoy in the mediation process for the conflict in Myanmar. Communication between ASEAN, the Myanmar government, and various other stakeholders takes place through a range of digital channels to expedite coordination and the exchange of information. The use of digital technology enables ASEAN to maintain continuous communication despite facing various political and geographical access constraints. In this context, digital diplomacy serves as a tool that supports mediation efforts and constructive dialogue among the conflicting parties. (Zinovieva, 2019).

On the other hand, ASEAN's digital diplomacy also faces various challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the limited influence ASEAN has over Myanmar's military junta. Although ASEAN has succeeded in establishing communication and reaching various diplomatic agreements, policy implementation is often hampered by the military junta's lack of commitment to the outcomes of the negotiations. This is evident in the slow implementation of the Five-Point Consensus and the ongoing violence in Myanmar despite various diplomatic efforts. In other words, digital diplomacy can enhance the effectiveness of communication, but it does not automatically guarantee the successful resolution of conflicts (Andra Khagum Muhammad, 2025).

Another challenge relates to the principle of non-interference, which is a defining characteristic of ASEAN. Although digital diplomacy enables ASEAN to engage in more intensive communication, the organization remains constrained by regional norms that emphasize respect for the sovereignty of member states. As a result, ASEAN tends to prioritize persuasive approaches and dialogue over stronger political pressure. This explains why ASEAN's response to the crisis in Myanmar is often viewed as ineffective by some international observers (Gunawan, 2024).

However, from a liberal perspective, ASEAN's digital diplomacy continues to make a significant contribution. Digital diplomacy has helped strengthen regional communication, improve coordination among member states, and create a space for dialogue that allows ASEAN to remain engaged in efforts to resolve the conflict in Myanmar. In complex and sensitive situations such as the crisis in Myanmar, the existence of digital communication channels is a crucial factor in keeping regional cooperation on track. Therefore, although it has not yet been able to fully resolve the conflict, ASEAN's digital diplomacy can be viewed as an instrument that supports efforts to maintain security and stability in the Southeast Asian region through sustained regional communication, coordination, and cooperation. (Holmes, 2015).

The Contribution of ASEAN Digital Diplomacy to Regional Security and Stability

The crisis in Myanmar following the 2021 coup has become the greatest test of ASEAN's diplomatic mechanisms in its history. Amid the stalled implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) agreed upon in April 2021, ASEAN has gradually shifted to digital diplomacy as an alternative tool to maintain

communication channels with Myanmar's military junta. This move reflects ASEAN's efforts to find a "sensible middle ground" between the pressure to isolate the junta and the pragmatic need to remain engaged in conflict resolution efforts (Haacke, Myanmar's Coup and ASEAN's Response, 2022). In May 2026, ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn confirmed that ASEAN was planning a virtual meeting between foreign ministers and representatives appointed by Myanmar's junta (Secretariat, 2026).

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., as chair of ASEAN in 2026, described the evolution of ASEAN's stance as a "nano-shift"—a specific acknowledgment that while fundamental principles are upheld, the regional bloc "needs to do more" to advance the peace process. Marcos symbolically referred to Myanmar as an "estranged family member," indicating that while Myanmar remains a nominal part of ASEAN, it is not treated on an equal footing with other members.

The key contribution of digital diplomacy lies in its ability to separate diplomatic engagement from political recognition. Through virtual platforms, ASEAN can interact with the junta for limited purposes—such as coordinating humanitarian aid or monitoring the implementation of the 5PC—without having to invite junta representatives to in-person meetings, which could be interpreted as a normalization of relations. Joanne Lin Weiling of the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute describes this approach as "conditional engagement," which allows for limited involvement without "fully restoring" Myanmar's political status (Weiling, 2025). Thailand's proposal for "calibrated re-engagement," which includes engagement through side events or virtual meetings, received serious consideration at the 48th ASEAN Summit in Cebu (Ha, 2026). Thailand argues that developments in Myanmar—including the completion of the three-phase general election and the release of thousands of detainees—should be viewed as tentative steps that justify an adjustment to ASEAN's approach. However, this proposal has also sparked heated debate among ASEAN leaders, revealing internal divisions between countries that support a softer approach and those that want to maintain pressure (Gunawan, 2024). As analyzed in a study by Tang Siew Mun of ISEAS, "ASEAN unity and support for an 'upgrade' of the 5PC cannot be taken for granted, as Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand have broken ranks by recognizing the State Administration Council (SAC) bilaterally." ASEAN unity and support for an upgrade of the 5PC cannot be taken for granted, as Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand have broken ranks by recognizing the State Administration Council (SAC) bilaterally (Mun, 2025).

However, the impact of this digital diplomacy is not without significant structural limitations. Foreign policy analyst Hunter Marston of the Lowy Institute noted that inviting Myanmar back to virtual meetings, though limited, still marks a "tentative step" that could "shift the balance toward the normalization of relations with Myanmar"—a risk the regime could exploit for "propaganda purposes to emphasize its political legitimacy." A similar warning was issued by Htwe Htwe Thein of Curtin University: "Soften now without getting anything concrete in return, and the regime wins." (Thein, 2026). Furthermore, the effectiveness of digital diplomacy is also limited by the fact that the junta exercises direct control over Myanmar's domestic telecommunications infrastructure. As documented by Coppel and Chang (2024), the junta has "weaponized internet shutdowns in regions where anti-coup resistance is strong" and "under the guise of e-government projects, the regime raises funds and collects resources to strengthen its extensive surveillance infrastructure." (Chang, 2024). This creates an imbalance in which the regime can use digital platforms for propaganda purposes while suppressing opposition voices, thereby limiting ASEAN's ability to influence the junta's behavior through digital diplomacy.

Analysis Based on Liberalism Theory

Based on the theoretical framework of liberalism in international relations, there are three main perspectives that can be used to analyze the effectiveness of ASEAN's digital diplomacy in responding to the crisis in Myanmar: liberal institutionalism, complex interdependence, and soft power. Each of these perspectives offers a different yet complementary understanding of the contributions and limitations of ASEAN's digital diplomacy. From the perspective of liberal institutionalism, as proposed by Robert Keohane, international institutions can facilitate cooperation by providing information, reducing transaction costs, and creating shared expectations among states (Keohane, 1984). In the context of ASEAN and the crisis in Myanmar, this proposition has received partial support. ASEAN, as a regional institution, has successfully maintained internal cohesion and developed a regional digital governance framework through the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Safe and Responsible Use of

Social Media Platforms and the ASEAN Guidelines on the Safe and Responsible Use of Social Media Platforms. In the digital realm, with clear shared interests such as the prevention of disinformation and protection against cybercrime, ASEAN institutions facilitate meaningful coordination. A study in the **Journal of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations** (IDFR) notes that ASEAN's principle of non-interference "has become selectively adaptive, indicating an informal transformation of ASEAN's diplomatic norms." (Rahman, 2024).

However, the case of Myanmar also reveals the fundamental limitations of liberal institutionalism when applied to authoritarian regimes. In his analysis of the 5PC, Tang Siew Mun notes that "the 5PC is by no means a perfect framework. It lacks a clear 'end game' beyond the advocacy for dialogue. From a strategic perspective, ASEAN made few attempts to leverage 'carrots and sticks' and relied heavily on persuading a disinterested Myanmar leadership." Keohane himself acknowledges that international institutions are most effective under conditions of mutual interdependence and symmetrical information. In the case of Myanmar, the conditions are precisely the opposite: the junta has shown that it is willing to bear the costs of isolation rather than make substantive concessions, creating a situation of asymmetrical interdependence in which Myanmar needs ASEAN less than ASEAN needs to maintain regional cohesion. (Mun, 2025).

In this study, the relationship between digital diplomacy, liberal institutionalism, and regional security is understood as a gradual one. Digital diplomacy serves as an instrument that provides channels for communication and information exchange, while ASEAN, as a regional institution, provides forums, rules, norms, and mechanisms that enable these channels to be used to build cooperation. Thus, digital technology does not stand alone as a factor that produces security, but operates through institutions that regulate the processes of communication and coordination among actors.

From the perspective of liberal institutionalism, international institutions help states address coordination issues by providing information, reducing uncertainty, and creating patterns of interaction that enable cooperation to take place. In the context of ASEAN, digital diplomacy can strengthen these functions by accelerating the exchange of information and maintaining communication when conventional meetings face obstacles.

From the perspective of liberal institutionalism, international institutions help states address coordination challenges by providing information, reducing uncertainty, and creating patterns of interaction that enable cooperation to take place. In the context of ASEAN, digital diplomacy can strengthen these functions by accelerating the exchange of information and maintaining communication when in-person meetings face obstacles. These relationships then influence regional security through communication and coordination mechanisms. When ASEAN member states are able to maintain communication, they have greater scope to align perceptions, exchange information, and coordinate responses to crises. In the context of Myanmar, this process is relevant because domestic conflicts have cross-border consequences and can affect regional stability. Therefore, regional security in this study is understood not only as the absence of interstate conflict but also as the capacity of regional institutions to manage the regional impacts of domestic conflicts.

From the perspective of complex interdependence developed by Keohane and Nye, there are three main characteristics of modern international relations: multiple channels of interaction, the absence of hierarchy among issues, and the diminished role of military force. In the case of Myanmar, multiple channels of interaction have developed significantly thanks to digital technology. In addition to official diplomatic channels between ASEAN and the junta, there are channels between the NUG and foreign governments, between civil society organizations and international actors, and between the Myanmar diaspora and the global community. However, the proposition of the diminished role of military force needs to be seriously reevaluated. The Myanmar junta clearly relies on military force as the primary instrument of its policy. Military power has not diminished; rather, it has become a determining factor in the strategic calculations of all parties (Ryu, 2023). More importantly, this study reveals what might be called the paradox of digital interdependence: digital technology creates new dependencies, but these dependencies are not symmetrical and do not lead to cooperation in the way liberal theory would expect. As explained by Coppel and Chang (2024), the junta uses its control over domestic digital infrastructure to "control information and the transfer of funds" while at the same time "weaponizing internet

shutdowns.” This challenges the optimistic assumption of complex interdependence that an increase in channels of interaction automatically leads to cooperation and a reduction in conflict (Chang, 2024).

From the perspective of soft power as articulated by Joseph Nye, a country can achieve its goals through “attraction rather than coercion” by means of appealing values, culture, and foreign policy (Jr, 2008). In the Myanmar crisis, ASEAN’s soft power has suffered significant erosion. President Marcos explicitly acknowledged this crisis of credibility by stating that ASEAN “needs to do more” and that “it is a tragedy when a family member is left out of the family for whatever reason.” This erosion of soft power is caused by two main factors. First, the inconsistency between ASEAN’s rhetoric and actions: while it rhetorically advocates for democracy and human rights, its concrete actions are limited to declarations and virtual engagement without meaningful consequences for the junta that violates these norms. Second, internal fragmentation within ASEAN: member states hold differing positions on Myanmar, with Thailand advocating for “calibrated re-engagement” while others, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, support a tougher approach. In the realm of digital governance, ASEAN’s soft power demonstrates greater effectiveness. The development of a regional cybersecurity framework and digital literacy initiatives, as outlined in the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025, can be viewed as a form of normative power—that is, the ability to shape regional standards and practices through persuasion and by setting an example. This relative success can be explained by the differing nature of the issues: digital governance is a “low politics” issue with clear shared interests and low costs of cooperation, in contrast to “high politics” issues such as political transitions that directly threaten the junta’s power interests (Caballero-Anthony, 2023). However, ASEAN also faces a fundamental contradiction in its digital soft power. On the one hand, ASEAN advocates for the “safe and responsible use of social media,” but on the other hand, some ASEAN member states have a poor track record on domestic digital freedom, with laws that criminalize online dissent and extensive surveillance infrastructure (Ziani h. , 2025). This contradiction reflects what is referred to in the literature as “ASEAN’s dilemma”—the tension between liberal aspirations for a rules-based regional order and the reality of authoritarian domestic politics in some member states.

CONCLUSION

The crisis in Myanmar following the 2021 military coup has evolved from a domestic political issue into a regional security concern that affects the stability of Southeast Asia. Prolonged conflict, human rights violations, a humanitarian crisis, and the potential for increased refugee flows and transnational crime indicate that the impact of the Myanmar crisis is felt not only by Myanmar but also by ASEAN countries as a whole. These conditions place ASEAN in a critical yet challenging position in its efforts to maintain regional stability and security.

Research findings indicate that ASEAN is utilizing digital diplomacy as one of the tools to respond to the crisis in Myanmar. The use of virtual conferences, digital communication platforms, social media, and various online communication tools has enabled ASEAN to maintain communication and coordination among member states despite facing various political and geographical constraints. Digital diplomacy also supports the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC), strengthens ASEAN’s public diplomacy, and facilitates communication between ASEAN and various stakeholders involved in resolving the conflict in Myanmar.

From a liberal perspective, ASEAN’s digital diplomacy demonstrates that international cooperation and the role of regional institutions continue to make significant contributions to maintaining regional stability. ASEAN has successfully provided a space for dialogue, strengthened regional coordination, and maintained diplomatic engagement with Myanmar through various digital channels. However, the effectiveness of digital diplomacy still faces a number of obstacles, such as the principle of non-interference, differences in political interests among ASEAN member states, and the Myanmar military junta’s lack of commitment to implementing the various agreements that have been reached.

Thus, it can be concluded that ASEAN’s digital diplomacy contributes to maintaining security stability in the Southeast Asian region by strengthening communication, coordination, and regional cooperation in responding to the crisis in Myanmar. Although it has not yet been able to fully resolve the conflict, digital diplomacy has become an important instrument that helps ASEAN maintain its role as a regional

organization in efforts to foster peace, stability, and security in the region in the digital age. Moving forward, enhancing the effectiveness of digital diplomacy requires stronger political commitment from ASEAN member states so that efforts to resolve regional crises can proceed more effectively.

REFERENCES

- Abiyyu Ahnaf Bayana Abi, M. H. (2025). ASEAN's Role in Addressing the Myanmar Crisis: Challenges and Prospects for Regional Peace. *Synergy: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 1 , 44–58.
- Acharya, A. (2014). *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- Alvela Putri, P. J. (2021). Dampak Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar ASEAN Terhadap Pola Kerjasama ASEAN Menghadapi Krisis Kudeta Myanmar. *Nation State: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 , 40-55.
- Andra Khagum Muhammad, A. R. (2025). Beyond Wavering: Post-Colonial Resistance and Norm Contestation in ASEAN's Response to Myanmar's Coup. *Nation State: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 23-35.
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2021). *Five-Point Consensus of the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- Asrudin, D. T. (2025). Diplomasi Digital dan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan: Tinjauan Literatur Semantik tentang Inklusivitas, Kebijakan, dan Teknologi. *Jurnal Ilmu Politik dan Komunikasi*, Vol. 15, No. 1 , 1–18.
- Bremberg, E. H. (2021). Practice Approaches to the Digital Transformations of Diplomacy. *International Studies Review*, Vol. 23, No. 4 , 1595–1617.
- Bremberg, E. H. (2021). Practice Approaches to the Digital Transformations of Diplomacy: Toward a New Research Agenda. *International Studies Review* 23, no. 4 <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab027>, 1595–1618.
- Caballero-Anthony, M. (2023). ASEAN's Future and Regional Security Governance. *Asian Security*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 20–127.
- Chang, N. C. (2024). Myanmar's Digital Authoritarianism and Internet Governance After the Coup. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 55–74.
- Gunawan, T. (2024). Between Principles and Actions: ASEAN and Indonesia in Dealing With the Political Crisis in Myanmar. *Global Strategis*, Vol. 18, No. 1 , 81–106.
- Ha, S. S. (2026). *The State of Southeast Asia 2026 Survey Report* . Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Haacke, J. (2022). Myanmar's Coup and ASEAN's Response. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 44, No. 2 , 177–203.
- Haacke, J. (2025). Reassessing ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus: On Shifting Boundaries of Legitimate Involvement and a Contested Consensus. *Asian Politics & Policy* 17, no. 4 e70050, <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.70050>, 1–4.
- Holmes, C. B. (2015). *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge.

- Jr, J. S. (2008). Public Diplomacy and Soft Power. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, No. 1, 94–109.
- Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- KPAI, H. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.kpai.go.id/publikasi/pmi>
- Manor, I. (2019). *The Digitalization of Public Diplomacy*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mun, T. S. (2025). *Myanmar and ASEAN: Upgrading the Five-Point Consensus*. Singapore: ISEAS, No. 44 .
- Rahman, M. F. (2024). ASEAN's Evolving Non-Interference Principle in the Digital Era. *Journal of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations*, Vol. 26, No. 1 , 45–62.
- Ryu, Y. (2023). ASEAN's Response to the Myanmar Coup and the Crisis of Regionalism. *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 36, No. 6 , 1101–1124.
- Secretariat, A. (2026, Mei). *ASEAN to Hold Virtual Engagement with Myanmar Representative*. Retrieved from Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/asean-hold-talks-soon-with-myanmar-foreign-minister-secretary-general-says-2026-05-07>
- Thein, H. H. (2026). Myanmar's Military Regime and ASEAN's Engagement Strategy. *East Asia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2 , 22–25.
- Triwibowo, A. (2023). The Characteristics of Indonesian Digital Diplomacy. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 , 1–18.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2022). *Myanmar Emergency Update*. Geneva: UNHCR, 2022.
- Weiling, J. L. (2025). ASEAN's Myanmar Dilemma and Conditional Engagement. *ISEAS Perspective*, No. 61, 1–8.
- Ziani, h. (2025). Security and Reliability in Digital Diplomacy. *Humanities and Social Sciences Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2 , 105–118.
- Ziani, K. (2025). Security and Reliability in Digital Diplomacy. *Humanities and Social Sciences Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 , 55–68.
- Zinovieva, M. L. (2019). Digital Diplomacy: International Experience and Prospects. *Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 89, No. 6 , 618–624.