ASEAN-MYANMAR: THE POLITICS OF ENGAGEMENT

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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ASEAN's strategy of "constructive engagement" has been instrumental in bringing Myanmar into ASEAN. ASEAN believes that Myanmar would be able to progress better and to come out from its own isolated nutshell. Although ASEAN provides right and privileges for Myanmar to enhance its political legitimacy either domestically or internationally, but Myanmar's membership in ASEAN continues to be controversial as critics either within the country or outside the region disagree with its domestic policies. The cry for political and economic reforms in Myanmar is loud and clear. However, the intransigence of Myanmar not only has frustrated ASEAN but also its dialogue partners especially the United States and the European Union. Furthermore, the same policy has not been successful in dealing with the political situation in Myanmar. Myanmar's admission has been seen as too hasty because ASEAN should have given Myanmar ample time to settle its own domestic political problems. Myanmar's domestic situation has been strongly criticized by the international community, and the lack of progress in Myanmar's domestic politics has resulted in Myanmar becoming a thorn in ASEAN's flesh, which may tarnish ASEAN's international reputation. Therefore, ASEAN has either to re-evaluate its engagement policy towards Myanmar or evict Myanmar from the organization for the time being. At the same time, ASEAN has to reconcile its own principle of non-interference with regard to Myanmar. In this regard, there is a possibility that ASEAN may need to impose certain conditions in relation to Myanmar's domestic politics. Otherwise, ASEAN will lose its reputation and credibility if it so decides to expel Myanmar even as a last resort.
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