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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Why states do not impose sanctions: regional norms and Indonesia's diplomatic approach towards Myanmar on the Rohingya issue

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Abstract
Existing literature on economic sanctions is abundantly clear regarding the motivation of countries to impose sanctions on other nations. Yet, there are few scholarly works on the motivation behind the improbability of economic sanctions in a specific country or region. In other words, the key question is not 'why do states impose sanctions?' but rather 'why do *not* states impose sanctions is spite of their efficacy?' This paper seeks to explain the absence of economic sanctions from ASEAN states in constraining the Myanmar government as a response to the Rohingya crisis. Despite the fact that economic sanctions have not previously been employed in Southeast Asia, the driving factors behind this case are puzzling. This paper selects the case of Indonesia's soft diplomacy approach in dealing with the Rohingya crisis and assumes that in spite of its efficacy to punish norm-violating regimes, the 'ASEAN Way' has a crucial impact on the improbability of Indonesian implementing economic sanctions against Myanmar. This argument challenges the rationalist perspective that emphasizes strategic calculations behind sanctions policies.

Keywords Rohingya crisis · Indonesia · Economic sanctions · Norms · ASEAN Way

Introduction

The enduring debate over economic sanctions tends to focus on the effectiveness of sanctions as a foreign policy tool. There are abundant scholarly works on this issue but little agreement between them. On the one hand, optimist viewpoints argue that sanctions are an effective instrument to change the behaviour of

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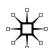
another country (Lindsay 1986; Morgan and Schwebach 1995, 1997; Smith 1996; Dashti-Gibson et al. 1997; Elliott 1998; Crawford and Klotz 1999; Doxey 2000; Oudraat 2000; Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz 2005; Ang and Peksen 2007; Shagabutdinova and Berejikian 2007; Hufbauer et al. 2007; Collins 2009; McLean and Whang 2010). On the other, pessimistic viewpoints argue conversely that sanctions often fail since states have many ways of avoiding the impact of international pressures (Galtung 1967; Pape 1997, 1998; Haass 1997, 1998; Tostensen and Bull 2002; McDonald and Reitano 2016). In addition, sanctions often have negative impacts on the human rights of ordinary citizens in targeted countries instead of altering the targeted government's policies (see for example, Wood 2008; Peksen 2009). At the centre of this debate is the question of what motivates a country to impose economic sanctions on another country.

This paper offers a different angle concerning the imposition of economic sanctions and aims to address a simple but fundamental question: 'Why do states *not* impose economic sanctions?' While a significant amount of literature analyses the motivation of countries to introduce economic sanctions, this paper flips the question in order to investigate the reluctance to use economic sanctions as a foreign policy instrument. Why is it that while economic sanctions are an effective tool to punish state violations of human rights, some countries prefer not to use them? Exploring and answering this question would fill the gap in existing literature with regard to the improbability of economic sanction implementation.

This paper employs a case study of Indonesia's foreign policy towards Myanmar with regard to the persecution of the stateless Rohingya people. Indonesia is an interesting example, as the country has never imposed economic sanctions on another nation. With the exception of then-President Sukarno's '*konfrontasi*' (confrontation) foreign policy towards the USA in the first half of 1960s, Indonesia has historically and continues to prefer a diplomatic approach, using coercive instruments in dealing with international crises. In the case of the Rohingya people in Myanmar, Indonesia's foreign policy emphasizes a diplomatic and humanitarian approach rather than coercive diplomacy. Despite the fact that gross human rights abuses have been occurring for decades in Myanmar, Indonesia has not considered any other instruments to prevent or curtail such abuses. According to a 2016 UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) report, multiple types of violations have been carried out against the Rohingya people, including extrajudicial killings, random shootings, enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention, gang rape, sexual violence, physical assault including torture, looting and occupation of property, destruction of property, and ethnic and religious discrimination and persecution (OHCHR 2017). International human rights advocates such as Amnesty International have described the worsening humanitarian situation in Myanmar as 'apartheid', a crime against humanity under international law (Amnesty International 2017). Thus the absence of sanctions in Southeast Asia against the Myanmar government is puzzling. Why are Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia—a pivotal state in the region—reluctant in employing coercive instruments, even when other countries do so? Western countries have already imposed sanctions on Myanmar, including the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, and the European Union (EU).



It is important to note that this paper is not solely an analysis of Indonesia's foreign policy in the region. More importantly, the key question this paper asks should be understood within the context of a broader sanctions debate. Rationalist approaches—primarily realist and liberal—do not explain this situation. Using a cost–benefit consideration in understanding foreign policy, a rationalist approach would argue that the driving factor behind the absence of economic sanctions is that there is simply no strategic interests in employing sanctions. From a rationalist perspective, economic sanctions play are an instrument of national interests, where states do not impose sanctions when they perceive that they would not produce an absolute advantage, especially with regard to security and domestic pressure (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 2000; Nyun 2008; Hove and Chingono 2013; Stoop 2016). Rationalist arguments overlook non-strategic calculations such as culture, norms, traditions, and non-material elements that act as a structural constraints of state behaviour, including with regard to sanctions policies.

Using a constructivist approach, this paper argues that Indonesia does not consider economic sanctions as a viable foreign policy tool against Myanmar because of the constraint of regional norms. Non-interference and non-use of force are two fundamental elements of the 'ASEAN Way' and prevent ASEAN member states from interfering in and coercing other ASEAN nations. Economic sanctions are inherently coercive in nature, leading to Indonesia's unwillingness to consider this approach. Indonesia's foreign policy aims to develop peaceful coexistence in international affairs by avoiding political interference on domestic affairs in other countries as well as using coercion to gain certain interests. Following constructivist logic, this implies that the implementation of economic sanctions in response to a violation of international norms is unlikely because ASEAN states regard it as a foreign policy 'taboo'. This means that states are often already constrained by structural conditions—norms, values, traditions, or culture—before even making foreign policy decisions (Price 1995; Tannenwald 2005, 2007; Paul 2010).

This paper is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the conceptual framework of international sanctions. Sanctions represent one of the diplomatic option that may be taken by governments to suppress other governments. If used as a response to the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, sanctions are not intended as a means of achieving national interests but are rather a tool to punish a government in violation of international norms. The second section describes Indonesia's soft diplomacy approach towards Myanmar during the presidencies of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo, under whom hard power is not used in dealing with crises. The third section explains the improbability of using hard power in addressing the Rohingya issue. The analysis will apply a constructivist approach which considers that ASEAN norms prevent Indonesia from using coercion and violence. The last section will conclude the argument and summarize the implications of the findings for academic and policy practices.

Economic sanctions: coercive diplomacy in world politics

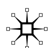
Economic sanctions are a foreign policy option commonly applied by developed countries. The USA and EU are the two most frequent international actors imposing economic sanctions. Both the USA and EU have the economic and political resources which allow them to put pressure on other countries to align with their foreign policy objectives. Developed countries such as Japan and Australia also often employ the same approach. Developing countries, on the other hand, less frequently apply economic sanctions. This is not to say that economic sanctions are method that exclusively employed by major economies and great powers. As demonstrated by Crawford and Klotz (1999), during sanctions decade in South Africa, many actors imposed sanctions against the Apartheid regime, including corporations, non-governmental organizations, universities, and even individuals.

Economic sanctions can be defined as the use of economic instruments to achieve political goals (Drury 2001, 488). Drezner (1999, 2) defined economic sanctions as an 'economic coercion', i.e. '… the threat or act by a nation-state or coalition of nation-states, called the sender, to disrupt economic exchange with another nation-state, called the target, unless the targeted country acquiesces to an articulated political demand'. In terms of foreign policy, economic sanctions have a double meaning, namely policy options available for decision makers and policy alternatives to military force (Baldwin 1999, 83). As an alternative, economic sanctions are increasingly replacing military force as an instrument of foreign policy. In other words, rather than having to send troops to make other governments follow what the sender country wants, it uses economic instruments to produce the same pressure a battalion of troops could generate. In the world of economic sanctions, suppressing by economic instruments is now seen as preferable. According to Baldwin (2016, 55), there are four instruments of international relations: propaganda, diplomacy, economic statecraft, and military statecraft. Thus, the classic adage 'if diplomacy fails, war occurs' is no longer entirely true since economic sanctions can serve as a middle way between peace and war.

Economic sanctions have many forms, but all include similar elements: embargo, blockade, and boycott. An embargo is an act of banning the movement of goods in and out of the country (Simmons 1999, 8–9), essentially a ban on trading activities. A trade ban is intended to weaken the targeted countries so that they may surrender and meet international demands. The most prominent example of this type of sanction would be the Iraqi oil embargo in 1990, imposed against Iraq due to its aggression towards Kuwait during the First Gulf War.

Economic sanctions can also take the form of blockade. Blockade refers to the prohibition of delivery of goods by sea, and when used during conflict, goods are prevented from entering the enemy's territory. This strategy was implemented by the Netherlands against Indonesia during the revolution period prior to Indonesia's independence in 1945.

Economic sanctions can also include boycotts. A boycott is a collective prohibition on buying goods from targeted countries. For example, some Indonesian



Moslem activists support the idea of not purchasing or buying Israeli products as an expression of protest against Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Given the destructive impact of economic sanctions on the national economy and social life of citizens in targeted countries, the international community separates economic sanctions into two subtypes. The first is known as smart sanctions. This is a strategy that selectively punishes individuals or institutions considered to be responsible for human rights violations. This type of sanction includes asset freezing, blocking, suspension or withholding aid, a ban on selling luxury goods, and arms embargo. Smart sanctions are intended to increase the risk of non-compliance for the targeted countries, while preventing the perceived-to-be-more destructive impact of comprehensive sanctions (Drezner 2003). Furthermore, smart sanctions leaves open the possibility of cooperation between the imposers and targets as well as gaining support from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). This is because smart sanctions do not have a negative impact on humanity nor do they damage trade relations with the government of the targeted country (Drezner 2011, 100).

The most heated debate on economic sanctions is whether it sanctions are an effective tool to make a country comply with international norms. Those who agree with the effectiveness of economic sanctions argue that sanctions have a substantial impact on the targeted country. Based on the deterrence logic, the impact of losses borne by the targeted state is greater than the costs incurred by the sender states so the target state will consider changing its policy. Those who disagree, however, argue that countries have the ability to adapt if facing pressure from external actors. In his study on the impact of economic sanctions against Rhodesia, Galtung (1967) found that Rhodesia was able to withstand economic sanctions by employing strategies of adaptation, restructuration, and smuggling commodities. Likewise, Pape (1997) sees that sanctioned states can actually use sanctions to gain sympathy and exploit the situation for rallying domestic support.

Despite scepticism regarding the efficacy of economic sanctions, many countries do employ sanctions. This indicates that economic sanctions remain an important foreign policy option in handling international crises. These crises do not necessarily have to be war between nations but could also include states violating international norms. Countries committing violations against international law can be regarded as deviant, criminal, or, borrowing a phrase from former US president George W. Bush, ‘rogue states’ (Wagner et al. 2014). In responding to states’ violations against international norms, states often use economic sanction as a strategy to punish them. As Nossal (1989) puts it, economic sanctions are not merely an instrument to support the implementer’s national interests but are rather an instrument of punishment from the international community. According to Barber (1979), there are three purposes of sanctions: a ‘primary purpose’ which is related to the target country, a ‘secondary purpose’ that relates to the sender itself, and a ‘tertiary purpose’ for the international community. The third purpose is closely linked with Nossal’s argument concerning sanctions as an international punishment. In this regard, states impose sanctions not because of their own willingness or of certainty to succeed. Instead, sanctions are imposed as a means to punish a country that violates international norms. Despite the widespread scepticism about the efficacy of economic

sanctions to alter a targeted country's policies, sanctions remain an important feature of international politics because states do not always do what they want but sometimes demonstrate a 'symbolic' politics when it comes to, for example, humanitarian issues (Nossal 1991).

Indonesia's approach to the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar

In addressing the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, Indonesia applies two approaches: political and humanitarian. While the political approach focuses on dialogue both bilateral and multilateral ways, the humanitarian approach is pursued through platforms of humanitarian assistance. The Indonesian government considers the combination of these two approaches to be an effective tool to persuade the Myanmar government to stop human rights abuses as well as to give attention to the victims by giving humanitarian assistance.

In 2012 during the massive Rohingya refugee influx into neighbouring countries, Yudhoyono's administration in Indonesia used three policies in dealing with Myanmar: provision of humanitarian aid, open dialogue with Myanmar government, and diplomatic multilateralism at regional and global stages. With regard to the provision of humanitarian aid, Indonesia gave US$1 million to build four schools for Rohingya children. Marty Natalegawa, the then-Indonesian Foreign Minister, stated that the aid was intended to improve the quality of human resources, which in turn can improve the economy and create jobs. Indonesia also sent aid through the Indonesian Red Cross in the form of blankets, sarong, and hygiene kits weighing 7.5 tonnes, together with medical personnel. Indonesian civil society also donated IDR1 billion (US$73,000) to establish refugee camps and distribute food in Sitwee and Bangladesh (Rosyidin 2015, 170).

In terms of politics, Indonesia has undertaken bilateral engagement with the Myanmar government. Yudhoyono sent a letter to President Thein Sein asking for permission to grant international organizations such as OIC, United Nations, and ASEAN to gather first-hand information directly from Myanmar. Indonesia offered conflict resolving assistance based on its domestic experience in Poso, Ambon, and Aceh. As Yudhoyono put it, 'Just like when we dealt with communal conflict in Poso, Ambon, and Aceh, we didn't want foreign involvement in those cases. We also rejected allegations that we did not protect minorities. I think Myanmar can hear the criticism and act justly' (Irrawady 2012). Indonesia's advice was welcomed by Myanmar, and a few days after receiving the letter, Thein Sein gave permission to the OIC delegation to visit the sites where communal conflict had occurred.

Indonesia is well aware that ethnic cleansing in Myanmar could destabilize the region. Therefore, Indonesia did not stop with the bilateral strategy alone. In November 2012, Indonesia brought the issue to the 10th anniversary of the Bali Process, also known as the Bali Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (BRMC). The forum agreed on the principle of mutual respect between countries in which all delegations agreed not to scapegoat Myanmar, rather view the country as part of the solution. Indonesia also brought the issue to the OIC Ministerial Conference in Djibouti, 15–17

November 2012. Along with Malaysia and Brunei, Indonesia requested the OIC undertake concrete measures in dealing with the Rohingya crisis, including the provision of assistance and conflict resolution. The Indonesian government argued that as the OIC is the largest forum of Muslim countries, it should actively be involved in Myanmar. From an ethical lens, Indonesia's proposal at the OIC reflects its solidarity towards the Rohingya people.

When Jokowi came to power in 2014, Indonesia's foreign policy towards Myanmar has not changed. As with the previous government, Jokowi's administration has consistently supported the Rohingya people through diplomatic advocacy and humanitarian assistance. Soon after Human Rights Watch found an evidence of 820 destroyed buildings in several Rohingya villages, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi arranged a meeting with Myanmar's democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The meeting intended to urge the Myanmar government to take steps in halting the ongoing violence against Rohingya people. Retno stated, 'The meeting with State Counsellor Myanmar is expected to bring improvements to the humanitarian situation and stability for all communities, particularly the Muslim community, in Rakhine State' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2016). Indonesia seeks to promote the establishment of good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights in Myanmar. In addition, Jokowi also undertook intensive communication with former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to discuss the current situation in Myanmar, met with ASEAN foreign ministers in Yangon, and held a second meeting with Suu Kyi in Myanmar.

Jokowi's government also sent humanitarian aid for the Rohingya people, consisting of 10 shipping containers of instant noodles, baby food, and sarongs. The aid was collected from the Indonesian public, businesses, and government agencies and was given as a respond to demands made by representatives of the Rohingya people to Retno Marsudi in her Myanmar visit (Tempo 2016). Such assistance can be interpreted as a form of solidarity from Indonesian Muslims. This is nowhere more evident than in President Jokowi's preference of words when speaking about the situation: he described the Rohingya people as 'siblings' when dispatching the containers of aid from Tanjung Priok, Jakarta, 29 December 2016: 'Soon we will dispatch 10 containers of goods that will be sent to Myanmar to help our *siblings* in Rakhine State, especially the Muslim community' [emphasis added] (Kompas 2016a). The word siblings' was used in other occasions by the previous Indonesian government to show its strong concern and solidarity of the Indonesian people towards the Rohingya. For example, when Yudhoyono asked then-Vice President Jusuf Kalla to visit Myanmar, he stated, 'We want to help our *siblings*, the Rohingya ethnic community' [emphasis added] (Antara 2012). As the country with the world's largest Muslim population has always been trying to position itself as a responsible stakeholder whenever conflict involving Muslims occurs.

Indonesia expanded its contribution to resolving the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar by offering a comprehensive solution. In her meeting with Suu Kyi on 4 September 2017, Foreign Minister Retno proposed a '4 + 1 formula' for Rakhine State. The formula consists of four elements: reinstating security and stability; exercising maximum self-restraint and the non-use of violence; protecting everyone residing in Rakhine State, regardless of their ethnicity and religion; and opening up access for

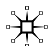
humanitarian aid. Another key element is implementing the recommendation of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State chaired by Kofi Annan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2017). Indonesia has also been cooperating with Bangladesh, a host country for Rohingya refugees, to ensure access for humanitarian assistance. In his visit to Cox's Bazar, where many Rohingya refugees are living, Jokowi emphasized Indonesia's commitment to send humanitarian assistance. He maintained that this humanitarian aid '… is provided in a sustainable manner' (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia 2018).

It is evidently clear that Indonesia plays a major role in attempting to resolve the Rohingya issue. Both Yudhoyono and Jokowi are fully aware of the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and have conducted a similar double-strategy—diplomatic advocacy as well as humanitarian approach—in addressing the crisis. But unlike Yudhoyono's government, which was actively involved in many multilateral fora, Jokowi prefers to take a different direction and emphasize bilateralism, which he considers to be the most effective way in achieving Indonesia's goals. This is not to say that Jokowi's administration has been neglecting multilateralism, as on multiple occasions, Jokowi has brought up the issue at a regional level, mainly through the ASEAN forum. Yet we can still conclude that multilateralism has not been a priority for Jokowi, mainly because of the widely believed perception of multilateral forums being merely a 'talkshop' and not being institutions capable of providing feasible and accountable solutions. More importantly, Jokowi avoids the use of 'megaphone diplomacy' and prefers quiet diplomacy to change the Myanmar government's treatment of Rohingya people.

Regional norms and Indonesia's foreign policy

After describing Indonesia's approach in dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, this section will analyse the improbability of Indonesia imposing economic sanctions against Myanmar. This section argues that Indonesia could have chosen coercive diplomacy in addressing ethnic violence in Myanmar, but it decided not to do so. This is interesting, as Indonesia's economy is the largest in Southeast Asia, and much larger than that of Myanmar. According to data from the World Bank, Myanmar's GDP in 2015 reached US$62.6 billion, compared to Indonesia's GDP of US$861.9 billion. In international politics, larger economies generally have more bargaining power than the smaller ones (see, for example, Korr 1973, 82–90).

The economic relationship between Indonesia and Myanmar has been growing as political openness and democratization takes place in Myanmar. Dramatic political and economic changes began in 2011 under the rule of President Thein Sein, where, in contrast to the former military junta government, Thein Sein's economic reform policies focused on boosting national economic growth and improving the economic well-being of the population. This policy paid special attention to rural development and poverty alleviation (Qinrun 2013, 3). An ADB report in 2012 demonstrated that Myanmar has good potential for growth; its rich natural resources and strategic location could see it become 'one of the next rising stars in Asia' (ADB 2012). The



economic reform initiated by Thein Sein aims to attract more foreign direct investment (FDI) and to increase exports, particularly to ASEAN member states.

As the largest economy in ASEAN, Indonesia has become a strategic economic partner for Myanmar. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Trade show that from 2011 to 2018, Indonesia-Myanmar trade relations increased by 14–18% (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, n.d). Indonesia is a potential market for several key commodities from Myanmar such as refined copper (30%), dried legumes (28%), and rice (14%) (MIT, n.d). As an agricultural country, Myanmar is one of Indonesia's largest trading partners in providing rice. Although China remains the largest market, Myanmar signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indonesia to export 500.000 tons of rice annually until 2019. For Indonesia, importing rice from Myanmar would serve as a supply backup since imports from Vietnam and Thailand are no longer adequate to stabilize local prices (The Jakarta Post 2016b). The agricultural sector contributes significantly to economic development in Myanmar. Consequently, the demand for chemical fertilizer has been on the rise in the country. Chemical fertilizer is one of the most important products imported from Indonesia alongside teak wood and cement, along with manufacturing and banking services. Myanmar produces only 100,000 tons of chemical fertilizer, while domestic industries need approximately 800,000 tons (ASEAN National Secretariat n.d). In 2013, Indonesia began looking to penetrate the Myanmar fertilizer market, targeting the sales of 180,000 tons of urea fertilizer (The Jakarta Post 2013).

For Myanmar, Indonesia ranks as the 14th largest source of foreign investment. Indonesian firms have invested US$21.5 million in Myanmar between 1988 and 2013 (Myanmar Times 2013), primarily in the oil and gas sector (Myanmar Business Today 2016). In 2012, four Indonesian state-owned companies—Pertamina (oil and gas), Wika (property), Semen Gresik (cement), and BNI (banking)—also expanded their businesses to Myanmar (Republika 2012). Then-Indonesian Minister of State-Owned Enterprises Rini Soemarno stated that Myanmar was undergoing rapid development under Aung San Suu Kyi which in turn was attracting many countries to invest there, including Indonesia. She added that Myanmar initiated attempts to increase cooperation with Indonesia because their state-owned companies were not making a profit (Antara 2016). Another Indonesian state-owned company is PT Aneka Tambang (Antam). Antam focuses on gold and nickel mining, and in 2013, Antam began exploring gold mines in Myanmar with a US$2.6 billion in investment through to 2014. The government of Myanmar believes that investment in this 'second most important sector for FDI' would provide jobs for its people (Bhasin 2014, 52).

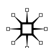
From a rationalist point of view, Indonesia has substantial bargaining power over Myanmar. Based on the nature of the economic relationship between Indonesia and Myanmar, Indonesia could have employed its power to encourage Myanmar to cease its abuses of the Rohingya people. However, Indonesia has shown it is not interested in using coercive diplomacy to solve the issue. In contrast to rationalists who argue that material incentives shape state preferences and behaviour, a constructivist perspective posits that norms affect states' behaviour. Constructivists defines norms as '… shared expectations about appropriate behaviour held by a community of actors' (Finnemore 1996, 22). In contrast to rationalists who argue that states have always

been driven by national interests, constructivists posit that ideational elements also play an important role behind states' action. A country's behaviour reflects the values, rules, and norms that are equally shared by its people. These factors can affect states' action by defining states' preferences. In the literature of international relations, preference equals interest; that is, the expected results of actor's interaction with others. Lake and Powell (1999) argue that preferences cannot be observed and measured. Yet, according to Moravscik (1997), state preferences represent domestic actors' interests. From a liberal point of view, the state is not an actor but rather a representative institution of domestic actors (Moravscik 1997, 518). As a result, state preferences can be identified, for example, by public opinion polls or understanding specific motives and purposes of certain actors, either individuals or groups in the domestic political context. Although preferences are difficult to observe and measure, Alons (2007) theorizes that the preference formation can be understood by combining 'internal polarity' with 'external polarity'. In addition, preferences are not predetermined entities but dynamic and depend on the social context in which actors are embedded.

This idea implies that states' actions are not solely driven by individual motivation but also by shared ideas and understanding. Generally speaking, states want to be seen as international actors who abide the rules. Constructivists use the logic of appropriateness to describe states' behaviour that complies with the norm. As March and Olsen (2004) assert, 'Actors seek to fulfil the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions'. Not only is the violation of rules and norms considered inappropriate, but also as a factor capable of damaging interstate relations. This does not mean that constructivists adhere to a naive view of international relations. Actors internalizing rules and norms is not without logical considerations; they involve a process of reasoning in defining what kind of situation they are facing and what they should do in that particular situation (Finnemore 1996, 29). However, actors refer to the normative structure in the process of reasoning instead of pre-existing preferences.

Constructivism seems a appropriate tool to explain Indonesia's foreign policy towards Myanmar. Instead of employing hard power or coercive instruments, Indonesia prefers to use soft diplomacy and ethical approaches. Indonesia has addressed ethnic violence in Myanmar using a soft diplomatic route with letters and dialogue (Fitriani in Aspinall et al. 2015, 81). Indonesia's foreign policy towards Myanmar tends to be silent, waiting patiently for the government of Myanmar to change its mind, and avoid the imposition of sanctions or expulsion from ASEAN (McDonald 2015). When visiting Myanmar, Retno Marsudi asserted the importance of stability and security in the country so that inclusive development can be implemented by saying, 'The problem of inclusivity, where all people have the same rights and obligations, which is key to solving the problems in Rakhine' (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia 2016).

In accordance with constructivism, ASEAN's institutionalized norms play a crucial role in influencing patterns of interaction among member states. Prior to the formation of ASEAN, the relationship between Indonesia and neighbouring countries was not entirely harmonious. During Indonesia's era of Guided Democracy



(1957–1966), Sukarno's confrontation policy created an anarchic culture that led to hostility instead of cooperation (for example, Bunnel 1966; Leifer 1989). The establishment of ASEAN after his resignation was a turning point in the relationship between Indonesia and neighbouring countries. ASEAN provides the 'rules of the game' as to how to manage interstate relations among member states, both in conflict and peaceful conditions.

In contrast to regionalism in other parts of the world, ASEAN has a distinct characteristic often referred to the 'ASEAN Way'. According to Narine (1998, 129), ASEAN Way is rooted in Malay culture, focusing on '*musyawarah*' (consultation) and '*mufakat*' (consensus). In fact, the ASEAN Way consists of four pillars or principles; non-interference, quiet diplomacy, non-use of force, and the mechanism of consensus in decision-making processes (Katsumata 2003, 106). The detailed principles of ASEAN Way are codified in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), a norm of interaction among ASEAN members signed on 24 February 1976. TAC includes a number of points: first, respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, and territory; second, integrity and national identity of all nations; third, freedom from external interference, subversion, or coercion; fourth, non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; fifth, the peaceful settlement of disputes; sixth, renunciation of the threat or use of force; and seventh, effective cooperation among themselves (Severino 2008, 15). All these principles boil down to one key principle which has become the common goal of ASEAN members: peaceful coexistence.

Both the ASEAN Way and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are treated as legitimate normative structures, and ASEAN member states believe violating them would be inappropriate. As Johnston (in Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003, 108) puts it, ASEAN does not work with the principle of 'stick and carrot' or 'reward and punishment' as commonly implemented by the West, but through the mechanism of socialization or 'habits of cooperation'. Likewise, Acharya (2001, 8) points out, '… the organisation's approach to regionalism has been geared towards inducing cooperative behaviour from its members through socialisation, rather than 'constraining' uncooperative behaviour through sanctions'. This explains why during the ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Conference on 2 April 2012 held in Cambodia, all members requested the termination of economic sanctions against Myanmar. At the time, ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan argued that the member countries wanted the 'reintegration of Myanmar into the global community' (Aljazeera 2012). Even though Myanmar has acted contrary to the principles of democracy and human rights, the member states did not choose coercive diplomacy to punish their ASEAN fellow.

Since ASEAN's creation in 1967, Indonesia has consistently conducted its foreign policy in accordance with the ASEAN Way and TAC. When Suharto seized power, he put regionalism as the first of Indonesia's concentric circles of foreign relations. Though he was a military general and strongly backed by the military, Suharto did not carry out an aggressive foreign policy. For example, the relationship between Indonesia and Singapore became difficult after two Indonesian marines were executed in Singapore due to alleged sabotage at McDonald House, Singapore, in 1965. As a result of the incident, economic cooperation between the two countries collapsed. The Indonesian public harshly criticized Singapore and urged the

Indonesian government to retaliate. However, Suharto rejected the demand to take countermeasures both politically and militarily. Suharto and his Foreign Minister Adam Malik instead showed tremendous calmness and restraint in the face of Singapore (see for example, Anwar 1994, 168; Suryadinata 1998, 98). Similarly, when Vietnam occupied Cambodia in 1978, Indonesia showed compromise rather than a confrontational attitude towards Vietnam, and working alongside Malaysia, Indonesia chose a more persuasive strategy in order to get Vietnam engaged with ASEAN. In May 1980, the two countries signed the Kuantan Principles indicating the commitment to remove Vietnam from isolation and reduce dependence on the Soviet Union as well asking the USA to provide economic aid to Vietnam (Anwar 1994, 188). Thus, Indonesia ruled out coercive diplomacy and emotional-driven foreign policy when handling international conflict with neighbouring countries, reflecting the New Order regime's vision that sought to create stability and cooperation in the region.

After the demise of the New Order in 1998, Indonesia's foreign policy changed dramatically. Suharto's successors focused on domestic affairs rather than foreign policy. As a post-authoritarian country, Indonesia remains in the process of learning how to build a solid foundation for democracy alongside economic restructuration after the 1998 economic crisis. Additionally, between the fall of Suharto and the election of Yudhoyono, no president served a full period (5 years), meaning that leaders had little time to focus on foreign policy in the face of more pressing domestic concerns.

At the regional level, Megawati Sukarnoputri was the only president (2001–2004) who paid significant attention to ASEAN. During her term, Megawati reiterated that ASEAN was the first priority of Indonesia's foreign policy. This 'neighbour-first policy' reflects the internal balancing strategy to resist external pressure through consolidation among ASEAN members (He 2008, 66). This is the reason why in 2003, Indonesia initiated a push to establish the ASEAN Community which stands on three pillars: economic, political security, and sociocultural. A good example of Indonesia's policy is heightened tensions between Indonesia and Malaysia regarding claims over the Sipadan and Ligitan islands. Instead of protesting the International Court of Justice's decision and demonstrating hostilities, Indonesia accepted defeat regarding the ownership status of the two islands. Indonesian government through the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Hassan Wirajuda underlined that Indonesia has '… the obligation to respect the Special Agreement to jointly file a dispute the two islands to the International Court of Justice on May 31, 1997' (Tempo 2002). The Indonesian public, however, strongly objected to the decision and considered it as a diplomatic failure. To appease widespread nationalist sentiment, the Indonesian government took further steps to strengthen its sovereignty over outlying territories, such as in Miangas, close to the Philippines' border (Weatherbee 2009, 140). But even this action was only intended as an anticipatory measure, not as a provocation that could worsen the situation.

Megawati's successor Yudhoyono also implemented soft diplomacy in addressing conflicts with Indonesia's neighbours. Like Suharto, Yudhoyono is a military figure, but his foreign policy did not reflect that; Yudhoyono's strong commitment to democracy supported Indonesia's non-hostile attitudes towards others (Wirajuda

2014). Yudhoyono's government was also strongly committed to the ASEAN regional norms, particularly the principle of non-use of force. In the case of the Ambalat dispute, mass nationalist demonstrations and hostilities took place across Indonesia. Instead of complying with public demand, the government adopted a soft approach by conducting bilateral negotiations on 22–23 March 2005. At the time, Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda stated, 'We will continue negotiations. The presence of warships in Ambalat not necessary to create conditions conducive to negotiations… Even if there is the presence of several warships of the Malaysian Navy or Army, it is only part of a routine patrol' (Putra 2016, 11). The similar approach was also taken to respond the arrest of three Indonesian Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs officers by Malaysian police in Bintan in 2010. When criticized over their response, the Indonesian government claimed that the relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia is an important pillar of ASEAN unity (Viva News 2010). Both the Ambalat and Bintan incidents reflect Indonesia's commitment to the good neighbourhood policy that reflects the norms of the ASEAN Way.

This good neighbourhood policy is also evident in Jokowi's foreign policy. Although in some cases Jokowi tends to adopt *realpolitik* approach, particularly with regard to issues of sovereignty, Jokowi has generally shown commitment to maintaining a stable environment to foster international cooperation. At the 29th ASEAN Summit Retreat in Vientiane, Laos, 7 September 2016, Jokowi called upon ASEAN to maintain regional peace and stability (Ministry of State Secretariat 2016). When addressing the South China Sea dispute, Jokowi asserted that all parties should build mutual trust and conduct negotiation. He pointed out, 'The military solution or the use of force will only grow more violent. For example, extremism, even humanitarian crisis' (Kompas 2016b). As a regional power, Indonesia bears responsibility for the creation of peace in some of the world's most contested waters. Jokowi has previously stated that 'Indonesia has continued to be actively involved in promoting the settlement of South China Sea disputes through negotiation and peaceful efforts following the decision of the International Arbitration Court in The Hague on this issue' (The Jakarta Post 2016a). Furthermore, as mentioned previously, Indonesia's approach to Myanmar is not reactive and confrontational. This attitude is different from that of Malaysia, which strongly condemns the violence by calling it 'genocide' and criticizing Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, saying she does not do anything to resolve the crisis. Unlike Malaysia, Indonesia considers that the problems in Myanmar cannot be solved by megaphone diplomacy or demonizing Myanmar (Almuttaqie 2016) and rather seeks a long-term and comprehensive solution

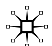
In contrast to the Western preference for the 'stick and carrot' strategy, Indonesia's approach to the Rohingya issue focuses on achieving a peace agreement between the government of Myanmar and the Rohingya people. Instead of employing economic sanctions and 'naming and shaming' as practiced by Western powers, Indonesia plays the role of 'problem solver' that seeks concrete solutions. In an exclusive interview with *Channel News Asia*, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi asserted that 'constructive engagement will be more productive than when we adopt megaphone diplomacy' (Channel News Asia 2017). This principle does not only reflect Indonesia's identity as a 'peacemaker', but also the regional norms it adopts in undertaking its foreign relations. The notion of 'constructive engagement'

proposed by Minister Retno is not new. Indonesia's Suharto-era foreign minister, Ali Alatas, strongly supported this policy, saying it was better to 'quietly talk them out of their shell and ask them to see the benefits of being open' (Oo and Grieg in Stokke and Tostensen 1999, 106). Regardless of the (in)effectiveness, ASEAN's constructive engagement approach reflects the non-interference principle and the habit of dialogue among ASEAN member states. As Mahbubani and Sng (2017, 2) argue in their book *The ASEAN Miracle: A Catalyst for Peace*, in an era of growing geopolitical pessimism, ASEAN has adopted a 'culture of peace' deriving from the ASEAN Way; that is, consultation and consensus. Similarly, former Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa is of the opinion that ASEAN has made possible the growth of conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict resolution norms based on a 'culture of peace' (Natalegawa 2018, 19). Thus, while Western representatives in Myanmar are much more interested in promoting democracy and human rights using coercive instruments such as economic sanctions, Indonesia has not considered coercion as a feasible foreign policy tool due to the regional norms constraints that do not allow ASEAN member states to impose sanctions against their fellows.

Conclusion

Since the end of New Order, Indonesia has demonstrated a high commitment to the implementation of good neighbourhood foreign policy. This commitment can be seen from Indonesia's responses when facing tensions with neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Indonesia tends to oppose the use of force or coercive diplomacy in order to get others acquiesces to its will, as Indonesia believes that hard power is counterproductive to regional peace and stability. In ASEAN, the use of coercive diplomacy or force is considered inappropriate and not in line with the ASEAN Way and TAC, both of which play a crucial role in managing conflict among ASEAN members. The ASEAN Way helps in defining states' preferences by pushing coercive instruments away. This is the reason why the Indonesian government does not seriously consider economic sanctions as a diplomatic option for dealing with the Rohingya issue.

The implications of these findings for the academic of international relations are twofold. First, this finding contributes to understanding why economic sanctions are applied by many Western countries but not by other countries. In other words, the central question is not 'why do states impose economic sanctions?' but on the contrary 'why do states *not* impose economic sanctions?' The enduring debate over economic sanctions is centred on the efficacy of economic sanction as a foreign policy tool. This paper has widened the issue and argues this debate is not limited to the factors behind the imposition of sanctions or the efficacy of sanctions as foreign policy tool but also the impossibility of implementing sanctions as a diplomatic instrument for certain countries. Second, these findings confirm the constructivist premise that international relations are more influenced by ideational rather than material factors. It refers to the least-likely case, that is, the case that is expected to corroborate assumptions of a theory (see George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007; Bennett



and Elman 2007). This paper departs from the problem-driven research where traditional explanations use cost–benefit calculations; this is inadequate to explain Indonesia's foreign policy. As this paper has demonstrated, norms of the ASEAN Way, codified in the TAC, affect how states behave in the region, including how ASEAN member states deal with gross human rights violations committed by authoritarian regimes like Myanmar.

These findings also contribute to the diplomatic practice in Southeast Asia. It has long been argued that the existence of the ASEAN Way brings with it moral dilemmas, especially when faced with serious human rights violations, as norms prevent member states from becoming directly involved in the domestic affairs of other member states (see for example, Jones 2008; Narine 2009; Arendshorst 2009). The implication is that soft diplomacy and the humanitarian approach applied by Indonesia would not be able to guarantee protection to minorities such as Rohingya people. Humanitarian aid only provides temporary support, while negotiations have little influence in persuading the Myanmar government to adopt democracy and respect human rights. Nevertheless, Indonesia should maintain its role as a 'norms entrepreneur' in promoting democracy and human rights in the region. These values are fundamental principles in ASEAN community that should be respected by all member states.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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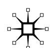

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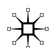

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