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The EU and Myanmar: Obsessed with 'Security' in Southeast Asia?

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Does the European (the EU and the member states') focus on Myanmar tie in with their focus on China which has created security preoccupations due to its increasing influence on Myanmar and its neighbouring region? Both Myanmar's president, Thein Sein's tour of the European capitals (Brussels included) and the European response to Sein's request for cooperation at the beginning of 2013 shed light on the issue. Some responses from the member states specifically centred on cooperation in the field of security and offered a link to the Europeans' broader concerns regarding China. The Rejectionist School approach contributes some reflections on President Sein's attempts to build up Myanmar's foreign policy in the EU.

Keywords: European Union, Myanmar, China, Rejectionist School Approach

Diplomatic relations developed between Myanmar and the European Union in early 2013. In what way does the European (the EU and the member states') focus on Myanmar interact with their focus on China which has created security preoccupations due to its increasing influence on Myanmar and its neighbouring region? Both Myanmar's president, Thein Sein's tour of the European capitals (Brussels included) at the beginning of 2013 and the European response to Sein's request for cooperation shed light on the answer. Some responses from the member states specifically centred on cooperation in the field of security and offered a link to the Europeans' broader concerns regarding China. The Rejectionist School approach will contribute some reflections on President Sein's attempts to build up Myanmar's foreign policy in the European Union and on the approach's reverberations regarding China. Whereas many scholars have focused on human rights issues when dealing with the EU's links with Myanmar, the distinction of the present discussion lies in the indication that China and its Burmese interactions have, in some way, impacted on the EU and the member states prompting their policy with regard to Myanmar. Official EU documents, newspapers from Myanmar (*The New Light of Myanmar*, *The Irrawaddy* and *Myanmar Times*), European newspapers and interviews conducted in Myanmar in 2013, all of them contribute to this discussion.¹

¹ Some of these thoughts elaborate on comments made at the EUSA AP Conference in Macau, another conference in Canberra, "Smart Sustainable and Inclusive: Researching the EU from Australia and New Zealand", respectively in May and September 2013, and at events, in 2014, at SMU and ISEAS both in Singapore. Particular thanks go to Pascaline Winand, John Leslie, Paul Evans and Termsak Chalermphanupap for their remarks.

From development support to military aid

Either to increase his government's credibility in relation to Myanmar's 2014 chairing of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), or with regard to the country's 2015 general elections,² and perhaps seeking to expand its international legitimacy, in 2013, Myanmar's President, Thein Sein, intensified foreign relations. Calling for political and economic support for the transition towards a democratically-elected civilian government, President Sein pledged that cause within the wider community. As a salesman for the "New Myanmar", Sein toured the European capitals and primarily the European institutions in Brussels. The EU sanctions have been lifted, excluding the arms embargo (the Everything but Arms (EBA) regime),³ and EU development aid has more than doubled (to around €150 million for 2012-13), with Brussels exploring the feasibility of a bilateral investment agreement and reinstating the system of generalised tariff preferences with Yangon in mid-2013. Bilateral trade between Myanmar and the EU expanded (\$226.37 million in 2012), with Myanmar's exports to the EU amounting to \$43.54 million, and its imports from the EU standing at \$182.83 million.⁴

During Sein's diplomatic tour, the European capitals expressed their own particular interests in entertaining relations with Myanmar. The non-EU state of Norway, together with Finland, Austria, Belgium and Italy, was visited. Norway offered assistance in the area of the sustainable management of natural resources⁵ and, similarly to Austria, expertise for developing hydropower projects.⁶ Belgium organised a 12-member delegation to Yangon, led by the country's President (Peeters), to discuss the extent of useful cooperation.⁷ Italy offered expertise in the energy field, thus enhancing the technological skills and know-how of its oil and gas companies.⁸

Beyond the specific, sectorial interests of the European capitals and member states with regard to infrastructural, technical and business aid, cooperation in the field of security and good governance practice was also proposed. The Finnish President has made accessible his country's assistance with "the establishment of the rule of law, peace-making developments and good governance in Myanmar" (4 March 2013). On that same occasion, the former President and Nobel Laureate, Ahtisaari, discussed with Sein the proposal made by his group – the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) – to the EU, to engage and assist Yangon in a peace-making process.⁹

² Marchi, L., "Myanmar standing on its feet? The chairmanship and the elections. A view from Europe", *The New Mandala*, 6 May 2014; <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/>

³ Council of the European Union, 2013.

⁴ Xina, "Myanmar, EU agree to use forum to advance ties", *Global Times* 20 June 2013; <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/790343.shtml#U1pYulxdok>

⁵ Norway The Official Site in Thailand, "President U Thein Sein visits Norway", 8 March 2013", http://www.emb-norway.or.th/News_and_events/News/U-Thein-Sein-visits-Norway/

⁶ The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, President Office, "President U Thein Sein arrives in Vienna", 5 March 2013; <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/?q=briefing-room/news/2013/03/05/id-1677>

⁷ MNA, "President U Thein Sein receives Belgian delegation", *The New Light of Myanmar*, 26 March 2013; <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-03-26.pdf>

⁸ "Joint statement on the occasion of the visit to the Italian Republic of Thein Sein"; <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/open9/090313rea.html>

⁹ The CMI was founded in 2000 by Ahtisaari as non-governmental organisation that engages in building sustainable peace and resolving conflicts. It has been active in Liberia, the Black Sea area, the

Via diplomatic sources, the member states were informed that Myanmar's military leadership was willing to gain more expertise, professionalise and also to cede its dominant role in politics.¹⁰ Britain in particular (which "governed" Myanmar from 1885 to 1948) dared to revive its relations with Myanmar's military to assess avenues for cooperation. The UK's Chief of Defence (who served as the commander of the UK peacekeeping contingent in East Timor) held official talks with his counterpart (Senior General Min Aung Hlaing) in Myanmar (3 June 2013). The British General acknowledged "a genuine desire for reform" among the military officers, and concluded that the current military leadership was a victim of its own army's history. The General stated that "a new generation of military officers deserved encouragement". In these circumstances, the Burmese General, Hlaing, placed emphasis on the aspiration that Myanmar's military might gain that accountability which the British army holds both in their country and abroad.¹¹ The recent visit of Myanmar's Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, Nay Pyi Taw, to Moscow testified towards the cementing of a further "friendly relationship between the armed forces of Myanmar and Russia" (6 June 2013).¹² The EU and the member states might be anxious concerning Myanmar's military assistance from non-European countries.

Behind development and military assistance: The European security preoccupations?

The EU and the member states are also "anxious" about Myanmar's Chinese ties. Both the strategic position of Myanmar and its penalisation by the EU and other western countries have been fully exploited by China. Yangon offered Beijing the opportunity to integrate partially with Myanmar both economically and militarily. In 2012, the bilateral trade between the two countries exceeded \$1,4 billion.¹³ Beyond its rich natural resources (teak, rubber, gems, coal and copper), Myanmar has proven gas reserves, both on- and offshore, of roughly 12 trillion cubic feet. Chinese strategists have envisaged the long-term necessity for their country to be connected to the Indian Ocean. In search of diverse supply lanes to respond to future energy requests, Beijing sought to import oil and gas from the Middle East via two China-Myanmar pipelines, bypassing the Strait of Malacca.

China has warmed to the military regime over the past two decades by providing military hardware in a cost-friendly manner.¹⁴ As India's defence analysts contend, since 1994 China has maintained a military base in the Coco islands in the

Middle East and Aceh in East Timor. <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/briefing-room/news/2013/03/04/id-1661>

¹⁰ Robinson, G., "US courts military contacts with Myanmar", *The Financial Times*, 20 September 2012.

¹¹ Robinson, G., "Britain revives links with Myanmar's military establishment", *The Financial Times*, 7 June 2013.

¹² MNA, "Senior General Ming Aung Hlaing visits Summer Palace and Museum of King Tsar", *The New Light of Myanmar*, 30 June 2013; <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-30-red.pdf>

¹³ Katoch, P., "Surreal China. Lessons from Myanmar", *Indian Defence Review*, 9 June 2013, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/surreal-china-lessons-from-myanmar/>

¹⁴ Kuppuswamy, C. S., "Myanmar-China cooperation: Its implications for India", *South Asia Analysis Group*, Paper No. 596, 2 March 2013; www.southasiaanalysis.org/paper596

Northeastern Indian Ocean, on leased land belonging to Myanmar.¹⁵ Beijing's cooperation involved the provision of major weapon systems, training, reconnaissance and intelligence systems on the Great Coco Island. It also included the development of the deep-water port of Kyaukpyu (in connection with the trans-Myanmar pipelines)¹⁶ and the modernisation of the Sittwe Port (near Kyaukpyu in Rakhine State) as a naval base, together with the subsidisation of strategic infrastructures linking China's Yunnan province to Myanmar's Bay of Bengal.¹⁷ China helped to dredge the Irrawaddy River in order to make it navigable by large vessels. It made Myanmar practically "China's satellite in the Indian Ocean". Further details concerning Chinese cooperation with Myanmar by means of military equipment, infrastructures and intelligence networks (plus industrial projects) are available.¹⁸

Also, China augmented its military spending. In 2011, China increased its defence budget by 6.8 per cent, which triggered growth in the region's military expenditure. Defence spending across Southeast Asia rose by 13.5 per cent in 2011 (to \$24.5 billion; it is expected to reach \$40 billion by 2016). Based on a certain assessment,¹⁹ China's disbursement in the area of defence may even surpass the EU-28 spending by 2020. Britain, France, Germany and Italy have dropped down the list of the leading ten military payers, to fourth, fifth, ninth and tenth place, respectively.²⁰ China is the world's largest arms importer, followed by South Korea in fourth place, then Singapore fifth. Also Indonesia's defence spending has expanded and almost quadrupled in the past six years.²¹

Despite its close ties with Myanmar and military cooperation, China has also relentlessly sustained, boosted and armed its "proxies to hold Myanmar to ransom".²² It has been militarily equipping the ethnic Wa group for several years, which have a fighting force of about 30,000: the United Wa State Army (UWSA). It created some leverage in Shan State in Northeastern Myanmar, where UWSA is headquartered (which is the hub of the Golden Triangle drug trade).²³ China's arming of UWSA strengthened as Myanmar become keen on entering into relations with the west. It has recently provided the UWSA with "medium helicopters fitted with air-to-air missiles", as current reports (9 June 2013) from various informants (comprising the Janes Information Group) suggest. This and other provisions risk making the UWSA one of the most powerful insurgent groups in Asia, as sources contend, with great potential for undermining Myanmar²⁴ and having consequences for the security of the

¹⁵ Katoch; see also: Selth, A., "Burma's Coco Islands: Rumours and Realities in the Indian Ocean", *South East Asia Research Centre*, Working Paper Series, (2008) No. 101; Pear, P., "Coco Islands", *Myanmar Forum*, 23 June 2012, <http://burmaboard.com/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=161> See also: Sheldon Simon *The Pacific Review*, vol.8, no.1, p.16.

¹⁶ Xinhua, "China Kunming to Myanmar", *Myanmar Times*, 23 January 2013; <http://www.oilseedcrops.org/2013/01/23/chinas-kunming-to-myanmars-pipelines-to-open-in-june-2013/>

¹⁷ Katoch.

¹⁸ Kuppuswamy: see Appendix.

¹⁹ SIPRI, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

²⁰ Russian defence spending exceeded both France and Britain's in 2011, positioning Moscow into the third place.

²¹ Keohane, "Why the EU", 41. Khandekar, "East Asia", 90.

²² Katoch.

²³ Myanmar is the second largest opium grower in the world after Afghanistan. BBC News Asia, "Burma signs treaty with Wa ethnic group", 13 July 2013; www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-23300441

²⁴ Katoch.

region. China and its policies are interwoven with the Europeans' attention to Myanmar. The tension is understood to be connected with China's growing arms imports, defence budget and spending, persistent military cooperation with Myanmar and holding of Myanmar to ransom.

European reactions

A spokesperson from the German Foreign Office recently declared (26 June 2013) that Germany, as obviously all of the other EU member states, "has an eminent interest in open sea lanes of communication", and that this "involves burden sharing in stabilising fragile, underdeveloped countries". The way in which the burden-sharing will manage the risks, security voids, governance gaps, challenges and opportunities will impact²⁵ on the stability of Myanmar's neighbouring area.

The security and prosperity of the EU and its member states are "directly related to their weight even command over distant but crucial areas", European geostrategists claim.²⁶ The EU has a particular interest in the East and Southeast Asian region. At least two member states (France and the UK) hold a few strategic outlets in the area (overseas territories and military facilities in Nepal, Brunei and Singapore) and at least one (the UK) has security commitments through the Five Powers Defence Arrangements, which came into force (1971) as a loose consultative mechanism involving Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore.

Critics of China's encroaching presence in East and Southeast Asia argue that the Europeans would need to be ready to give "a response to the emerging geopolitical changes in the region", "consolidate existing alliances"²⁷ and become involved more actively in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), as the Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia urged in 2012 (p. 16).²⁸ The Europeans should partake more frequently in military exercises with the EU's ARF partners (which include Myanmar), project their forces' confidence within the region, and remain fully inter-operable with the region's other military powers (South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, and also China).²⁹ With renewed interest in the ARF, this forum would become a mechanism for enabling active European and Asian participation in a security structure that sits literally at the geopolitical heart of the Southeast Asian region.³⁰

²⁵ This discourse originally concerning East Africa at the same time applies to Southeast Asia. Federal Foreign Office.

²⁶ Rogers, G., "European Geostrategy", 7 July 2013; <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/author/jamesrogers/>

²⁷ Rogers, G., "European (British and)", 82.

²⁸ Council of the European Union, 2012, 16. The ARF members cover 27 nations in total, including: Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, New Zealand, North Korea, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States, and Vietnam.

²⁹ Concerning China, in July 2012 the EU has agreed with Beijing to set up a regular dialogue on defence and security, which included training exchanges and sharing ideas on crisis management. The two sides planned to hold a joint high-level conference in 2013 on security and defence issues. Keohane, 44. See also: Casarini.

³⁰ Rogers, 83, on a different argument.

Explaining Thein Sein's drive to Brussels and to the European capitals?

Through which lenses can we observe Myanmar and its ties to China, which agitated the EU and the member states, and also justify Thein Sein's developing Myanmar's foreign policy in Brussels? Three analytical perspectives focusing on Myanmar's linkages to China are considered: the Domination, the Partnership and the Rejectionist Schools.³¹ The Domination School is inspired by the power politics, influence and strategic balances of the Cold War. It disbelieves Myanmar's capacity to conduct its own affairs *vis-à-vis* China's potent strategic influence.³² Myanmar would develop as a dependent or client state of an expansionist China.³³ The intelligence connections enhanced between Yangon and Beijing are understood to be a fundamental part of a broader Chinese project. Concerning the future, the Yangon junta is categorised as an instrument of Beijing's government, capable and eager to undermine the regional councils, such as the ASEAN, to the advantage of its sponsor.³⁴

The Partnership School doubts that China shall merely enforce its will on hesitant Myanmar. It perceives this process as evolving slowly alongside a rather equal strategic union. While Myanmar may not yet be ready to approve of a substantial Chinese military presence today, the Yangon junta shall eventually decide to accept the advantages of a "deeper strategic partnership" with China.³⁵ This outcome would sooner, rather than later, become a reality if the EU and other countries continue to apply pressure to Myanmar's government, in an attempt to bring about regime change.³⁶

The Rejectionist School bases its influence on three main convictions. Firstly, it acknowledges that, through history, Myanmar has usually been distrustful of Beijing,³⁷ and only became inclined towards it when the EU (and other countries) applied sanctions, starting in 1991. It reckons that Myanmar looks first to Southeast Asia as an example of political and economic governance rather than to China. Secondly, this school maintains that China has been less effective in gaining Myanmar's trust than is frequently stated. The Irrawaddy River transport corridor scheme has generated several obstacles, such as the economic and political leverage that this would offer Beijing. Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw, criticised the capabilities of the military materiel provided by China, and Myanmar's government turned to Russia and other countries for arms acquisition.³⁸ Thirdly, this approach concedes that Myanmar constantly retains the option to withdraw from its close relations with China. Should Myanmar escape from China's tough encirclement, there would be a slight prospect of it being left to conduct this process by itself. The western democracies would be ready to grant support and a series of positive opportunities to Myanmar.

³¹ The analytical considerations draw from Selth (2007), 19-21.

³² See: Merrill.

³³ See: Ghoshal.

³⁴ See: Malik.

³⁵ See: Garver, 296.

³⁶ See: Badgley.

³⁷ See: Hill, J.

³⁸ Ashton, W., "The arms keep coming – but who pays", *The Irrawaddy*, June 2004; http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=3759

The Rejectionist interpretation

The Rejectionist School approach is helpful in recognising that Sein's Myanmar is slowly detaching itself from Chinese strategic cooperation. Myanmar could not be considered as that "isolated and economically troubled" place which "inevitably succumbs to the pressure of China", as the followers of the Domination thinking believe.³⁹ The Rejectionist School suggests that neither Myanmar's new and improved roads, dredged Irrawaddy, upgraded ports, new airfields and other major infrastructure developments are intended to serve as a basis for supporting China's strategic intents, nor that China's close relationship with Myanmar serves one of China's supposed aims of dominating the Strait of Malacca and the sea lanes of communication, as the Domination School alleged. The Rejectionist School, however, cannot exclude that the latter argument has a potential risk. In parliament, a group within Myanmar's military elites might advance a preference for closer strategic cooperation with China, and may have sound reasons and the power to sustain that option, but European diplomatic sources have disclosed that Myanmar's army leaders "were prepared" to relinquish their political influence on the government. Nor has Sein "expressly" committed his country to a strategic partnership with Beijing, as the Partnership School envisioned. As the Rejectionists contemplated, Yangon holds the ASEAN countries as a model for its government and economy, not China. The truth of this is confirmed by Myanmar's acceptance of its role as ASEAN chair in 2014.

Were there Burmese perceptions showing a detachment from China's close hold on Myanmar? Interviews conducted in Myanmar in 2013 led to somewhat general insights. The "aversion" to China within Myanmar was rather a reality encountered in Yangon than an alleged claim.⁴⁰ Some of those interviewed even dared to comment that the "unexpected turn to the west" was motivated by a desire to "change alliances" and disengage Myanmar from China.⁴¹ Others very similarly maintained that the "desirability of new partners", different from China, was the driving force behind the move.⁴² Others again laid greater emphasis on the "incumbent presence" of Beijing and even likened China to India in terms of its sway over the country.⁴³ Their responses highlighted somewhat their discontent with China's influence on Myanmar (and also with India's).

Also, this approach suggests some "ideas" concerning Thein Sein's chosen opportunity to turn to the EU and the European capitals in search of economic and political support. It sheds light on President Sein pledging his country to Brussels. Promising to work jointly with two other European leaders (the President of the European Commission, Barroso, and the President of the European Council, Van Rompuy), Sein accepted the challenge of giving shape to a 'Lasting EU-Myanmar Partnership' (5 March 2013).⁴⁴

Was a new agenda for the Europeans attached to the Partnership? As the European Council's official document confirms, Sein undertook a commitment to work

³⁹ Selth, 19.

⁴⁰ Interviews with members of civil society, Yangon Centre, Yangon, January 2013.

⁴¹ Interviews with an academic, Myanmar Book Centre, Yangon, January 2013.

⁴² Interviews with Burmese people, British Council, Yangon, January 2013.

⁴³ Interviews with members of civil society, Mon State, January 2013.

⁴⁴ European Council, 2013.

“together on preparedness, response and resilience to emergencies, by building up a professional and effective response system” (p. 2). What does this clause mean? Apparently, it indicates the decision to create an operative system, prepared to intervene in the prevention of and reaction to emergencies, crises and natural disasters. This system is intended to be resilient and robust. It is expected to be professional, benefiting from training, underpinned by constant practice and exercises conducted with joint forces. It is implied that the European forces will be in support of this cooperation in the civil-military field.

Not that with the new agenda all of the following European fears would be under control: China’s opaque presence in Myanmar and insistent penetration of the Indo-Pacific area, the possibility that it encourages tensions around the Malacca passage, and the extent to which security voids and governance gaps (which characterise poorly developed and undemocratic countries, as Myanmar could still be) might allow China to destabilise Myanmar through its military and political support of UWSA, in the Northeastern corridor to China, the Shan State. But at least the EU and the member states, by means of enhancing cooperation, are not excluded from the region.

European diplomats have already revealed that Britain and France made progress in re-accrediting military attaché to Myanmar, previously withdrawn as a result of the international sanctions.⁴⁵ Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain, together with France, have confirmed (November 2012) their readiness to shoulder the EU’s responsibilities in areas where EU security interests are at stake.⁴⁶

Also, the Partnership, apparently, acted as a response to the kind of needs which fall within the request of the Burmese general, Hlaing: the general believed that his country’s military would need to develop that accountability which other European forces hold both in their own nation and abroad.

In addition, the Rejectionist School laid emphasis on two further factors. On the one hand, shedding light on the “firm and enduring” partnership that is meant to be pursued between the EU and Myanmar, it underscored a special relation. The latter has its roots in durable foundations, the ASEAN, because it was within the Association framework that the EU managed, for a long time, to “raise its concerns about Myanmar and encourage positive changes”.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the approach’s impacts on Beijing in terms of “rejecting” interactions with China will not damage Myanmar-China relations. These impacts would be moderated by ASEAN. The latter and its Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) emanation represented the political environment in which China has practised multilateralism in the Southeast Asian region. ASEM was recognised as an arena where China built up a “strategy in dealing with regional relations”. Even more so, ASEM provided the forum where China has positioned itself as a “partner” in Southeast Asia, rather than “aggressor” to the neighbouring states, as scholars of

⁴⁵ Robinson 2012.

⁴⁶ Meeting of the Foreign Affairs Ministers and Ministers of Defence of France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain, Paris, 15 November 2012. See: ‘Library of the European Parliament’, ‘Selected country and regional approach’.

www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/.../121114_Outcome_proposal_Final_cle821c1..

⁴⁷ Marchi 2013.

Southeast Asian studies have suggested.⁴⁸ This factor is of great interest to the EU and its member states.

Conclusions

Responding to the question of whether, and in what way, the European (the EU and the member states') attention to Myanmar intertwines with their focus on China, three conclusions have been reached: namely, concerning the "interaction", the "approach" and the "Association of Southeast Asian Nations".

Regarding the "interaction", the EU and the member states' anxiety with regard to Myanmar's military assistance from non-European countries led to reflect on China's military assistance to Myanmar, the provision of military hardware and intelligence systems, increased economic relations since when Myanmar was penalised by the EU and other western countries through sanctions, and also China's arming of ethnic groups threatening Myanmar and the region, all of these reasons being a cause for concern for the Europeans. This concern was understandable in the light of Myanmar's location as an entry point to the Indian Ocean and its proximity to the most heavily travelled shipping channels in the world for its significance to commercial trade.

Regarding the "approach", the Rejectionist School explained Sein-Myanmar's refusal to fall within China's prevailing ethos and the choice of the EU in order to forge its foreign policy. Also, the approach has not concealed the fact that the Partnership offered a new "agenda" to the Europeans to vindicate their presence in that far region, and therefore an answer (though limited) to their preoccupations originated by China. Hence, the Partnership served the EU and the member states in promoting their foreign and security policy in Southeast Asia. In addition, the Burmese interviewees have confirmed the approach's discussed denial of China's "unique" influence on Myanmar.

Regarding the "Association of Southeast Asian Nations", as a reverberation of the Rejectionist School's approach, ASEAN and its ASEM appendix formed that political arena which encouraged China to practice a multilateral policy, locating itself as a "collaborator" rather than a competitor. This development is of crucial comfort to the EU and member states' fear that the security and stability in, and around, Myanmar should not be in peril.

By contrast with other scholars' emphasis on human rights when observing the EU's interaction with Myanmar, the originality of the argument now lies in the claim that, through being the cause of the Europeans' agitation, China and its relations with Myanmar have practically impacted on the European Union's proposal of a EU-Myanmar Partnership policy.

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⁴⁸ Shambaugh; Percival; Fitriani.

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