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The EU's Role in Developing Security Cooperation with Myanmar at the ASEAN Regional Forum: 2004-2008

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This article tracks the European Union's efforts at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), from 2004 to 2008, to encourage Myanmar directly or indirectly to engage in security cooperation. It, then, explores Myanmar and ASEAN's reactions to the devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis to Myanmar's Irrawaddy delta in 2008. It focuses on ARF as a forum whereby interactions take place. It examines whether the complementarity of the analytical variables provided by the logic of consequences and appropriateness (March & Olsen 1998, 2004), social mechanisms (Checkel 1999, 2005) and observations derived from interviews (Southeast Asia and Brussels) can explain ASEAN and Myanmar's reactions and, also, the EU's behaviour in relation to the Myanmar-Nargis event. The EU's role is explored through the co-chair's summary reports of the meetings that the EU co-chaired with ASEAN. The article shows that, at ARF, the EU promoted the multilateral aspects of its policy in the field of security, and attempted to mobilise the different strengths, values and capacities of its partners, i.e. ASEAN and Myanmar. It uncovers the EU's efforts to encourage both ASEAN to take up responsibilities and Myanmar to accept multilateral security options. The article argues that, as the EU tried to inspire Myanmar to connect with cooperation, 'Myanmar hit by Cyclone Nargis' encouraged the EU Council to include the 'responsibility to protect' as a new goal of the European foreign and security policy of December 2008.

Keywords: EU security cooperation, ASEAN Regional Forum, Myanmar, ASEAN, foreign policy analysis

Introduction

At the beginning of 2014, for the first time, the European Union (EU) co-chaired meetings with Myanmar, which it hosted in Brussels within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum (ARF). The ARF, of which the EU has been party since its establishment in 1994, is 'the leading platform in Asia for dialogue and cooperation on security' (EEAS-ARF). It brings together nations across the Asia-Pacific region: the ten nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea and the United States, plus the EU. The meetings in Brussels concerned Defence Officials' Dialogue (DOD) and Inter-sessional Support Group (ISG) on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and Preventive Diplomacy (PD). Discussions on various aspects related to security cooperation in Asia were planned. These included, *inter alia*, 'humanitarian assistance and disaster relief' (EIAS 2014). The meetings in Brussels are sign that Myanmar is cooperating with the EU in the field of security.

Relatively recently (5 March 2013), Myanmar signed an agreement with the EU, the 'EU-Myanmar Partnership'. In this document the EU pledged to work with Yangon's

administration on specific issues concerning ‘preparedness, response and resilience to emergencies’, and intended to pursue these through ‘building up a professional and effective response system’ (EU-MP 2013, 2). This agreement indicates that a Myanmar-EU security connection exists. Yet, in mid-2014, Myanmar’s government accepted, by the EU, the funding of the Myanmar National Crisis Management Centre, which has been established in Nay Pyi Taw, the new capital (CMCM 2014). This EU action is indicative of its support for capacity development concerning crisis-related responses.

These commitments between Myanmar’s government and the European Union, and specifically its external branch, the European External Action Service (EEAS), testify to a shift in the Yangon/Nay Pyi Taw government’s attitude. The latter (cautiously) detached itself from the rigid non-interference dogma that had characterised its policy decisions for decades. Myanmar’s junta had opposed any multilateral options in general, and, even more so, with regard to approaching aspects of security (EIAS 2014). These events, suggesting the existence of a Myanmar-EU security link, motivate interest in the EU’s role in sponsoring cooperation.

This article traces the EU’s attempts at the Forum, from 2004 to 2008, directly or indirectly to induce Myanmar’s junta to cooperate in the area of security. Since the dialogue and many of the training activities in the ARF framework concerned crisis management and disaster relief capacity building, the article, also, investigates Myanmar and ASEAN’s reactions to the damage produced by Cyclone Nargis to Myanmar’s Irrawaddy delta, in 2008. It focuses on the ARF as a forum in which interactions occur. It examines whether the analytical variables provided by the logic of consequences and appropriateness (March and Olsen 1998, 2004), social mechanisms (Checkel 1999, 2005) and observations derived from interviews (Southeast Asia and Brussels) in a complementary relationship can explain ASEAN and Myanmar’s reactions, and, also, the EU’s behaviour in relation to the Myanmar-Nargis event. This investigation exposes the EU’s efforts to inspire ASEAN to assume responsibilities, and Myanmar to accept multilateral security options. It argues that, as the EU sought to convince Myanmar to compromise and accept cooperation, ‘Myanmar hit by Cyclone Nargis’ has encouraged the EU Council to insert the ‘responsibility to protect’ goal into the 2008 European foreign and security policy.

In the years leading up to the cyclone, the EU antagonised the chosen isolation of Myanmar’s junta, specifically in the security area. The EU’s experience as ‘a collective and in Asia not yet well known political and security actor’ (Reiterer 2014, 20) and advocate of a multilateral approach to security matters inspired the policy proposed at the Forum. The EU’s quest to promote security cooperation is explored via examination of the meetings that it co-chaired with ASEAN between 2004 and 2008 through the co-chair’s summary reports. The EU co-chaired the ARF Inter-sessional Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy for both 2004/05 and 2006/07 (Thayer 2009, 78), and the ARF Workshop on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy in Asia and Europe, in 2008. The article does not focus specifically on either of these meetings; combined, they portray the perception of the EU’s support for multilateral solutions to security problems, and, neither engages with

any of the critique that the ARF is a talking-shop with peripheral outcomes. The investigation period is justified by Myanmar being admitted to ARF in 2004 and Cyclone Nargis afflicting Myanmar four years later. Since the co-chair's summary reports offer little direct link to Myanmar, connections will be made via ASEAN. Interviews were conducted with several officials and academics, as described in the following section.¹

The analytical framework: the variables, their value and complementarity

This article explores the EU's attempts at the ARF and the reactions of ASEAN, Myanmar and the EU to Cyclone Nargis by focusing on the ARF as a forum in which interactions of several interests occur. The latter may include the promotion of one's own identity as well as the publicisation of multilateral security options, or the encouragement to undertake security responsibilities. The article also both employs and investigates analytical variables in a joint relationship, arguing that their complementarity provides explanations: the logic of consequences and appropriateness (March and Olsen 1998, 2004), social mechanisms (Checkel 1999) and observations derived from interviews (Southeast Asia and Brussels).

March and Olsen's argument

One of the main tasks of the states participating in the ARF meetings is agreeing together how to face external security strains. There has been a specific emphasis on the scope of the Forum of 'reconcil[ing] the differing views between ARF participants' under the conviction that unifying visions would 'reduce the risk to security' (ARF-CP 1995). Beyond the widespread criticism of the ARF as a 'talk shop' with no action (Katsumata 2006; Thayer 2009, 79), there has been a reported (Haacke), more recent, tendency of the ARF to move beyond dialogue towards practical security cooperation. This development suggests that common agreement might tend to bridge mere diplomatic declarations with more proactive policies (Haacke 2009). National considerations, however, trump conceptions of any common, stable ARF as well as ASEAN interest (Acharya 2014; Simon 1995). ASEAN members have been determined to retain their national prerogatives (Ruland 2010). At the same time, ASEAN strengthened their commitment to homogenising their policy in view of the increasing regionalism through Bali Concord II (2003), Vientiane Action Programme (2004) and the ASEAN Charter (2007) (deFlers 2010). ASEAN states have declared their interest in common action, largely on the basis that influence and effectiveness in foreign policy is, to a considerable extent, based on speaking and working together (ARF-CP 1995).

March and Olsen (1998) contemplate agreeing together via a logic of expected consequences, and suggest that the strategic calculation of rational bargaining leads a government to defend what it perceives as its national interest. They, however, envisage also changes in the logic behind the state-actors. They argue that, when a government confronts a position on a policy issue that is relevant to other states of the group to which it belongs, that government becomes involved in a new process. The latter supports a different behaviour, i.e. frequently the state-actor becomes reconciled with the position of those other states. As March and Olsen posit, it might be that a government tends to recognise the ethical dimensions and collective norms of the group. In such a situation, a 'logic of appropriateness' motivates its behaviour (pp. 449-51). To act 'appropriately' is

to proceed according to practices based on a collective, mutual and tacit understanding (March and Olsen 2004, 3-4). This logic explains foreign policy as the application of rules, associated with specific identities, to specific circumstances (March and Olsen 1998, 951). A common interpretation of rules is that they exist because they work well and provide better solutions than their alternatives (see: Hechter, Opp and Wippler 1990) (March and Olsen 2004, 12). Yet, it is also true that the logic of appropriateness does not guarantee moral acceptability (p. 4). The division between the two logics is faint. As March and Olsen (1998) specify, ‘the descriptive question is whether (or when) one logic is more likely than the other to be observed as the basis for actual behaviour’ (p. 949). March and Olsen help to analyse why Myanmar initially refused external assistance in Nargis’ aftermath, and, why, later, the junta agreed with ASEAN to accept assistance. They also highlight why the EU Council included the responsibility to protect populations as the new goal of its security policy.

Checkel’s argument

Whereas March and Olsen shed light on the logic behind the state-actors and the EU Council, Checkel highlights developments derived from the interactions within the groups and sub-groups that are part of the ARF’s working method (ARF-CP 1995). Checkel offers explanatory power to the puzzle of how and through which means actors can acquire new interests and preferences (Checkel 1999, 548). This is achieved through the observation of the dynamics and practices through which messages migrate and spread, namely the social mechanisms, such as group learning, the ability to persuade and, also, the crisis and policy failure argument (pp. 548-550). ASEAN’s behaviour in the aftermath of the cyclone is subjected to this exploration.

Checkel indicates that ‘social learning is more likely...where a group meets repeatedly and there is a high density of interaction among participants...where the group feels itself in a crisis or is faced with clear and incontrovertible evidence of policy failure’. A setting where agents should be conducive to persuasion, Checkel argues, is most likely ‘when the persuader is an authoritative member of the in-group to which the persuadee belongs or wants to belong’. He explains persuasion as a mechanism through which social learning may occur and may lead to interest redefinition and identity change (pp. 549-550). Checkel indicates that social learning can take place through contact with other contexts (discursive structures and/or norms) (pp. 548-9). Hence, it is clear that the dynamics of socialization are processes which probably develop among actors due to their working together, performing common tasks, or taking group decisions, and from all kinds of practices which require several exchanges in order to be accomplished. Strictly concerning aspects of security or closely related to it, between 2004 and 2005, either for consultation or training purposes, several meetings took place, including Disaster relief and Peacekeeping meetings. Some of these, such as the ARF Defence Officials’ Dialogue and the Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures, took place in Yangon (ARF library). When consultations have been held outside Myanmar, officials from the Yangon administration represented their government at the meetings. Through their own representatives, ASEAN, Myanmar and the EU networked together within contexts that were potentially affected by social mechanisms.

Interviewees' observations

While March and Olsen and Checkel usefully contribute to the analysis as outlined, the interviewees provide their interpretations regarding the reasons supporting the actors' acquisition of new interests and purposes via the social mechanisms. Several interviewees contributed to this discussion, and particularly: ASEAN leaders and leaders close to the ARF organisation, Southeast Asian security policy analysts, European Commission Rapid Response Coordinator officials, EEAS officials from the Crisis Response and Operational Coordination, and a Myanmar historian. Hence, the interviewees assist with indicating the drives behind ASEAN's behaviour in Nargis' aftermath, and those which led to the Myanmar junta's acceptance of ASEAN's assistance.

Added value and complementarity

Each of the employed variables adds a distinctive, particular value to the investigation to the extent that the analytical strength is expressed by the complementarity of Checkel, March and Olsen, and the interviewees. Checkel helpfully reveals how three processes (group learning, the ability to persuade and the crisis and policy failure issue) lead to the development of new responsibilities and roles. The interviewees' observations of the ARF networking are important in confirming that the above three circumstances exerted an influence on the actors' inclinations. By contrast, March and Olsen's argument, applied to 'ASEAN's engagement in crisis support to Myanmar', would overlook how the three conditions indicated by Checkel have the power to motivate others to change their behaviour. Checkel's argument, therefore, by placing emphasis on the significance of the interactions and how the discourses generate consequences, provides an added value to the investigation. It might be argued that Checkel's contribution (and that of the interviewees) is not necessarily key in explaining 'ASEAN taking action when it did', and that a realist framework would be a more logical explanation: ASEAN's support of post-Nargis Myanmar would be justifiable by the organisation's desire to prevent the destabilisation of the region. To counter that argument, let it suffice to state that realist accounts would be indifferent to the communication and exchanges that took place in the ARF. Those processes are central to the investigation, and this scholar's contribution matters.

Whereas Checkel's framework holds greater weight than that of March and Olsen with regard to the causal explanation concerning the transmigration of messages and their effect, March and Olsen are valuable under a different viewpoint. They reveal the sources which, most logically, explain Myanmar's junta's progressive conduct in the post-cyclone era. The interviewees bring to the fore several arguments, which they explain as incentives for the junta to relax its non-interference strategy. Checkel's social mechanisms have little causal reading of the Myanmar junta's protection of the political order and defence of its national interest that, by contrast, March and Olsen emphasise to explain the junta's initial rejection of external help. Hence, with regard to the logic informing the actors' behaviour, these two scholars contribute more argumentative elements, and, in this context, their frame possesses more weight than that of Checkel.

As pointed out, interviewees are vital to the investigation. If there were no Myanmar historian (and the other officials), the enquiry would provide no suggestions regarding

how interests, purposes and priorities can be exposed to processes of transformation. Similarly, the secrecy under which security and defence choices were made in the ASEAN group would be overlooked, and, equally, the junta's evolutionary process regarding its choices, ignored. The value of the analytical tools employed lay in their explanatory capability, and the overall value of their complementarity lay in making the whole subject under investigation more logically understandable. In the end, this article demonstrates not only the usefulness of these theories but also their complementarity.

The literature on this study area

Political scientists and observers have increasingly paid attention to Myanmar, with regard to security cooperation in Southeast Asia. However, no publications investigating the EU's efforts to encourage security cooperation by connecting with Myanmar and ASEAN at the Forum have been found. The most complete publication on the European Union and ARF is Weber's work (2013), which reflected on the EU's role in promoting security in the Asia-Pacific region via the ASEAN Regional Forum; yet she makes only a cursory mention of Myanmar. Haacke (2013) published an overview of Southeast Asian international relations and security perspectives, with insights into Myanmar's reactions to security incidents; however, his study almost completely ignored the EU. Haacke and Morada (2010) provided a perspective on the ARF in terms of cooperative security, including traits of policy originating in Myanmar. Yet, their contribution paid no attention to the EU.

By contrast, Reiterer (2014) has very recently published an informed and updated evaluation of the European Union's comprehensive approach to security in Asia. Nonetheless, his study has offered a very modest outlook on Myanmar. Casarini (2011) outlined the security developments in East Asia and the consequences for the EU, but he made no mention of Myanmar. Interestingly, Haacke (2009) offered an interpretation of the way in which the Forum has moved beyond dialogue towards practical security cooperation. He contends that ARF is developing capacity building and operational security responses outside, as well as inside, the Forum, and argues that this outcome is the result of initiatives supported by a small group of ASEAN and some non-ASEAN states. Although, this time, Haacke left Myanmar out of focus, and, similarly, the EU. Katsumata (2006) emphasised the efforts of ASEAN, in ARF, to achieve the security of the whole region through multilateral security cooperation. This stemmed from the view that regional security is indivisible, though this contribution emphasises neither Myanmar nor the EU. Heller (2005) argued that the ARF is a forum that reflects the convergence of the strategic interests of both the regional and external actors. However, he pays no attention to the European Union and virtually ignores Myanmar. Berkofsky (2003) discussed ideas regarding the function that the EU should cover, and develop, within ARF to enhance security in Asia. Yet, his policy brief gives only a very brief hint about Myanmar. Hence, an investigation tying in the EU, Myanmar, and ASEAN, at the ARF level, considering the EU's attempts to inspire security cooperation appears to be unavailable. The present study, thus, aims to fill this gap.

The EU and the Forum

The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission embodies the European Union at the Forum, and participates on behalf of the member states. As the EU likes to assert, the European Union has been active in the ARF on account of its 'overall engagement with a security order in Asia' (EEAS-ARF). The EU's commitment to the ARF's consultation on regional, political and security matters was confirmed by its conviction that reconciling the different views among the participants, ASEAN, Myanmar and the other states, enhanced security.

Several groups and sub-groups were organised coherently with ARF's working method both for discussion and training reasons. The ARF Concept Paper specifies that decisions are made on the basis of consensus and compliance. The convening of the groups is at the inter-governmental level, and the meetings reflect the three stages of development of the ARF's activities: confidence-building, preventive diplomacy and approach elaboration to conflicts (C-S, ARF 1995). The meetings are, among others, the Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building and Preventive Diplomacy (in particular a dialogue on security perceptions and defence policy papers) and the Inter-sessional Meetings on Cooperative Activities (including, *inter alia*, disaster relief and peacekeeping) (ARF-CP 1995).² The 'confidence building measures' are actions meant to address, prevent and resolve uncertainties among actors and states, and involve (direct or indirect) negotiations (CBMs). 'Disaster relief measures' are also discussed and are intended to ensure a coordinated response in order to increase the local resilience of the people offended by natural, or man-made, disasters (DRMs).

An outline of the engagement in which the EU expressed willingness to participate in the ARF is enclosed in the European Commission's official documents (Marchi 2015, 8-9). Concerning this paper, it may suffice to recall that the EU has declared that 'crisis management' and 'capacity building' were expected to enrich the EU's security dialogue with ASEAN in the form of knowledge transfer and exchange of best practices (Plan of Action 2007, 2). 'Capacity building' involved actions focused on the development of skills and attitudes in groups and individuals with regard to the formation, management and maintenance of processes which were locally meaningful (Howorth 2007). 'Crisis management', in its civilian aspects, extended its operation to the wider area of the rule of law (strengthening the police sector), and included monitoring borders and peace agreements (C-CM).

Since ARF's inception, it was agreed that ASEAN would be the 'primary driving force' and would chair the annual meeting (Weber 2013, 351). The European External Action Service, in its role as the external arm of the EU, and EU member states acknowledged the importance of the ASEAN Regional Forum. They have taken part in several ARF work strands (Reiterer 2014, 17), and cooperated with ASEAN in drawing and adopting ARF statements. The EU's commitments were intended to contribute to the debate at the Forum where Myanmar participated as a full actor in its capacity as a full member of ASEAN since 1997 and a recognised participant in ARF seven years later.

The EU as co-chair of ARF meetings

The EU's ARF position, which could be linked to convincing Myanmar's junta to connect with security cooperation, is examined here through the joint declarations with ASEAN. ASEAN was a moderator of any possible EU overtone reproaching Myanmar and demanding transformations. The EU's policy on Myanmar developed through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) sanctioning the military junta since 1991 and through the EU-ASEAN dialogue (Marchi 2014). What can be inferred from the ARF meetings and declarations has little direct link to Myanmar; to find a direct comment on Myanmar's government, we need to focus on the meeting in Potsdam, in 2005.

Potsdam: 2005

At the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures, co-chaired by the EU (21-23 February), representatives of Myanmar's junta sought to convince the ARF participants, including the European Union representatives, that the course of Myanmar's reform was on track, namely the implementation of the Seven Step Roadmap to Democracy (CSR 2005). The Roadmap was expected to address security matters, and was seen to offer an opportunity to implement 'ceasefire strategies' in Myanmar (Jones 2014, 16). The observance of the Seven Steps programme was a matter of interest and preoccupation for ASEAN, firstly, because of their true support for a transition in Myanmar and, secondly, because it was expected to soothe international agitation with the military junta. This agitation also affected the Association itself (Caballero-Antony 2010, 26-7).

ASEAN's relations with the EU suffered when Myanmar joined ASEAN and, later, when it was accepted to ARF (Marchi 2014, 63, 67-8). ASEAN's 'completion of the vision of the ASEAN founders' and project of successful regionalism had called for these inclusions (Acharya 2002). Hence, in Potsdam, possibly, to break down the wall that separated the processes under way in ASEAN as a whole (the integration efforts of ASEAN's regionalism) and Myanmar (the vocal intention to comply with the Seven Steps reforms), the EU delegates focused on what they conceivably thought to be the success of multilateral participation (that the EU privileged and supported) in approaching security situations.

The EU officials focused on threats to non-traditional security, particularly crisis prevention, dispute avoidance, management and settlement. They indicated that a combined process of multilateral inputs and arrangements, rather than a single country's efforts, more easily antagonised complex situations. Governments acting unilaterally were putting themselves at a disadvantage. To that scope, the officials explained the concept of the (at that time) European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which was described as that process which aimed at strengthening the EU's 'external ability to act through the development of civilian and military capabilities in conflict prevention³ and crisis management'.

The EU's action in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EU-ALTHEA), as well as its contribution towards supporting local authorities to build and safeguard a secure environment served to exemplify the specific value attached by the EU to the central role

of local authorities in the achievement of security goals. The idea of the role played by the EU in preventing and easing crises emerged as a model of the action that ASEAN, its members, Myanmar included (and ARF participants) could provide to the region when such support seemed necessary to the group (CSR 2005). It was an encouragement to take up responsibilities.

Helsinki: 2007, and before, Phnom Penh: 2004, and Berlin: 2008

In Helsinki, in 2007, at the other ARF Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy co-chaired by the European Union (28-30 March), the EU sought to promote confidence building practices through discussing the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) 'potential for strengthening ties with the ARF' (CSR 2007). Already at a previous meeting that it co-chaired (Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures), in 2004 (26-28 October) in Phnom Penh, the EU had succeeded in promoting the inclusion of the 'need to maintain informal contacts' with the OSCE in the ARF's official position (CSR 2004). Its message, at that time, focused on showing the two groups' constructive and productive interaction. The EU shared experience of good governance, democratic transition, human rights and minority rights with the OSCE.⁴ Hence, in Helsinki, the EU's multilateral influence featured, more intensely, through the explanation (to the ASEAN nations, and there within, Myanmar) of the OSCE's expansion, progress, structure and activities (CSR 2007).

The same endeavour was pursued at the successive co-chaired event in Berlin (2008), the ARF Workshop on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy in Asia and Europe (12-14 March). There, 'transparency' and 'information' were examined and used as examples of practices that could develop and characterise security behaviour among the countries of Southeast Asia and other ARF participants. These practices were posited as fundamental to a policy associated with an 'open' dialogue on security. The representatives of the EU argued for the adoption of a common security concept together with the development of politically binding standards and the gradual institutionalisation of cooperation as processes offering a solid and durable basis for security collaboration (CSR 2008). However, the question of whether or not some of these discourses were going to create consequences among the regional actors, i.e. ASEAN and Myanmar, remained.

Reactions to Cyclone Nargis

Around the same time as the event in Berlin, in May 2008, Cyclone Nargis ravaged Myanmar's Irrawaddy Delta causing huge destruction and loss of life. It produced reactions among the local actors. Initially, with regard to Myanmar, the government was overwhelmed by the magnitude and complexity of the disaster relief problems. The junta's attitude, particularly at the beginning of the crisis, in refusing external help, did little to diminish the difficulties. The EU, and other external agents, was barred from being an actor by the military government's inflexible non-interference policy (see: Selth 2008; Haacke 2008). ARF did not enter into action in spite of reports that '... it may have been that ARF Senior Officials were among the first to meet soon afterwards Nargis had struck' (Haacke and Morada 2010, 228). However, it was ASEAN that was the

predominant actor in the cyclone's circumstance.⁵ The EU, too, was entangled in several new processes induced by cyclone-distressed Myanmar.

ASEAN

The Association's activity was vital to the extent that it networked the government in Myanmar and other international actors ready to assist. It made possible the constitution of the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, led by the ASEAN Secretary General. The Task Force operated through the Tripartite Core Group (TCG: the Government of Myanmar, ASEAN and the UN), coordinated the relief work and delivered assistance. It was the first ASEAN-led mechanism that involved ASEAN member states individually and collectively (in addition to the international community and the UN). Its recognised value was to have built a regional response to a local problem (C-S, ARF 2008). ASEAN acted as a bridge between Myanmar's government and the donor nations and their funding. It allowed, for example, through the TCG, the financing and development of the Commission's Post-Cyclone Nargis recovery and preparedness plan over three years, from 2009 (EC 2009).

Myanmar

What resulted from the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force's intervention in Myanmar, with regard to the military government's approach to policy-making, was a softened non-interference stance by the junta (see Cook 2013, 184). The change in Myanmar was tangible. This was also confirmed by Brussels, where Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner acknowledged the opening up of an 'unprecedented dialogue' with Myanmar's government (which the Commissioner defined as having been paved by the coordinating efforts of ASEAN and the UN) (EC 2009).

The EU

Myanmar's devastation prompted some new thinking from the European Union (EUC 2008). The European Council, in November 2008, discussed the state of affairs of the European Security and Defence Policy, and argued that, after five years of civilian missions, a 'large body of information and experience [was] available which needed to be captured in a systematic lessons learned exercise' (Council 2008, 16). The exercise led to the recognition that the 'function that [the EU] should play' in Nargis-like situations required the use of a 'broader understanding of the term to protect [R2P]' (EUC 2008, 28).⁶ Human security was a more far-reaching interpretation. More concretely, the new EU security policy agreed in December 2008 (i.e. the 'Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World') fixed the notion of a 'shared responsibility to protect populations' as the new goal enshrined in law (IESS 2008, 12). The side effect of cyclone-affected Myanmar contributed towards building this certainty.

What the analytical framework reveals about the EU encouraging, at ARF, cooperation on security

Emphasis on the EU's messages

As co-chair of the ARF meetings, the EU underscored the multilateral character of its position on security, stressing its experience and seeking to inspire others. As an actor that has aimed to activate the diverse potential, principles, and competences of its partners (EP-C 2013) while operating in the ASEAN Regional Forum, the European Union has sought to provide suggestions concerning security cooperation, confidence building and disaster relief.

ASEAN

Yet, the EU and OSCE's argument that the gradual institutionalisation of cooperation underpinned their common action contrasted with ARF's and ASEAN's distinctive loose character as a collective security arena for dialogue (Heller 2005; ARF-CP 2006). It antagonised ASEAN's low institutionalised cooperation approach.⁷ Also the suggested commitment to an open security dialogue, made distinctive by 'transparency and sharing information', was, as an official from the EEAS interviewed in Brussels confirmed, out of step with the secrecy with which security and defence choices were made in the ASEAN group (Interview (A), 2014).

Myanmar

Myanmar's leadership, with the obligation that it established in the 2008 constitution to preserve the nation's sovereignty, and, more specifically, the sovereignty of its decision-making in the field of security, was conceivably indifferent to the messages addressed by the EU at the Forum. Incentives to change, promoted by the EU, in favour of Myanmar's transformation were there, spelled out at ARF, ready to be taken up by the military junta. The leadership's declared commitment to implementing the Seven Steps Roadmap to Democracy would have implied an embracing of a multifaceted process, with numerous preparations and arrangements. A full sequence of actions was required from Myanmar to fulfil the Seven Steps programme: convening a National Convention to draft the constitution; taking steps to establish democracy after the National Convention was concluded; drafting a constitution based on the principles laid down by the National Convention; organising a national referendum to approve the redrafted constitution; holding free and fair elections for a Parliament; and building a modern and democratic nation through the support of the leaders elected by Parliament (Caballero-Antony 2010, 27).

The encouragement to incorporate fundamental freedoms, minority rights and democratic transition into 'the indivisibility of the security concept' (as it has been embraced by both the EU and OSCE) was an example of the expectations of the junta's steps towards democracy. That progress was, however, irreconcilable with the thinking of Myanmar's administration (Roberts 2010; Farrelly 2013). Also, as an interviewed official from the EEAS implied, in the unfortunate case of a crisis occurring in the region, there was no chance that Myanmar's authorities would provide assistance to their ASEAN partners, or accept ASEAN's assistance. In other words, they would not develop a multilateral cooperation policy coherent with the EU's propositions (Interview (B), 2014).

Social mechanisms and ASEAN

However, the reaction among the local actors to the devastation produced by Cyclone Nargis revealed fresh developments. ASEAN provided crisis support for Myanmar. How could this be the case? Would Checkel give reasons for that result? Checkel (1999) explained that there are processes whereby actors acquire new interests and preferences through contact with other contexts, either discursive structures or norms. Is this argument persuasive? Three points deal with this question: ‘group learning’, ‘ability to persuade’ and the ‘crisis’ and ‘policy failure’ argument.

First, there was no lack of transformative discourses at the ARF meetings through which to promote ‘group learning’ and dispense norms, as vehicles of new interests (Checkel 1999, 548). The Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures, the Peacekeeping groups, and those related to Search, Rescue and Disaster Relief, received growing support from the personnel from the EU External Service. These officials were from the Crisis Response and Operational Coordination section (Interview (B), 2014). Officials from the European Commission’s department, providing emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters and armed conflict outside the European Union, were also in contact with the ARF groups. Frequent exchanges with the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) personnel for assistance and long-term follow-up were confirmed (Interview (C), 2014). Relations among these personnel and the groups’ participants indicate that communication spread and competence and knowledge were disseminated. The working clusters, training and security exercises, and other groups met several times during 2004-2008. As the interviewed EEAS officials acknowledged, it was inevitable that interactions were going to develop new interests. The purpose of the frequency and thickness of the networking was to promote new learning (Interviews (A) & (B), 2014). This result is congruent with Checkel’s belief that ‘where a group met repeatedly, and where there was a high density of interactions among participants’ new interests were most likely to be generated (p. 549).

Second, the ‘ability to persuade’ was not a minor factor contributing to acquire new preferences and goals. The EEAS and ECHO personnel, those from OSCE and the EU co-chairs, were recognised as having sway over the attendants, during training, and their involvement in tuition and assistance in the practical exercises. Whether this result was due to their personal ability or to other reasons would seem unclear. Though, the interviewed ASEAN leaders close to the ARF organisation (Interviews (D), 2013) and Southeast Asian security policy analysts (Interviews (E), 2014) have acknowledged that the persons involved in the Forum’s activities, in most cases, had an enhanced persuasive capability, which they accredited to the authority of their position. The interviewed maintained that the persuasive ability provided guidance, and that guidance had the power to influence the actors’ inclinations (Interviews (D), 2013 & (E), 2014). Also this result matches Checkel’s suggestion that, when the persuader was an authoritative member of the in-group to which the persuadee (e.g. representatives of ASEAN and its member states) belonged or wanted to belong, persuasion was most likely to materialise (p. 550).

Third, also, the ‘crisis’ and ‘policy failure’ dynamics is able to develop new interests and roles. Since the Bangkok Declaration was agreed, in 1997, to give shape to the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN set the norm that its group was to remain in a higher ranked position compared to the other participants’, due to its role as founder of the Forum. Interviewed ASEAN leaders (Interviews (F), 2013) suggested that during the ‘crisis’ of the cyclone that hit and damaged the Irrawaddy delta, the ASEAN group was discouraged. Sensing the emergency on its shoulders, the group felt an added responsibility. The role of dealing with the crisis emerged as an obligation. The entire region was in a humanitarian and environmental depression, and all ASEAN nations were bound to suffer consequences (Interviews (F), 2013). No doubt, the foreign policy of Myanmar’s junta was evidence of ‘policy failure’. Refusing the help of external donors, whose ships had been left for weeks anchored in the Andaman Sea (Selth 2008), the lack of capability to provide assistance to its people was unquestionable. ‘Crisis’ and ‘policy failure’ were evident in the context within which the ASEAN’s relief operation took place.⁸ These reasons reconnect with Checkel’s account that the development of new purposes, commitments and roles was more likely ‘where the group felt itself in a crisis or was faced with clear and incontrovertible evidence of policy failure’ (p. 549).

Then, the interviewees provided several justifications and explanations: the frequency and intensity of the groups’ networking was starting to generate new ambitions and motivations; the ‘persuasive’ capability of those involved in the Forum’s activities began to influence the preferences within the groups; and the duty to assume a leading role in assisting Myanmar was supported by the critical situation and, also, by the recognition of Myanmar’s policy failure. Did ASEAN respond to the EU’s encouragement to undertake responsibilities, and has Checkel’s argument provided reasons for ASEAN’s crisis support for Myanmar? The interviewees from the EEAS Crisis Response and Operational Coordination section, and the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid Office stated that their own activity within the groups and sub-groups had the purpose of transmitting new norms, with the aim that these norms would be assimilated and lead to others’ undertakings (Interviews (B) and (C), 2014). The interviewees outlined a scenario which agreed with Checkel’s account that social dynamics created new drives, which grew *via* contact with other contexts.

The logic of consequences and appropriateness and Myanmar

The other new development that emerged in connection with Nargis’s devastation was the Myanmar junta’s softened non-interference stance. How can I interpret this change? Do March and Olsen offer an explanation? These scholars’ logic of expected consequences suggests that the strategic calculation of rational bargaining of a government’s protection and defence of what it perceives as its national interest confronts, but frequently, also, becomes reconciled with the position of other states on the same policy issue (March and Olsen 1998, 950). In the post-Nargis situation, the strategic calculation of rational bargaining by the Myanmar’s junta challenged the position of the other actors, specifically ASEAN, and the ASEAN Secretariat which was willing to network with the Myanmar’s government. The rational bargaining challenge was, firstly, manifested by the junta’s rejection of external help, and its protection of the political

order that it held dear, and the defence of what it perceived to be the national interest (Selth 2008; Haacke 2008; Cook 2013).

Only subsequently, a different logic (that March and Olsen explain as the logic of appropriateness (1998, 951-2; 2004)) emerged. This logic was manifested by late forces for change (Haacke 2008). (i) An interviewed Myanmar historian (Interview (H), 2014) believed that the ethical dimension of the responsibility to protect its own people was a true response which became more definite only successively. (ii) Also, the collective norms of the ASEAN group to reduce the risk to security (as established in the ARF's Concept Paper of 1995) was another encouragement to change that was confirmed by an officer of the ASEAN Secretariat (Interview (I), 2013). (iii) A further motive was proposed by a Singaporean security analyst (Interview (J), 2014): the collective norm of avoiding undermining the efforts of the ASEAN group to strengthen regionalism in Southeast Asia. (iv) Another explanation, by the same expert, held that the pressure felt by the junta to comply with the Seven Steps programme (combined with the need to be more accommodating (Interview (J), 2014) *vis-à-vis* ASEAN's offer of networking) acted as an incentive to support the new reasoning, which March and Olsen (1998, 2004) identify as a logic of appropriateness. (v) An additional motive was suggested by a Southeast Asian security analyst (Interview (G), 2014), i.e. the confidence factor motivating Myanmar's junta's reliance that the mission was to remain under its own control. The interviewee contended that the Myanmar government's control of the operation was key to its acceptance. This assertion simply recalls the EU's efforts, at ARF, to develop confidence-building dialogues and generate a reliance on security and humanitarian operations.

An evolutionary process took place from the first-mentioned logic to the second. Interviewees, i.e. a Myanmar historian, an officer of the ASEAN Secretariat and a Singaporean and Southeast Asian security analyst, offered a clue. Several questions arose: the ethical dimension, together with the collective norms of the ASEAN group to control security, a new-born attention to the ASEAN's efforts to bolster regionalism, the obligation to conform to the Seven Steps agenda, the understanding that cooperation with ASEAN was overdue, and the trust that the mission was to remain under the junta's own control. March and Olsen's argumentation has been beneficial to this analysis and results.

Concerning Myanmar's acceptance of ASEAN's (and others') assistance, could this result have any relation with the EU's efforts in terms of encouraging Myanmar to accept multilateral security options? The relation lies in the fact that the motivation to change highlighted by the interviewees is the encouragement that the EU proposed at the Forum. Undoubtedly, the ethical dimension of the responsibility to protect its own people is distinct to the EU, and similarly the belief in the value of collective regional security; likewise, the trust in reinforcing regionalism in Southeast Asia is key to both the EU's idea of security and participation in the ARF. That Myanmar's junta should engage in reforms, as advanced by the interviewees, has always been demanded by the EU; and, also, the principle of continuing cooperation among the regional partners is something that the EU predicates at all times. In the end, the motivation supported by the

interviewees appears to be connected with the EU's encouragement of Myanmar to accept multilateral security solutions.

The logic of appropriateness and the EU

The other observed new development connected with Nargis was the inclusion of 'shared responsibility to protect population' as a new goal of the EU's security policy of December 2008 (IESS 2008, 12). March and Olsen's logic of appropriateness suggests that 'rules' associated with specific 'identities' and 'circumstances' (March and Olsen 1998, 951) challenged the EU. The circumstance was provided by the EU and specifically by the Council re-thinking the EU's performance, i.e. whether the EU, during the Nargis incident, behaved in accordance with its mission and the rules to which it had agreed (EUC 2008, 28). The EU had established the norm of readiness 'to share in the responsibility for global security' in the European Security Strategy (ESS) that the Council ratified in 2003. In that document, the EU spelled out that the 'concept of responsibility to protect needed to evolve in response to developments' (ESS 2003, 1). Later, in 2005, the EU was at the forefront of the diplomacy that resulted in the UN General Assembly's agreement with the notion of a 'responsibility [...] to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity' (UNGA 2005; Marchi 2011, 157). Notwithstanding the norm that it had fixed in the ESS almost five years before the cyclone struck and the progress achieved at the UN, the EU was yet 'normatively un-clear' on whether it was obliged 'to assist in circumstances like that of Myanmar's Nargis' (EUC 2008, 28).

March and Olsen's appropriateness thinking asserts that 'action involves evoking an identity or role[,] and matching the obligations of that identity or role to a specific situation' (p. 951). This suggests a link to the EU Council's new claim as one that was motivated by the sense of obligation ingrained in the EU's identity, its normative actorness, and its valued and principled foreign policy (Manners 2002; Lucarelli and Manners 2006). It was also motivated by the recommendation embedded in the ESS (of evolving the notion concerning 'when' the choice to protect became a recognised responsibility). The claim upheld that a '*Europe de la sécurité humaine*' was a sufficiently broad concept for the EU to adopt. It embraced 'natural disasters' and 'multiple sources of insecurity', which were associated with Myanmar's situation (EUC 2008, 39). The broadened concept was, now, suitable to answer the Council's question of 'whether or not the humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the cyclone, in Myanmar, was a reason for the responsibility to protect' (EUC 2008, 28).

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that the EU misses no occasion to stress its interest in the ASEAN Regional Forum framework. The ARF is a channel of communication through which the EU can promote its identity, distinctiveness, and, in a sense, uniqueness. By itself, this dimension and 'opportunity to transmit messages' are relevant to the EU and to its aspiration to encourage others to conform to the behaviour predicated by its messages. Hence, the EU's role in developing security cooperation with Myanmar at the 2004-2008 ARF meetings was expressed by the EU's publicisation of the multilateral aspects of its policy in the security area. It was conveyed by its attempts to activate the various

energies, drives and abilities of its partners, ASEAN and Myanmar, on the basis of its own experience and ambition from which others could benefit. The EU's role was, also, and in particular, manifested through its efforts to encourage both ASEAN to undertake responsibilities and Myanmar to take on multilateral security options. This article has also shown that the side-effect of Myanmar being hit by Nargis has contributed towards prompting the EU Council to upgrade the European foreign and security policy by introducing the responsibility to protect as a new goal enshrined in law. Through its focus on the ARF as a forum whereby interactions occur, the article has demonstrated not only the usefulness of the theories under consideration, but also their complementarity.

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Notes

¹ The investigation pays no attention to the EU's efforts to encourage Myanmar to compromise, or to connect with cooperation in the area of security, both up to the current position. It offers no hint at other frameworks of security consultation in Asia with which the EU might be involved. It includes no focus on the participants in the ARF other than the ASEAN group, Myanmar and the EU; on the ASEAN Regional Forum in terms of assessing its operation, on the domestic level of analysis, and the decision-making processes.

² For a detailed description of ARF's activities, see the ARF Concept Paper, 1995 (ARF-CP, 1995).

³ Conflict prevention included that range of actions intended to anticipate and deter the outburst of conflict (EPLO).

⁴ For OSCE's attributes, see Galbreath and Brosing (2013, 275-78).

⁵ For an account of ASEAN's dealing with Cyclone Nargis, see: Haacke (2008, 370-73).

⁶ For a discussion of the factors complicating the responsibility to protect's implementation in the Asia-Pacific region, see Weber (2013b, 29-31).

⁷ However, ASEAN was engaged in building a security community among its members, including Myanmar (Acharya 2001), and the EU-OSCE's experience of cooperation could offer inputs to the Association's security community project.

⁸ Southeast Asian security policy analyst (G), questioned in Singapore (February 2014), believed that the intervention in Indonesia's Aceh region, in collaboration with the EU, in 2005, was of support to ASEAN's new initiative. The commentator suggested that the Aceh Monitoring Mission served as a formative preparation. It facilitated the institution of the Humanitarian Task Force and the Tripartite Core Group to organise the aid work which focused help entirely on Myanmar (Interview (G), 2014).

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