

Geopolitics and Asean Centrality: Looking Beyond the Five Point Consensus on Myanmar

Noel Morada

Abstract

The paper examines the normative and structural constraints in implementing ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus in dealing with the Myanmar crisis and what are the factors that account for its failure over the last five years since the February 2021 coup. The paper argues that ASEAN's normative and structural limitations only partly explain the failure of the bloc's regional diplomacy. More importantly, geopolitics, specifically China and Russia's strategic interests in Myanmar, has in fact seriously undermined ASEAN's value-centered diplomacy as it enabled the junta to ignore the FPC amidst continuing international and regional outrage over atrocities in Myanmar. The paper uses qualitative textual analyses of policy-relevant statements by key actors and stakeholders in examining the dynamics of ASEAN's diplomacy towards Myanmar. It explores some pathways towards de-escalation of the conflict, including a combination of ASEAN regionalism and minilateralism involving non-ASEAN actors such as China and Russia in the search for peace in Myanmar.