

An Old Line in the Sand:

The Rohingya Crisis' Effect on ASEAN Political Integration



Figure 1

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak speaking at a rally against violence towards Rohingya people on December 4, 2016.¹

Course: MA, International Relations in Historical Perspective (60734)
Name: Martijn Robert Swartbol
Student Number: 4180852
Address: Ampèrestraat 7bis
3553CH, Utrecht, The Netherlands
Supervisor: David J. Snyder, Ph.D.
Second Reader: Prof. Dr. Jacco Pekelder
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¹ Press, A. (2016, December 04). Malaysia's Najib Leads Rally Against Rohingya 'Genocide'. Retrieved November 20, 2017, from <https://www.voanews.com/a/malaysia-pm-leads-rally-against-rohingya-genocide/3622270.html>

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Abbreviations

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AHA Centre	ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
APSC	ASEAN Political-Security Community
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AU	African Union
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EU	European Union
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

1. Introduction

An unprecedented challenge to the South East Asian political status quo presented itself in a statement from Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman on 24 September 2017. For the second time in the Association of South East Asian Nations' (ASEAN) history, publicly flaunted disagreement between the states undermined the stability of their community. By stating that "Malaysia would like to dissociate itself with the Chairman's Statement" concerning the Rakhine State of Myanmar, Aman indicated that ASEAN is in a state of political non-consensus.² In ASEAN's statement, no specific mention was given of the ethnic Rohingya people, instead violence against the Myanmar forces and all resulting violent acts were condemned.³ Malaysia's reaction made clear that it does not agree with the ambiguity of the statement and lack of mention of the Rohingya people by the ASEAN Chairman. Thus, Malaysia took a stance to plea for the increased attention to the persecution of the Rohingya people, instead of supporting its regional community's official stance. ASEAN has historically been proud of its consensus and non-interference principles,⁴ which have helped promote stability in a region where war between states was not uncommon. The ASEAN member states' reactions to the recent events in the Rakhine state, however, show that these principles have been brought into question. Although the member states sometimes disagree, they usually manage to come to a consensus even about sensitive issues. This disagreement has raised serious concerns about the future of ASEAN.⁵

² Aman, D. (2017, September 24). Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dato' Sri Anifah Aman in response to the ASEAN Chairman's Statement on the humanitarian situation in the Rakhine State. Retrieved September 25, 2017, from <http://goo.gl/gF6G1D>.

³ ASEAN, Chairman. (2017, September 24). ASEAN Chairman's statement on the humanitarian situation in Rakhine State [Press release]. Retrieved September 25, 2017, from <http://asean.org/asean-chairmans-statement-on-the-humanitarian-situation-in-rakhine-state/>

⁴ Jones, L. (2010). ASEAN's unchanged melody? The theory and practice of 'non-interference' in Southeast Asia. *The Pacific Review*, 23(4), 479-502.

⁵ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December, 2017

The ASEAN Chairman's statement came as the situation within the Rakhine state grew critical. More than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled from the primarily Buddhist country to neighboring countries since 25 August when renewed violence broke out in the Rakhine state, roughly 10 months after a similar outburst.⁶ The Rohingya people have been suggested to be the most persecuted minority worldwide.⁷ The Muslim minority has struggled since Burma's independence from Britain, including the denial of citizenship in Myanmar since 1982; periods of violent exchanges between extremists and military; and forced eviction, resulting in mass migration over decades.⁸ The reason for the most recent exodus is violence between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Myanmar security forces, which the UN and world leaders have suggested constitutes ethnic cleansing (Antonio Guterres, OHCHR) or genocide (Recep Erdoğan) against the Rohingya people.⁹ The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, stated that the situation in the Rakhine state "seems a textbook example of ethnic cleansing".¹⁰ This re-escalation is not a new phenomenon however, as the tensions between the Buddhist and Muslim populations in Myanmar are historically deep-rooted and have caused many episodes of violence and discrimination in the past. The international community has recently become more vocal regarding the violence, something

⁶ UN News Centre. (2017, September 22). UN scales up response as number of Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar nears 500,000. Retrieved September 25, 2017, from <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57677#.WckGCshJbIU>

⁷ Al Jazeera. (2017, November 30). Myanmar: Who are the Rohingya? Retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html>

⁸ OCHA. (2017, October 24). Rohingya Refugee Crisis. Retrieved November 09, 2017, from <https://www.unocha.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis>

⁹ UN Web TV. (2017, September 13). António Guterres (UN Secretary-General) - Press Conference. 11:20. Retrieved September 25, 2017, from <http://webtv.un.org/watch/ant%C3%B3nio-guterres-un-secretary-general-press-conference-13-september-2017/5575111900001/>

The Guardian. (2017, September 02). Erdoğan accuses Myanmar of 'genocide' as thousands of Rohingya flee to Bangladesh. Retrieved September 25, 2017, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/02/erdogan-accuses-myanmar-of-genocide-against-rohingya>

¹⁰ Al Hussein, Z. R. (2017, September 11). Darker and more dangerous: High Commissioner updates the Human Rights Council on human rights issues in 40 countries. Address presented at Human Rights Council 36th session in Palace of Nations, Geneva.

Myanmar's civil government (de-facto) leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi has infamously failed to do.¹¹

During atrocities such as genocide and ethnic cleansing “the international community [often] stands accused of doing too little, too late” in retrospect.¹² Especially the regional community, ASEAN, has failed to prevent and subsequently solve the crisis in the Rakhine state. While it can be said that ASEAN is adhering to its founding non-interference principle which is to not get involved with other states' internal affairs, Malaysia's disagreement with the ASEAN Chairman's statement on the crisis is the tip of the iceberg to a much deeper issue. Furthermore, China - an important state to consider when discussing power relations of the region - has also spoken against interference, suggesting that there might be other factors at play.

Political crises that have divided ASEAN member states are not new. These differences are due to the magnitude of the religious, ideological and ethnic differences within and between ASEAN member states. However, the current Rohingya crisis seems to have taken political differences one step further for the second time in ASEAN's history: Malaysia's direct public disagreement with ASEAN. Ibrahim Almutaqqi, head of ASEAN Studies Program at The Habibie Center in Jakarta, is ‘personally ... concerned’ about this ‘very rare’ disagreement as it may ‘challenge ASEAN unity’.¹³ This, together with Myanmar's unwillingness to address the subject, seems to have led to the matter becoming taboo within ASEAN meetings. This begs the question to what extent ASEAN's political integration can be pursued through platforms such as the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) when states are not willing to discuss sensitive matters upon which they cannot reach a consensus. Crises have in the past

¹¹ Jazeera, A. (2017, September 18). Suu Kyi urged to condemn violence against the Rohingya. Retrieved September 25, 2017, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/suu-kyi-urged-condemn-violence-rohingya-170918213434018.html>

¹² Annan, K. (1999, September 16). Two concepts of sovereignty. Retrieved September 26, 2017, from <http://www.economist.com/node/324795>

¹³ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December, 2017

caused ASEAN member states to promote change in ASEAN's non-interference principles (such as Thailand after Indonesia's East-Timor crisis), but have been unsuccessful. While Thailand pushed for a more lenient interpretation of the non-interference principles so that ASEAN could act to stop atrocities within its region in the future, not all member states agreed, possibly due to each of their own questionable human rights records. Despite this, how will the Rohingya crisis affect the progress of political integration within ASEAN? Does the Rohingya crisis identify a line of political integration that ASEAN will not cross, or will the aftermath of the humanitarian crisis prompt change?

2. Methods

This paper uses a combination of academic methods in order to address the question whether the Rohingya crisis will have an effect on political integration of ASEAN. Firstly, it will provide a literature review in order to provide a historical overview of the Rohingya people, the centrality of non-interference, intervention and consensus in the international discourse, and ASEAN's commitment to non-interference and its approach to previous crises. This method is also applied to ASEAN's mechanisms to deal with such crises.

In Section 6: *Responses to the Rohingya Crisis* the paper uses primary sources to convey the political stances of states versus that of ASEAN in relation to the Rohingya crisis. For the ASEAN side of this, primarily official communiqués are used, which are statements and meeting reports that can be found on the ASEAN website. Since these documents are written originally in English and are created for the purpose of transparent policy and reporting, it is easy to justify their usage and possible to draw solid conclusions on ASEAN's stance. It should be noted, however, that this is not necessarily the case when looking at stances of the individual ASEAN member states, since most of the information this paper uses comes from primary news articles. It is important to keep in mind that these articles are written in English, meaning that not only may the articles be biased towards a more global line of thinking regarding the Rohingya crisis, but that leader's speeches and statements may be taken out of context or mistranslated for argumentative effect. Unfortunately, the author of this paper does not master the relevant South East Asian languages to be able to investigate said speeches and statements in the original language.

Lastly, this paper makes use of qualitative semi-structured interview methods. The interviews were carried out due to the limited knowledge and academic writings in English on the topic of possible organizational change resulting from the Rohingya crisis. The interviews

have allowed the author to collect expert opinions on effect of the Rohingya crisis on ASEAN, with as little Western bias as possible. When interviewing the participants, the author prepared various questions (see Annex 1) that acted as a platform upon which to generate conversation with the participants. The essence and in turn the power of a semi-structured interview comes from the ability for the interviewer to be flexible in their line of questioning as a result of what participants have answered to the base questions¹⁴. This allows for the interviewer to engage in a deeper conversation depending on what the participants find more important, thereby not limiting the interviewer to their previous knowledge in their questions. In the case of this paper, the participants were approached by e-mail and were given a list of proposed questions. After initial identification of relevant experts on the topic of ASEAN, a method similar to the sociological snowball sample method was used to identify further possible interviewees.¹⁵ Once the interviews were carried out, the responses were coded using a coding program in order to organize their responses into categories that could be used in the relevant sections of this paper. The participants were asked whether they would like to remain anonymous, and whether the interviews could be recorded for correct transcription, to ensure sound ethics. Some participants did indeed wish to remain anonymous.

After giving a brief historical overview of the Rohingya crisis, this paper considers the global and regional relevance of non-intervention and consensus principles. It then goes on to identify key organizational cultures and mechanisms within ASEAN that may have contributed to its response to the Rohingya crisis. Following this theoretical framework, the paper investigates ASEAN's reactions to past crises and the collective ASEAN response as well as individual member states' responses to the current Rohingya crisis. The paper provides an

¹⁴ Brinkmann, S. (2014). Interview. *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*, 1008-1010

¹⁵ Snowball sampling refers to participants identifying possible future participants. In this case, the author found new contacts of experts during the interviews. While this method is usually used in sociological research, the author found it the most fitting description of how he found more interviewees. For more information, consult the following article: Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 10(2), 141-163.

analysis of why states have reacted the way they have, according to various factors such as economic or domestic political factors. This information is all used to analyze the likelihood of ASEAN's core principles being changed as a result of the Rohingya crisis, and whether the crisis may have a significant effect on political integration in the future.

3. Background of the Rohingya Crisis

The history of the Rohingya people is plagued by opposing claims of historical truth and their right to citizenship. The tensions between the Muslim and Buddhist populations in Myanmar have been brewing for centuries,¹⁶ a testament to how difficult the situation is to understand, let alone solve. One of the leading reasons for dispute is the question whether the Rohingya people have a claim to citizenship in Myanmar. According to Parnini and Lee, the Rohingya history starts when Arab and Persian traders came to the area in the seventh century.¹⁷ During the seventh century these traders settled in the area permanently for the first time, which shows why the Rohingya's language, culture and physically similar to other peoples in the area¹⁸. On the other hand, some writers claim that the Rohingya people do not historically belong to the Rakhine state area. Saw claims that "[i]n fact there has never been a 'Rohingya' race in Burma".¹⁹ The Myanmar military, government and many Myanmar citizens often argue that the Rohingya people are (illegal) Bengali migrants.²⁰ The Rohingya people are not considered one of the 135 ethnic groups of Myanmar.²¹ The government of Myanmar has been extremely clear about its rejection of the term *Rohingya* and does not attend international events which use the term, which has caused obvious difficulties when discussing the issue within ASEAN.²² This classification of the Rohingya people being illegal immigrants renders them stateless, and thus opens them up to human rights abuses and discrimination due to a lack of

¹⁶ Lee, R. (2014). A Politician, Not an Icon: Aung San Suu Kyis Silence on Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 25(3), 321-333. doi:10.1080/09596410.2014.913850 p.327

¹⁷ Parnini, S. N. (2013). The Crisis of the Rohingya as a Muslim Minority in Myanmar and Bilateral Relations with Bangladesh. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 33(2), 281-297. doi:10.1080/13602004.2013.826453 p.281

Lee, R. (2014). A Politician, Not an Icon, p.324

¹⁸ Parnini, S. N. (2013). The Crisis of the Rohingya as a Muslim Minority in Myanmar, p.281

¹⁹ Saw, U. (1993). The "Rohingyas", Who Are They? The Origin of the Name "Rohingya". *International Conference on Tradition and Modernity in Myanmar*. doi:10.1107/s0108768107031758/bs5044sup1.cif p.1

²⁰ Parnini, S. N. (2013). The Crisis of the Rohingya as a Muslim Minority in Myanmar, p.285

²¹ Kipgen, N. (2013). Conflict in Rakhine State in Myanmar: Rohingya Muslims' Conundrum. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 33(2), 298-310. P.300

²² Broderick, K. (n.d.). The intersection of HADR and the Rohingya Refugee crisis. *Broderick Futuregram* 15-004,1-7. P.2
Southwick, K. (2015). Preventing Mass Atrocities Against the Stateless Rohingya. *Journal of International Affairs*, 68(2), 137-156. P.140

protection under national law.²³ The question of citizenship and belonging of the Rohingya people in Myanmar can be seen as the driving reason for conflict until today, while it is not necessarily addressed that way within ASEAN.

Violence in the Rakhine state (previously Arakan) is not novel, with clashes having been numerous and destructive since British Colonial rule, when the “disaffection between the Buddhist population and the Muslims in Arakan developed”.²⁴ While the dominant discourse is that the conflict relates to religious, ethnic and citizenship conflicts, some writers also suggest that much of the conflict revolves around economic land-grabbing techniques that allow the Myanmar army to sell repossessed land to Myanmar and other investors within and outside of ASEAN.²⁵ The conflict has a variety of root causes that cannot be solved easily when violence is part of the collective memory in the Rakhine state. Furthermore, ASEAN itself is also religiously diverse, with religious considerations carrying significant weight in determining national interests, making discussions of religious conflict more difficult.

Violence has broken out throughout recent history, including atrocities in 1960, 1978, 1982, and 1991, and more recently in 2012, 2016 and 2017.²⁶ Writers have detailed recent human rights offenses by the junta during the military regime, including “rape, murder, public torture, kidnapping and burning of houses”²⁷ in 1992 and crimes against civilians after the 2010 elections including “de-nationalization, arbitrary arrests, restrictions of movement, extortion, torture and harassment”.²⁸ ASEAN has remained inactive and the Myanmar civil government,

²³ Parnini, S. N. (2013). *The Crisis of the Rohingya as a Muslim Minority in Myanmar*, p.282

²⁴ Yegar, M. (1972). *The Muslims of Burma*. Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz. P.95

²⁵ Sassen, S. (2017, September 15). *The Assault On The Rohingya Is Not Only About Religion - It's Also About Land*. Retrieved November 01, 2017, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/rohingya-land-grab-military_us_59b96400e4b02da0e13e79f4

²⁶ Rahman, M., & Baihaqie, A. (2017). *The influence of Islam in Indonesian foreign policy: A case study on the Rohingya conflict*. *Jurnal Ilmiah ISLAM FUTURA*, 17(1), 96-120. P.98

Parnini, S. N. (2013). *The Crisis of the Rohingya as a Muslim Minority in Myanmar*, p.286

Lee, R. (2014). *A Politician, Not an Icon*, p.325

²⁷ Parnini, S. N. (2013). *The Crisis of the Rohingya as a Muslim Minority in Myanmar*, p.291

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.293

led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, has been notoriously quiet about the topic. Lee even suggests addressing the Rohingya crisis at all may result in a “high electoral cost”²⁹ for the party, and that the new government has taken a similar stance towards the Rohingya people as the junta had.³⁰ More recently, a OHCHR report published in February 2017 detailed the accounts of Rohingya refugees who had fled the Rakhine state, showing that the international community’s hope that came with the new civil government was in vain.³¹ The report details information gathered from 220 people who fled from the Rakhine state after 9 October 2016 (See figure 2). Due to the ongoing human rights violations in Myanmar ASEAN’s commitment to the global human rights discourse can be called into question, as it has failed to make a concrete effort to end the continuing violence in Myanmar.

²⁹ Lee, R. (2014). A Politician, Not an Icon, p.329

³⁰ Ibid, p.326

³¹ OHCHR. (2017). Report of OHCHR Mission to Bangladesh : Interviews with Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016.

Testimonies of witnesses (including victims): Of the 204 persons interviewed:

- 134 (65%) reported killings.
- 115 (56%) reported disappearances (including persons having been “taken away” by the security forces and not heard of since).
- 131 (64%) reported beatings.
- 88 (43%) reported rape.
- 63 (31%) reported sexual violence.
- 131 (64%) reported burning or other destruction of property.
- 81 (40%) reported looting/theft of property.

Testimonies of victims: Of the 204 persons interviewed, many reported having been personally victim of a violation:

- 26 (13%) reported having been personally shot or stabbed (the OHCHR team has photographic evidence on file).
- 91 (45%) reported that a family member had disappeared.
- 96 (47%) reported that a family member had been killed.
- 89 (44%) reported having been beaten.
- 26 (13%) reported having been raped, of whom 2 were girls. Among the 101 women interviewed, 24 (24%) reported having been raped.
- 33 reported having suffered other forms of sexual violence, of whom 5 were girls. Among the 101 women interviewed 28 (28%) reported having suffered other forms of sexual violence.
- Taken together, 52 (52%) of the 101 women interviewed reported having been raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence.
- 102 (50%) reported that their own property had been burned or destroyed.
- 76 (37%) reported looting or theft of their own property.

*Figure 2**OHCHR mission’s numerical findings from testimonies of witnesses and victims*³²

The result of these episodes of violence have resulted in mass migration of Rohingya peoples from the Rakhine state to neighboring countries, especially neighboring Bangladesh, where they often live in below-standard refugee camps. Parnini, writing in 2013, claims “an estimated 200,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh from 1978 onwards. A new wave of an

³² Ibid. p.9

estimated 250,000 Rohingya fled to the country in 1991.”³³ The UNHCR estimates that between 25 August and 17 October 2017 582,000 Rohingya refugees left Myanmar as a result of the latest outbreak of violence.³⁴ This is a major regional impact, as many of these refugees seek to live in ASEAN member states. Considering both the human rights abuses of Myanmar and the resulting regional refugee crisis, the question remains why so little has been done by ASEAN to address the issue despite its regional implications.

³³ Parnini, S. N. (2013). *The Crisis of the Rohingya as a Muslim Minority in Myanmar*, p.281

³⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017, October 17). Rohingya emergency. Retrieved October 23, 2017, from <http://www.unhcr.org/rohingya-emergency.html>

4. Non-intervention and Consensus: Global relevance

The principles of non-interference and consensus are crucial in understanding ASEAN's (lack of) response to the Rohingya crisis. While these principles are central to ASEAN, they have global relevance throughout history and in contemporary times. According to R. Ramcharan, "(n)on-interference stems from the traditional notions in international relations of equality of the sovereignty of states ... and the consequent right to exclusive sovereignty".³⁵ The concept of sovereignty is essential to the principle on non-interference, as the goal of non-interference is to limit external influence from other states. According to Bellamy and Drummond, non-interference 'is the belief that each state's domestic affairs are no one else's concern', and that ASEAN reflects "an institutional culture of regional security management that aims to avoid confrontation".³⁶ Bellamy and Drummond thereby identify ASEAN's implementation of non-interference as similar to our understanding of Westphalian Sovereignty, inasmuch that each state should have determination over their own internal affairs. According to Lee Jones, non-interference in the third world can often be motivated by the idea of "regime security", the idea that non-interference allows elites to mutually strengthen their domestic positions of power without being influenced by other states.³⁷

The method of consensus decision-making is ASEAN's way of ensuring unity and uniform agreement over issues. "Decisions are not voted upon but rather made based on consensus."³⁸ This method of decision-making is different from other regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) as it relies on a unanimous

³⁵ Ramcharan, R. (2000). ASEAN and Non-interference: A Principle Maintained. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 22(1), 60-88. doi:10.1355/cs22-1c p.60

³⁶ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia: between non-interference and sovereignty as responsibility. *The Pacific Review*, 24(2), 179-200. doi:10.1080/09512748.2011.560958 p.184

³⁷ Jones, L. (2010). ASEANs unchanged melody? The theory and practice of 'non-interference' in Southeast Asia. *The Pacific Review*, 23(4), 479-502. doi:10.1080/09512748.2010.495996 p.481

³⁸ Aggarwal, V. K., & Chow, J. T. (2010). The perils of consensus: How ASEAN's metaregime undermines economic and environmental cooperation. *Review of International Political Economy*, 17(2), 262-290. P.269

agreement on all actions, statements, et cetera. Other regional organizations have mechanisms that allow for decisions to be made despite not all member-states agreeing, which in turn allows for decisions to be made that might directly impact one of the member states. The ASEAN consensus system in practice has resulted in something that is similar to a VETO system, where if one ASEAN member state does not agree with something, the idea is off the table. According to Bellamy and Drummond, “consensus-based decision-making ... effectively protects member states from interference by requiring consent”.³⁹ The UN Security Council (UNSC) has in some way a similar make-up, where the 5 permanent member states must agree upon something for it to proceed (among other statutes). Unlike ASEAN, however, the UNSC has the power to intervene should the council decide. Is it possible that ASEAN’s consensus principle will result in a “historical failure to reform”⁴⁰ such as many have argued about the UNSC?

The topic of armed intervention and other types of interference has been a topic of discussion on the international stage for many years. From the enlightenment through colonialism until now, the topic of influencing other states’ internal affairs has been sensitive. While it seems that the ASEAN nation states have internalized the idea of non-interference, other regional organizations have in fact internalized different global norms, such as the responsibility to protect (R2P). The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle is an international norm devised in within the UN system in 2001 that stipulates the responsibility for a state to protect the human rights of its citizens and when it is ‘unwilling or unable’ to do so, that other states have the responsibility to act in protection of those citizens.⁴¹ Specifically, the R2P was updated in the UN World Summit in 2005⁴² to provide an outline for a state to protect its citizens

³⁹ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia. P.189

⁴⁰ Weiss, T. G. (2010). The Illusion of UN Security Council Reform. *Washington Quarterly*, 26(4), 147-161. P.147

⁴¹ Nuruzzaman, M. (2013, Spring). The “Responsibility to Protect” Doctrine: Revived in Libya, Buried in Syria. *Insight Turkey*, 15(2) p.58

⁴² Alexandra, L. (2012). Indonesia and the Responsibility to Protect. *The Pacific Review*, 25(1), 51-74. doi:10.1080/09512748.2011.632964 p.52

from four crimes: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity'.⁴³ The response to R2P from the states in South East Asian region has been accepting but complicated. At first glance R2P may seem inconsistent with non-interference as it stipulates that states should intervene with military force if all else fails, with most states being skeptical of the norm. For example, an Indonesian official stated that it shows a Western attempt to 'politicize human rights'.⁴⁴ With this, although ASEAN member states have accepted the norm, it seems that they are simply doing so to show good faith and instead are still committed to non-interference, with R2P logic being applied primarily to non-military options to strengthen ASEAN.⁴⁵

Contemporary application of non-interference and consensus principles is what makes ASEAN unique in comparison to other regional bodies such as the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU) and the Organization of American States (OAS). The EU has grown quickly into a Union that is based upon a more complicated decision-making process. Interfering in its member states' domestic affairs is limited although impactful, especially considering the monetary power the regional community holds. There are still questions within the EU, however, about how much power the community should hold, and to what extent sovereignty must be maintained for the nation states.

R2P has been an influential global narrative, and has had significant effect on other regional communities, specifically the AU. The African states have shown a distinct historical shift from adherence to non-interference to having mechanisms for intervention in the case of a state being unable to protect its people. Before African states joined into the AU, during the times of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), "member states ... hid behind the shield of

⁴³ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia: between non-interference and sovereignty as responsibility. *The Pacific Review*, 24(2), 179-200. doi:10.1080/09512748.2011.560958 p.179

Alexandra, L. (2012). Indonesia and the Responsibility to Protect. *The Pacific Review*, 25(1), 51-74. doi:10.1080/09512748.2011.632964 p.52

⁴⁴ Acharya, A. (2014). Indonesia as a Global Actor. *Indonesia Matters* p. 104

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.104

Article III (2) ‘non-interference in the internal affairs of states’”.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the AOU had a consensus decision-making process similar to ASEAN,⁴⁷ which suggests that the AOU was then quite similar to contemporary ASEAN in terms of principles and acting capabilities (if nothing else). With the African Union being created in 2002, the R2P principle was fresh in the narrative of the international community (being adopted in 2001). According to Williams, the dramatic events of “the oppression in Idi Amin’s Uganda in the late 1970s and the 1994 Rwandan genocide” impacted the African states to consider the internalization of the R2P ideals within the newly created African Union.⁴⁸ With this, the AU now has intervention mechanisms and does not operate according to a consensus principle. This suggests that large scale atrocities may have influenced the African region that previously, similar to ASEAN now, adhered to non-interference and consensus based decision making within their regional community.

The historical change from the OAU (which followed non-interference and consensus principles) to the AU (which has strong mechanisms for interference) being arguably due to large crises begs the question whether ASEAN too may change because of a crisis. Although the norm of R2P is not as relevant in international discourse now as it was at its inception, there are different international narratives concerning human rights and humanitarian intervention that could influence ASEAN now. Many scholars have written about the changing nature of non-interference within ASEAN, but as of yet there is a lack of literature concerning the matter in light of the recent developments in the Rakhine State and the respective reaction of ASEAN. Current academic literature does not address the possibility of the Rohingya crisis being a prompt for making significant changes to the founding principles and crisis response

⁴⁶ Akinyemi, A. (1972-1973). The Organization of African Unity and the Concept of Non-Interference in International Affairs of Member-States. *British Year Book of International Law* 46, 393-400. P.393

⁴⁷ Cilliers, J., & Sturman, K. (2010). The Right intervention: enforcement challenges for the African Union. *African Security Studies*, 11(3), 28-39. P.29

⁴⁸ Williams, P. D. (2007). From non-intervention to non-indifference: the origins and development of the African Unions security culture. *African Affairs*, 106(423), 253-279. doi:10.1093/afraf/adm001 p.275

mechanisms within ASEAN. This paper aims to identify whether ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis may indeed show signs of future organizational change.

5. ASEAN History, Principles and structure

ASEAN was formed to ensure stability, prosperity and sovereignty for each nation state in light of the global political climate of the 1960's. The states that are part of ASEAN are by and large young nation states, whose sovereignty has been challenged by various situations including colonization, the Cold War, and secession movements. During the period of decolonization, the 5 original member states needed to secure their right to govern their own states in the future by limiting problematic "external interference and international conflicts"⁴⁹ and allow them to "be in control of their own destiny".⁵⁰ Furthermore, at its creation, ASEAN member states were often involved in violent disputes among themselves such as the *Konfrontasi* (armed confrontation) between Malaysia and Indonesia in 1963-66, warranting a framework that helped prevent conflict.⁵¹ Bellamy and Drummond argue that "in the period 1955-74, well over 70 per cent of deaths in armed conflict worldwide were in Southeast Asia (mainly but not only because of the Vietnam War). Since 1991, the region has had only 3.6 per cent of global battle deaths".⁵² It is therefore understandable that when joining a regional institution such as ASEAN, the states would want to ensure their sovereignty remains in-tact regarding forces within and outside the region. These considerations were the main driving factors for ASEAN to start political integration between the original 5 member states, somewhat like the EU in its goal to protect states from outside influences such as war. ASEAN has since grown to be a powerful platform for economic agreements, as well as cooperation on non-traditional security threats such as the illegal trafficking of persons, drug trade and violent extremism. These factors are heavily influenced by the Rohingya crisis, making the crisis

⁴⁹ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia: between non-interference and sovereignty as responsibility. *The Pacific Review*, 24(2), 179-200. doi:10.1080/09512748.2011.560958 p.184

⁵⁰ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December, 2017

⁵¹ Acharya, A. (2014). *Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*. London: Routledge. p.46

⁵² Tønnesson, Stein. "ASEAN's Rohingya Challenge." *PRIO Policy Brief*, Sept. 2015, pp. 1-4., www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=114&type=publicationfile. P.3

central to the goals of the organization. The principle of non-interference, however, has been central to the institutional culture of ASEAN, and has been reaffirmed in various major declarations and treaties throughout ASEAN's existence.⁵³ The principle of non-interference suggests that the ASEAN states do not interfere in each other's domestic matters, and instead come to conclusions based on consensus within ASEAN meetings. This allows each state to focus on their own economic prosperity and political consolidation without having to worry about interference from the surrounding states, although according to Bellamy and Drummond this would mean the "postponement of individual human rights for the greater good of national development".⁵⁴ Throughout time ASEAN has grown into a body that not only protects the sovereignty of each state, but also provides the member states with a platform to become more powerful on the international stage.

ASEAN and its member states are committed to become more integrated on various fronts, albeit slowly. Under its slogan "*One vision. One identity. One community.*"⁵⁵, ASEAN aims to achieve its "*twin visions of peace and prosperity*"⁵⁶ as one. C. Chindawongse, the Minister Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Thailand to ASEAN, argued that "moving slowly is better than just leaving someone else behind"⁵⁷. This echoes the idea of the central concept of the *ASEAN way*, meaning that integration can only go as fast as is comfortable for all member states. Singaporean Ambassador-at-large B. Kausikan compared ASEAN to a cow, arguing that many international academics and experts expect it to be more like horse. "A cow will never become a horse ... we have to accept a cow as a cow. A cow is quite a useful animal."⁵⁸ Kausikan means that although ASEAN may not move as quickly or be as powerful as critics may want, it is good at doing the job it set out to do. ASEAN's integration is built

⁵³ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia, p.184

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.184

⁵⁵ ASEAN Motto. (n.d.). Retrieved December 20, 2017, from <http://asean.org/asean/about-asean/asean-motto/>

⁵⁶ The ASEAN Secretariat. (2015). *ASEAN Community* [Pamphlet]. Jakarta: ASEAN.

⁵⁷ C. Chindawongse, personal communication, 6 December 2017

⁵⁸ Kausikan, B. (2015, October 7). *A cow is not a horse*. Speech presented at Youth Model ASEAN Conference, Singapore.

upon three different pillars, namely the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).⁵⁹ The pillar that has integrated furthest is the economic community, while the political community has shown a slower integration.

The AEC, being the 7th largest economy in the world, is a major community that holds a lot of power due to the quickly developing nature of the region. Within the AEC, various economic treaties are signed that allow for increased trade between ASEAN states. Furthermore, the AEC has helped make Free Trade Agreements between ASEAN and China which are extremely influential for ASEAN. 15.2% of total ASEAN trade was with China in 2015, whilst trade between ASEAN countries only made up 24%.⁶⁰ This shows that China is in fact quite an influential economic component of the region. Since the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, China and ASEAN have realized the extent of their economic interdependence and have moved towards further economic integration, fearing future crises.⁶¹ China's influence within ASEAN as well as over individual member states should not be overlooked, and its interests are likely to have important ramifications to decisions ASEAN makes. Much of ASEAN policy is driven by economic considerations, suggesting that each political action would also warrant some economic considerations.

While ASEAN political integration has reduced war and external influence, it has not managed to address all challenges it has been presented. The ASEAN APSC aims to achieve peace and prosperity between and within the ASEAN member states, namely by “political development; shaping and sharing of norms; conflict prevention; conflict resolution; post-

⁵⁹ Caballero-Anthony, M. (2013). Non-traditional security challenges, regional governance, and the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC) . In *ASEAN and the institutionalization of East Asia* (pp. 27-42). New York: Routledge. P.30

⁶⁰ ASEAN Statistics (2016). *ASEAN trade by selected partner country/region, 2015*. Retrieved from: http://asean.org/storage/2016/11/Table19_as-of-6-dec-2016.pdf

⁶¹ Cheng-Chwee, K. (2005). Multilateralism in China's ASEAN Policy: Its Evolution, Characteristics, and Aspiration. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 27(1), 102-122. P.109

conflict peace building; and implementing mechanisms”.⁶² In the context of the Rohingya crisis, the community is having difficulties achieving these goals, since it has not managed to provide a way to stop the violence in the Rakhine state.

The ASEAN consensus principle is very influential in deciding the agenda of ASEAN, and has only been broken publicly twice. While the member states are all varying sizes, each member’s voice is equally powerful when coming to a consensus. Since each of the states have different national interests reaching a consensus, “depending on the issues, can take quite a long time”⁶³. Furthermore, consensus means that states “can say no to everything they don’t want to discuss”⁶⁴, meaning that some issues are even difficult to discuss in the first place. According to various experts, the first break in ASEAN consensus was when the Foreign Ministers were unable to achieve a joint communique regarding the South China Sea in 2012, due to China’s bilateral influence on some of the member states.⁶⁵ According to a top ASEAN diplomat, this was because Cambodia, the chair that year, was doing China’s bidding to ensure it kept a stronger stance on the South China Sea and was able to continue negotiations bilaterally instead of with a united ASEAN⁶⁶. The second historic break of consensus followed the Chairman’s statement on Rakhine, with Malaysia’s disagreement. This shows the weight the Rohingya crisis has caused in ASEAN – causing I. Almutaqqi to express his concern for ASEAN unity as a result.⁶⁷

ASEAN’s non-interference principle carries great importance for the member states and is vital to understanding institutional and regional relations.⁶⁸ Non-interference within the

⁶² ASEAN. (n.d.). ASEAN Political - Security Community. Retrieved November 20, 2017, from <http://asean.org/asean-political-security-community/>

⁶³ Anonymous 1, personal communication, 5 December 2017

⁶⁴ F. Sharief, personal communication, 4 December 2017

⁶⁵ F. Sharief, personal communication, 4 December 2017

⁶⁶ Anonymous 2, personal communication, 6 December 2017

⁶⁷ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

⁶⁸ Jones, L. (2010). ASEANs unchanged melody? The theory and practice of ‘non-interference’ in Southeast Asia. *The Pacific Review*, 23(4), 479-502. doi:10.1080/09512748.2010.495996 p.479

ASEAN context is the idea that ASEAN member states do not directly try to influence each other's domestic affairs through coercive measures such as impositions of policy through ultimatums, sanctions, or armed intervention. Lina Alexandra, a researcher at the Department of Politics and International Relations at the Centre of Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta, argues that "sovereignty, respecting sovereignty and non-interference [is] very much the key principle that regulates the interactions among the ASEAN countries".⁶⁹ Apart from ASEAN's "norms... [of] consultation, consensual decision-making, and abstaining from threatening or using force"⁷⁰, Amitav Acharya argues that non-interference is not only one of the defining factors of ASEAN, but also South East Asian regionalism in general.⁷¹ China's non-interference principle (one of China's "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence") is also influential in the region, with China actively avoiding situations that might result in economic or political instability.⁷² The principle is said to be the main reason for ASEAN's inactivity and silence on various serious issues, such as Indonesia's invasion of East-Timor in 1974, and various crises in Myanmar and the recent violence against the Rohingya people.⁷³ The extent to which ASEAN is willing to follow and maintain its non-interference principle was shown in the aftermath of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia to end the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, when ASEAN condemned Vietnam for its actions.⁷⁴ This example shows the gravity of ASEAN's commitment to non-interference, especially considering the extent of atrocities committed by the bloody regime.⁷⁵ Even though further loss of life was prevented by

⁶⁹ L. Alexandra, personal communication, 6 December, 2017

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.480

⁷¹ Acharya, A. (2014). Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia, p.56

⁷² Asia Centre. (n.d.). China's Foreign Policy and its Non-interference Principle: Farewell or Renewal? *China Observatory 2011-2012*. Retrieved November 28, 2017.

⁷³ Jones, L. (2010). ASEANs unchanged melody?, p.481

Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia, p.185

Jones, L. (2010). ASEANs unchanged melody?, p.479

⁷⁴ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia, p.185

⁷⁵ Etcheson, *After the killing fields: Lessons from the Cambodian genocide*. P.60

Vietnam's intervention, the institution felt the need to condemn Vietnam for breaching its principles.

While non-interference has been a core principle of ASEAN, there have been various occasions where the organization has overlooked the principle and interfered nonetheless. ASEAN member states are interdependent in economic and political terms, which would suggest a need to interfere occasionally. The importance of flexibility in non-interference was in fact stipulated in the ASEAN charter of 2009, while recognizing the importance of noninterference and consensus within the organization.⁷⁶ According to L. Jones, even "ASEAN's own former secretary-general, Rodolfo Severino, insists that the application of non-interference is governed by 'pragmatic considerations' and accordingly 'has not been absolute'".⁷⁷ Leifer's argues that non-interference has only been visibly broken twice, namely in 1986 to stop upheaval in the Philippines, and in 1996 to set domestic conditions that Cambodia was required to fulfill before its entry into ASEAN.⁷⁸ Jones further argues that anti-communist sentiments caused intervention between ASEAN states during the Cold War continuously.⁷⁹ Today, interfering in each other's domestic affairs seems to be acceptable situationally and based upon consensus, with the ASEAN political-security community working on issues such as violent extremism, unusual movement of persons (such as trafficking), drug trade and other trans-national crimes. These are issues, however, that all states consider mutually beneficial to work together on and have little chance of affecting internal or international political environments through cooperation.

Bellamy and Drummond claim that ASEAN's relations with Myanmar have been a driving factor for applying the principle pragmatically instead of absolutely.⁸⁰ ASEAN's

⁷⁶ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia, p.189

⁷⁷ Jones, L. (2010). ASEANs unchanged melody?, p.481

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.490

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.480

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.186

interactions with Myanmar have been described as *constructive engagement*, which suggests the acceptability of interference to promote a change in the Human Rights situation in Myanmar. Arendshorst, however, states that critics argue that the *constructive engagement* discourse may be used by ASEAN to seem proactive in the eyes of the international community, and distract possible condemnations of trade between ASEAN and Myanmar.⁸¹ Other writers, such as Weatherbee, have called Myanmar “a cancer eating away at ASEAN’s credibility in the community of democratic nations”,⁸² referring to when George W. Bush cancelled meetings between ASEAN and the US due to Myanmar’s crackdown on democratic protests in 2007. *Constructive engagement* may simply be a discourse for the outside international community, which prompts Arendshorst to further state that *constructive engagement* is unlikely to change much in Myanmar.⁸³ On the other hand, during the Bangkok process in 2003, an international meeting to discuss the situation in Myanmar, the non-interference principle seemed secondary.⁸⁴ One of the main arguments for this shift in strictness of non-interference, Bellamy and Drummond argue, is the consideration that if crises have a regional impact, it is difficult to consider them solely a domestic question. It then follows that due to the regional impact of the Rohingya crisis (namely, the immense number of refugees fleeing to other ASEAN states, not to mention Bangladesh), it cannot be considered solely a domestic issue any longer. Indonesia suggested “that states could not ‘claim gross violations of human rights as a domestic matter’”.⁸⁵ Specific to the situation in Myanmar, Malaysia even suggested “that member states could not ‘allow non-interference to shield’ the deteriorating situation in Myanmar”.⁸⁶ It is evident that a more flexible approach to non-interference has not been applied to the current

⁸¹ Arendshorst, J. (2009). The Dilemma of Non-Interference: Myanmar, Human Rights, and the ASEAN Charter. *Northwestern Journal of Human Rights*, 8(1), 102-122. P.112

⁸² Weatherbee, D. E. (2014). *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy* (3rd ed.). Rowman & Littlefield. P.94

⁸³ Arendshorst, J. (2009). The Dilemma of Non-Interference, P.115

⁸⁴ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia, p.188

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.188

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.188

Rohingya crisis however, and instead ASEAN has remained true to its core values despite the alleged atrocities.

Despite the new line of thinking that many problems are regional rather than solely domestic, Thailand failed in 2000 to convince ASEAN to redraft the non-interference principle. This came after the non-interference principle stood strong despite killings and resulting humanitarian crisis in East-Timor in 1999.⁸⁷ ASEAN's inaction due to non-interference is often called *deafening silence*. These is one of the reasons that Thailand called for a rethinking of the non-interference principle in 2000. Nonetheless, ASEAN maintained that the issues of East-Timor were Indonesian domestic affairs, despite the political involvement of the region and international community.⁸⁸ Thailand's call for a change was taken into consideration and since then various mechanisms such as the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre (AHA Centre) and the AICHR were launched, but these bodies do not have the weight to affect ASEAN's non-interference principle, an aspect of ASEAN that has been central to the organizational structure since the onset. This shows that although it is possible for crises to create a movement (or rather- a call) for change of ASEAN's political processes, East-Timor did apparently not have enough of a political outfall for ASEAN to review the non-interference principle. This seems to set a precedent for current or future crises and following calls for a redesign of the non-intervention principle.

ASEAN has committed to improving its action on human rights through the creation of a mechanism to promote and protect human rights, albeit too weak to intervene in crises. "Unimaginable a few decades ago"⁸⁹, ASEAN created the ASEAN Intergovernmental

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.188

⁸⁸ Nguyen, T. (2016). Norm or Necessity? The Non-Interference Principle in ASEAN. *Cornell International Affairs Review*, 9(1). Retrieved from <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1318/norm-or-necessity-the-non-interference-principle-in-asean>

⁸⁹ L. Alexandra, personal communication, 6 December, 2017

Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in 2009, a process that was “protested against”⁹⁰ by Myanmar itself. Oona Hathaway stated that international human right institutions “invite the intrusion of international community into the domestic arena”⁹¹, something that seems to stand in opposition to the ASEAN non-interference principle. This clash of interests resulted in a long process of discussion and dispute within ASEAN as to what kind of powers the AICHR should have. During the deliberations, some of the states including Myanmar rejected various proposals such as the body’s ability to send fact-finding missions into states to investigate human rights abuses.⁹² It was agreed that the body should not get involved with domestic situations such as that in Myanmar and instead should have an advisory and supportive function without any enforcement powers.⁹³ The fact that AICHR, a body tasked with protecting human rights, has no enforcement power shows a continuation of ASEAN’s commitment to non-interference policy throughout history.⁹⁴ Some critics argue that the body was only created to divert international questions about human rights issues within the region.⁹⁵ L. Alexandra suggests that various ASEAN member states’ human rights abuses have been “the Achilles heel for ASEAN to actually play a bigger role at the international level” and that if ASEAN should want to play a bigger role internationally it should address human rights issues.⁹⁶ Without action however, the AICHR becomes a symbolic body only and is unlikely to improve ASEAN’s reputation as a regional body unless it can prevent future human rights abuses. I. Almutaqqi expressed his hopes that the ASEAN member states “will be more comfortable with these mechanisms, and that then they can start moving to the next stage which is the protection of

⁹⁰ Arendshorst, J. (2009). *The Dilemma of Non-Interference*, p.113

⁹¹ Munro, J. (2011). The relationship between the origins and regime design of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 15(5), 1185-1214. P.1186

⁹² Alexandra, L. (2012). Indonesia and the Responsibility to Protect. *The Pacific Review*, 25(1), 51-74. doi:10.1080/09512748.2011.632964 p.53

⁹³ Arendshorst, J. (2009). *The Dilemma of Non-Interference*, pp.112-113

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, P.113

⁹⁵ Munro, J. (2011). The relationship between the origins and regime design of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), P.1185

⁹⁶ L. Alexandra, personal communication, 6 December 2017

human rights”.⁹⁷ It is arguable however that ASEAN is not as interested in following the Western led human rights discourse, and have instead rejected intervention in general. When discussing Responsibility to Protect, former Indonesian Foreign Minister Wirajuda suggested that “the West ... tends to politicize human rights”⁹⁸, and that “questions such as; ‘Who mandates, who judges’”⁹⁹ have resulted in a dismissal of humanitarian intervention in South East Asian discourse. Despite this, it is clear that ASEAN has recently made a positive step towards addressing the issue of human rights within its region.

⁹⁷ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

⁹⁸ Acharya, A. (2014). Indonesia as a global actor. In *Indonesia Matters* (pp. 99-117). World Scientific. P.104

⁹⁹ Ibid. P.104

6. Responses to the Rohingya Crisis

How does the regional political landscape look like after the breaking point of the Rohingya crisis on the 25th of August 2017? While it is simple to claim that ASEAN is simply maintaining its non-interference principle through the crisis, it is also important to note that various of ASEAN's related political-security ambitions are thwarted as a result. On the other hand, ASEAN is an organization that is also built upon its consensus, so when some of its states have been vocal in expressing their opposition, one may question whether the consensus principle is being followed. While Malaysia's public disagreement with ASEAN may be the clearest example of ASEAN's strained political landscape, it is not the only. Indonesia too has been vocal regarding the Rohingya crisis. The fact that these two states are Muslim-majority is an important consideration, while economic and political interests of all the states should not be forgotten. This section aims to shed light both *how* and *why* the Rohingya crisis has affected the political climate of ASEAN, through publicly known information such as news articles and official ASEAN releases, as well as through interviews carried out by the author.

6.1 ASEAN statements

ASEAN's official viewpoint on the Rakhine state was most transparently provided in a statement released on 24 September 2017, but can be found sprinkled throughout its meeting reports on issues such as disaster management, Counter-Terrorism and radicalization, humanitarian assistance and conflict prevention. While some meetings such as the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting on 19 December 2016 discussed the issues, they lack officially released documents from ASEAN. ASEAN's collective viewpoint on the issue of the Rakhine state, however, is included in statements that have addressed the issue.

The ASEAN Chairman's statement on the humanitarian situation in Rakhine state is the most useful public resource that ASEAN has released regarding the Rohingya crisis. The

reaction to it is exemplary of the political tensions created by disagreement on the Rohingya crisis. The statement was written after an informal meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, which Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi stated was “quite out of the ordinary”.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, it sheds light on both ASEAN’s urge to address the issue as well as its stance on the issue. Regarding the most recent episodes of violence in the Rakhine state, the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN states “...condemned the attacks against Myanmar Security Forces on 25 August 2017 and all acts of violence which resulted in loss of civilian lives, destruction of homes and displacement of large numbers of people.”¹⁰¹

This shows ASEAN’s unwillingness to address the root causes of the situation in the Rakhine state. Apparently, ASEAN attempts to apply a blanket condemnation to all parties involved in the recent violent outbreak. What is notable, however, is the fact that it mentions attacks against the Myanmar Security Forces, while it does not specifically mention any ethnic groups that have suffered violence. As discussed before, ASEAN does not use the term *Rohingya* due to Myanmar’s objection to the use of the term, instead simply referring to ‘civilians’ generally. These considerations show that ASEAN aims to avoid addressing the historical root causes of the violence. Despite ASEAN being expected to condemn attacks against the Myanmar Security Forces, it is understandable that the way the statement is worded could be seen as a thorn in the eye of those who consider those same forces to be the perpetrators of much of the violence.

A further important excerpt from the statement relates to its clear reinforcement of the non-intervention principle, namely as it “... welcomed the commitment by the Myanmar

¹⁰⁰ Cabico, G. K. (2017, September 25). Malaysia calls Cayetano's statement on Rohingya crisis a 'misrepresentation of reality'. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/09/25/1742499/malaysia-calls-cayetano-statement-rohingya-crisis-misrepresentation>

¹⁰¹ ASEAN, Chairman. (2017, September 24). ASEAN Chairman’s statement on the humanitarian situation in Rakhine State . [Press release]. Retrieved September 25, 2017, from <http://asean.org/asean-chairmans-statement-on-the-humanitarian-situation-in-rakhine-state/>

authorities to ensure the safety of civilians, take immediate steps to end the violence in Rakhine, restore normal socio-economic conditions, and address the refugee problem” [sic] ¹⁰². Thus, we have clear indication that ASEAN will stay true to its non-interference principle despite international and regional calls to act, by showing its trust in the Myanmar authorities to take the appropriate steps to resolve the situation in the Rakhine state. While this fits with the non-intervention principle, it begs the question whether ASEAN regards Myanmar as the sole player involved in the refugee problem, and believes it can solve the crisis alone. Nonetheless, “[t]he Foreign Ministers urged Myanmar to continue to implement the recommendations of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.”¹⁰³ The recommendations include among others, addressing the following issues: open humanitarian access into the Rakhine State; (domestic and International) Media access; Justice and Rule of Law (considering alleged human rights abuses); Cultural and socioeconomic advancement; citizenship rights and freedom of movement.¹⁰⁴ The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State’s recommendation regarding regional involvement, however, only suggests Myanmar should continue to brief the neighboring countries as they did in the meeting on 19 December 2016. It is clear, therefore, that ASEAN can associate itself with the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, as they do not oppose the non-interference principle and primarily focus on actions that Myanmar itself needs to take, rather than committing the other ASEAN states. Thus, although prompting Myanmar to follow various improvements to the situation, it is clear from these excerpts that the statement was not very sternly worded and did not address the core of the problem, which prompted Malaysia’s response. Furthermore, it could be seen that ASEAN’s main way of dealing with the crisis may in fact be to get Myanmar to comply with

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. (2017, 23 August). Towards a peaceful, fair and prosperous future for the people of Rakhine (Rep.).

the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, as it allows itself to remain directly uninvolved, as stipulated by the non-interference principle.

ASEAN seems to avoid mentioning the issue of the Rakhine state in cross-cutting topics that are relevant to it. While various statements are made about increasing cooperation on areas such as creating a task force to address emergencies resulting from irregular movements (ASEAN 30th summit¹⁰⁵) or tackling radicalization (Manila Declaration to counter the rise of radicalization and violent extremism¹⁰⁶), the connection to their relevance to the situation in the Rakhine state remains elusive within the texts. This shows that ASEAN aims to increase integration on these topics, but has decided to approach them more generally and theoretically, allowing space for interpretation on a case-to-case basis. One specific case where one of the documents did in fact make a direct reference to Rakhine state was in a meeting regarding disaster management and emergency response on 19 October 2017. It stated that “the AHA Centre in view of recent experiences in providing humanitarian assistance to displaced communities in ... the Rakhine State” should “focus on responding to natural disasters.”¹⁰⁷ This statement suggests that mechanisms such as the AHA Centre will not be applied to address the Rohingya crisis or any similar crisis that is man-made (and politically charged). This straightforward distancing from humanitarian assistance through an ASEAN mechanism portrays how politically difficult the Rohingya crisis is, and how ASEAN goes to lengths to ensure it is not discussed. Lastly, the recent statement following the 31st ASEAN summit did not mention the Rohingya issue, reaffirming ASEAN’s unwillingness to address the issue further.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Duterte, R. (2017, April 29). Chairman’s Statement 30th ASEAN Summit. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/ctbwuy>

¹⁰⁶ ASEAN Ministers. (2017, September 24). Manila Declaration to counter the rise of radicalization and violent extremism. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/pfjGa2>

¹⁰⁷ Saysompheng, H.E. K. (2017, October 19). Chairman’s Statement of The Sixth Meeting of The Conference of The Parties to The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response and The Fifth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/oBsdX3>

¹⁰⁸ Flores, H. (2017, November 18) Philippines won’t join UN condemnation of attacks on Rohingya. Philstar.com, Philstar, from www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/11/18/1760042/philippines-wont-join-un-condemnation-attacks-rohingya.

6.2 ASEAN Member States vocally condemning the Rohingya Crisis

“The issue isn’t interference by ASEAN anymore. Muslim majority members of ASEAN have already clearly abandoned this principle as shown by Indonesia and Malaysia pushing very heavily for investigation about Rohingya abuses”¹⁰⁹

A divide of opinions between Muslim majority and non-Muslim majority countries is quite clear in the case of the Rohingya crisis. Indonesia and Malaysia have been the most vocal ASEAN states, pressing for action to be taken in their own ways. As discussed previously, ASEAN has taken an inactive stance because of its political sensitivity and the fact that ASEAN does not want to discuss it due to a lack of consensus on the matter. As embodied by the quote from McCarthy above, it seems Indonesia and Malaysia have not shied away from expressing their views despite the conflict with ASEAN’s stance. While it may seem sensible to assume that the disagreement with ASEAN’s inaction is drawn upon religious lines, it is important to consider the political and economic dimensions of the differences in how states have responded to the crisis.

Indonesia has shown a change in attitude towards non-interference in light of the Rohingya crisis. Indonesia has historically been part of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which has explained its often-stern support of the non-interference principle. Numerous internal conflicts such as separatist movements and subsequent crackdowns (East-Timor, Papua, Aceh, etc) have resulted in Indonesia arguing that these are domestic issues, and they should solve such issues internally, much like Myanmar’s rhetoric regarding the current Rohingya crisis. A strong exemplification of this, as mentioned before, was Thailand’s call to review the non-interference principle after Indonesia’s crackdown in East-Timor in 1999.

In the current Rohingya crisis, however, Indonesia has been supportive of action towards ending the alleged atrocities in the Rakhine state. This is likely due to domestic

¹⁰⁹ Niseiy, S. P. (2017, February 10). Cambodia's Prime Minister Is Wrong About Myanmar's Rohingya Issue. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <https://thediplomat.com/2017/02/cambodias-prime-minister-is-wrong-about-myanmars-rohingya-issue/>

pressure, which has been evident in the Indonesian public sphere of conversation, following protests,¹¹⁰ and a Molotov cocktail attack at the Myanmar embassy in Jakarta.¹¹¹ This public support for the Rohingya cause makes sense considering Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim majority country. Various Indonesian leaders have spoken out, with President Joko (Jokowi) Widodo stating that concrete action should be taken rather than simple condemnation of the situation:¹¹² “tangible actions, not just statements, and criticism”.¹¹³ Furthermore, Indonesia made clear that they did not accept the “claim [that] gross violations of human rights [can be seen] as a domestic matter”,¹¹⁴ with Jokowi stressing regional impacts.¹¹⁵ In fact, Indonesia has done more than just criticize, sending Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi to speak to various key players in Myanmar and Bangladesh early September, including a meeting with Suu Kyi where she stressed the importance of the ‘4+1’ recommendations, namely: (1) restoration of stability and public order; (2) maximum self-restraint and the non-use of force; (3) protection of all without exception or segregation based on ethnicity or religion; (4) open access to humanitarian aid, and (+1:) following the recommendations stipulated in the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State’s report, as detailed previously.¹¹⁶ Therefore Indonesia, while supporting Myanmar’s independent action, is taking more action by openly creating a dialogue. Furthermore, Dr. Marty Natalegawa, Indonesia’s former Foreign Minister, commented on ASEAN’s “deafening silence”¹¹⁷ on the Rohingya issue, which he deemed “unacceptable”.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Roughneen, S., Johnson, J., & Lyon, I. (2017, September 06). Thousands of Indonesians protest at Jakarta embassy over Burma's treatment of Rohingya Muslims. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/06/thousands-indonesians-protest-jakarta-embassy-burmas-treatment/>

¹¹¹ Indonesian President Jokowi deploras violence against Rohingya. (2017, September 03). Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/indonesian-president-jokowi-deplores-violence-against-rohingya-9182930>

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Tempo.Co. (2017, September 4). President Jokowi All-out in Helping Rohingya. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <https://en.tempo.co/read/news/2017/09/04/055905955/President-Jokowi-All-out-in-Helping-Rohingya>

¹¹⁴ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia, p.188

¹¹⁵ Lego, J. (2017, May 17). Why ASEAN Can't Ignore the Rohingya Crisis. Retrieved October 30, 2017, from <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/why-asean-cant-ignore-the-rohingya-crisis/>

¹¹⁶ Salim, T. (2017, September 5). Peace mission bears fruit. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/09/05/peace-mission-bears-fruit.html>

¹¹⁷ Suk-Wai, C. (2017, October 02). Asean risks credibility over its 'silence' on Rohingya issue. Retrieved October 30, 2017, from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/asean-risks-credibility-over-its-silence-on-rohingya-issue>

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Thus, like Malaysia's distancing itself from ASEAN's statement on the Rakhine state, Indonesia has distanced itself politically from ASEAN's approach to the Rohingya crisis. This foreshadows further complications to ASEAN political integration in the future due to the possible fallout over the Rohingya crisis.

Recent public pressure can help explain Malaysia's disagreement with ASEAN. Malaysia's vote "against a draft Security Council resolution condemning NATO for its armed intervention in Kosovo and participated in the INTERFET force [a UN mandated peacekeeping force] in East Timor"¹¹⁹ in 1999 shows its historical questioning of non-interference. While Malaysia has maintained for a long time "that member states could not 'allow non-interference to shield' the deteriorating situation in Myanmar",¹²⁰ the building domestic pressure can help explain their recent aggressively vocal stance regarding the Rohingya crisis. Being another majority Muslim country, Malaysian domestic pressure has mounted in support of the Rohingya cause, with large protests taking place, such as those on 30 August 2017, right after the latest re-escalation.¹²¹ In 2018, Malaysians will head to the polls, which means the Rohingya crisis came at a time that politicians may use it to secure the Muslim demographic vote, prompting I. Almutaqqi to suggest that Malaysia's concern "is an effort by the Prime Minister to try and boost his popularity with the Muslim voters".¹²² Furthermore, F. Sharief stated that Malaysia is using the situation in the Rakhine state "as a tool for politics, rather [than] that they really care for what happens in Myanmar".¹²³ This sentiment was also mirrored by a top ASEAN diplomat, who stated that as one of the 5 founding countries, Malaysia should know better.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia, p.188

¹²⁰ Ibid. p.188

¹²¹ MToday News Sdn. Bhd. (2017, August 30). Protest in Malaysia against Myanmar violence. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/08/30/protest-in-malaysia-against-myanmar-violence/>

¹²² I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

¹²³ F. Sharief, personal communication, 4 December 2017

¹²⁴ Anonymous 2, personal communication, 6 December 2017

Despite this, Malaysian leaders have taken a strong position on the Rohingya crisis. The most adamant display of both their disagreement with ASEAN's position and their support for taking action came from their Foreign Minister Anifah Aman's reaction to the ASEAN Chairman's statement.¹²⁵ At an ASEAN Foreign Minister's meeting he further stated that "the situation of the Rohingya Muslims was now of a regional concern and should be resolved together".¹²⁶ In September, he expressed his "grave concerns over such atrocities which have unleashed a fullscale humanitarian crisis that the world simply cannot ignore but must be compelled to act upon,"¹²⁷ which is in line with Indonesia's view of the situation. Furthermore, on 4 December 2016, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak even led a rally himself, calling the situation in the Rakhine State a genocide and an "insult to Islam".¹²⁸ While Malaysia's transparent disagreement on the political stance of ASEAN displays difficulties in future political integration, Dr. Vatikotis of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue has even suggested Malaysia wants Myanmar expelled from ASEAN over the crisis.¹²⁹

Brunei Darussalam (Brunei), another small Muslim majority state of ASEAN, could be expected to speak out against the violence in the Rakhine state similarly to Indonesia and Malaysia. Indeed, it has expressed its concern regarding the situation in the Rakhine state, and has offered financial aid to alleviate suffering¹³⁰. Various Brunei NGOs have offered to help refugees in Bangladesh through financial aid and helping improvements and building of new refugee camps¹³¹. Furthermore, the State Mufti of Brunei spoke out in September, stating that

¹²⁵ Aman, D. (2017, September 24). Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dato' Sri Anifah Aman

Cabico, G. K. (2017, September 25). Malaysia calls Cayetano's statement on Rohingya crisis a 'misrepresentation of reality'.

¹²⁶ Lego, J. (2017, May 17). Why ASEAN Can't Ignore the Rohingya Crisis.

¹²⁷ Nation, The. (2017, September 25). Malaysia breaks with Asean over Rohingya crisis. from www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/breakingnews/30327644.

¹²⁸ Lego, J. (2017, May 17). Why ASEAN Can't Ignore the Rohingya Crisis.

Bowie, N. (2017, September 30). Rohingya crisis splits ASEAN on religious lines. Retrieved October 30, 2017, from <http://www.atimes.com/article/rohingya-crisis-splits-asean-religious-lines/>

¹²⁹ Suk-Wai, C. (2017, October 02). Asean risks credibility over its 'silence' on Rohingya issue.

¹³⁰ Malaysiakini. (2017, September 15). Brunei to offer humanitarian assistance to Myanmar. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/395297>

¹³¹ Bandial, ain. "As humanitarian crisis mounts, more Brunei NGOs step up to help Rohingya refugees." *The Scoop*, Scoop Media, 16 Nov. 2017, thescoop.co/2017/10/16/humanitarian-crisis-mounts-brunei-ngos-step-help-rohingya-refugees/.

Brunei's Muslims "can't just be silent [about the persecution of the Rohingya Muslims]. Allah's wrath is upon us if we are silent and close our eyes to this issue".¹³² While the statement was made in relation to religious arguments (as would be expected of a Mufti), the Brunei State Mufti is appointed by the Sultan, which suggests that the words of the Mufti can be taken as an official statement. Apart from this statement, Brunei Darussalam has remained fairly quiet regarding the situation in the Rakhine state. This could be due to the size of the State, and its dependence on the other ASEAN states economically, thereby not willing to engage in the political turmoil the Rohingya crisis seems to be creating.

An important dimension of the crisis is that it is a focal point for mobilizing violent extremism in the region. Extremist groups have used the crisis to rally for their causes, which causes concern for ASEAN's regional stability. These calls come from groups associated with the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and other extremist organizations, and are aimed to recruit young fighters to go into Myanmar to fight the security forces as an act of solidarity with the Rohingya Muslims. In fact, such practices are already evident, with Malaysia's police chief confirming that there are already "Malaysian citizens ... present in Rakhine engaged in armed struggle against the Myanmar government, and that other Malaysian militants are quietly preparing to join the fight".¹³³ Furthermore, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) in Indonesia has also called for jihadists to travel to Myanmar to fight for the Rohingya cause.¹³⁴ This dimension of the conflict clearly shows a regional security implication, as a regional network of violent extremism is committing itself to fight in Rakhine state. As Malaysian and Indonesian officials have stated, it is evident that the crisis has a larger regional implication (not to mention the

¹³² Othman, A. (2017, September 23). State Mufti urges concern for Rohingya. Retrieved December 20, 2017, from <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/state-mufti-urges-concern-for-rohingya/>

¹³³ Bowie, N. (2017, September 30). Rohingya crisis splits ASEAN on religious lines.

Rodzi, N. H. (2017, September 18). Malaysians in Rakhine to fight army: KL top cop. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysians-in-rakhine-to-fight-army-kl-top-cop>

¹³⁴ Chan, F. (2017, September 19). ISIS, Al-Qaeda drawn to crisis in Rakhine state. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/isis-al-qaeda-drawn-to-crisis-in-rakhine-state>

refugee crisis that the Rohingya crisis has caused). The issue of violent extremism and counter-terrorism is an action point of ASEAN's Political-Security community, and is discussed in meetings. The Rohingya crisis has animated concern among the Muslim populations in South East Asia, and the inaction by the regional community is likely to frustrate many. ASEAN is committed to fighting violent extremism, so it is important that they consider addressing root causes of crises such as that of the Rohingya Muslims at their source as a preventative measure, rather than trying to stop violent extremists when they are active. Inaction in the Rohingya crisis therefore overflows into other political issues that ASEAN wishes to tackle, showing a wider political and security implication of the effects of its inaction on the Rohingya crisis.

6.3 ASEAN Member States that support adhering to non-interference

How ASEAN member states voted in the 16 November 2017 the UN General Assembly's (UNGA) draft resolution is telling about ASEAN states' commitment to non-interference. Egypt, on behalf of the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, submitted a draft resolution to the The UNGA Third Committee which dealt with the violence in the Rakhine state. It calls on Myanmar to halt military operations there, allow humanitarian aid into the region and to increase its efforts to reduce discrimination, among others things.¹³⁵ Ten UN member states voted against this draft resolution, including the ASEAN member states the Philippines, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and understandably, Myanmar.¹³⁶ Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam voted in favor, while interestingly Singapore and Thailand abstained from voting.¹³⁷ China also voted against the draft resolution, which suggests that there might be more at play than simple human rights considerations, especially because China is incredibly influential economically and politically in South East Asia. Voting against this

¹³⁵ General Assembly Third Committee Draft Resolution 72(c), *Situation of human rights in Myanmar*, A/C.3/72/L.48 (31 October 2017), Retrieved from <http://undocs.org/A/C.3/72/L.48>

¹³⁶ Flores, H. Philippines won't join UN condemnation of attacks on Rohingya.

¹³⁷ Valente, C. S. (2017, November 18). Palace defends PH vote vs UN resolution on Rohingya. Retrieved December 20, 2017, from <http://www.manilatimes.net/palace-defends-ph-vote-vs-un-resolution-rohingya/363757>

resolution shows that the non-interference principle has resonated into extra-regional foreign affairs policy, and shows a clear commitment to allowing Myanmar to attempt to resolve the situation on its own. It seems that the vote against is a simplified indication that these states' stances go further than adhering to the official ASEAN position on the subject.

The six states (excluding Myanmar) that did not vote in favor of the draft resolution have further expressed unwillingness to interfere with Myanmar. The Philippine Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque has defended criticism following the Philippines' vote against the UNGA draft resolution on Myanmar, reaffirming the Philippines' belief that Myanmar is able to address the situation internally.¹³⁸ Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen made it clear in February 2017 that he did not support the internationalization of the situation in the Rakhine State, and that Cambodia supports Myanmar in dealing with the issue domestically according to the ASEAN non-interference principle.¹³⁹ On the 30th of August, 5 days after the renewed violence in the Rakhine state, Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan met with Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar, Min Aung Hlaing to discuss the crisis. The Thai leaders did not use the term *Rohingya*, and reaffirmed the fact that they “don't intervene in their [Myanmar's] domestic affairs”.¹⁴⁰ The Minister Counsellor of Thailand to ASEAN stated that despite different contexts and national interests, the “ultimate goal [of ASEAN member states] is of course to have these people to live in harmony, peacefully, in the Rakhine state”.¹⁴¹ Thailand, however, has been known to drag boats filled with Rohingya refugees back to sea, sometimes giving them food and water and suggesting they travel further to Malaysia or Indonesia.¹⁴² NGOs have stated that there are roughly 100,000

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Niseiy, S. P. (2017, February 10). Cambodia's Prime Minister Is Wrong About Myanmar's Rohingya Issue.

¹⁴⁰ Nation, The. (2017, August 30). PM discusses Rohingya crisis with Myanmar military chief. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/aec/30325339>

¹⁴¹ C. Chindawongse, personal communication, 6 December 2017

¹⁴² Human Rights Watch. (2017, September 22). Thailand Needs to Stop Inhumane Navy 'Push-Backs'. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/22/thailand-needs-stop-inhumane-navy-push-backs>

refugees in camps in Thailand, although none of them are Rohingya people.¹⁴³ This is a clear indication that Thai officials do not wish to become involved in any aspect of the Rohingya crisis, neither the current affairs in the Rakhine state nor the refugee problem Singapore has promised to support humanitarian efforts for the Rakhine State by donating \$100,000 through the AHA centre. As discussed earlier, however, the AHA Centre seems to have decided to primarily concern itself to natural disasters in the future. Furthermore, Singapore has asked all parties involved to remain calm and prevent further escalation of the conflict, a statement that came weeks before - but is perfectly in line with – the ASEAN Chairman’s statement on the situation.¹⁴⁴ It further made clear that it would help through the relevant ASEAN channels, thus further strengthening the position that it will align with ASEAN protocol and stance. Lastly, Vietnam and Lao PDR have been very quiet regarding the matter, which is most likely a display of unwillingness to even address the issue.

6.4 Domestic Political and Economic Considerations

The adherence of these states to the non-interference principle stems from a combination of economic and domestic political considerations. Each state, apart from their commitment to protecting human rights within the ASEAN ideal, have their own national considerations to make when deciding on how to react to a situation such as that unfolding in the Rakhine State.

Domestic political considerations are heavily influential in making foreign policy for how to address the Rohingya issue. Within the states that are Buddhist majority (Thailand, Cambodia, Laos) it is understandable that leaders are unlikely to speak in favor of the Rohingya Muslims due to the demographics of their respective countries. In Myanmar itself for example, Suu Kyi refrained from addressing the issue for a long too since it may result in negative

¹⁴³ Reuters. (2017, October 01). Thailand 'Closely Following' Rohingya Crisis, Will Send Aid. Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <https://www.voanews.com/a/thailand-rohingya-aid/4051531.html>

¹⁴⁴ Violence in Rakhine must stop now: Vivian Balakrishnan. (2017, September 27). Retrieved December 20, 2017, from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/violence-in-rakhine-must-stop-now-vivian-balakrishnan-9254038>

political attention towards her and her party. Despite her status as a Nobel Peace Prize winner, she is a politician more than an activist¹⁴⁵. This is likely a driving consideration for each leader that wishes to consolidate power and remain favoured by the largest demographics within their states. This may be why states such as Singapore have publicly showed they care, such as Singapore Foreign Minister Dr. Balakrishnan, who stated that violence in the Rakhine state must “stop now”, and that Singapore is looking for a long-term political solution to the crisis¹⁴⁶. Such a statement will likely fall well with the public, while Singapore has done little apart from support ASEAN’s non-interference principle and financial contributions. On 12 October 2017, Laotian Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and Indonesian President Jokowi met in Bogor, where they agreed to “help solve the problems in Rakhine”,¹⁴⁷ which shows a care for resolving the situation, but is careful not to overstate his support for the Rohingya People. The argument of the impact domestic political considerations is the same for why Indonesia and Malaysia have been so vocal on the issue, namely due to their majority Muslim demographics, as mentioned in arguments by Almutaqi and Sharief. Economic and domestic political considerations have likely had a large role on each state’s foreign policy regarding the Rohingya crisis, rather than considerations of human rights or political cohesion and adherence to ASEAN principles.

National economic considerations include the effect to trade and stability as a result of condemning or acting against Myanmar. Condemnation of the situation in the Rakhine state alone is likely enough to dissuade investment into Myanmar, which would already influence other ASEAN states’ economic conditions. Looking at it more drastically, if action were to be

¹⁴⁵ Lee, R. (2014). A Politician, Not an Icon: Aung San Suu Kyis Silence on Myanmar’s Muslim Rohingya. *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, 25(3), 321-333. doi:10.1080/09596410.2014.913850 p.327

¹⁴⁶ Violence in Rakhine must stop now: Vivian Balakrishnan. (2017, September 27). Retrieved December 20, 2017, from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/violence-in-rakhine-must-stop-now-vivian-balakrishnan-9254038>

¹⁴⁷ Sheany. (2017, October 12). Indonesia, Laos Agree to Help Solve Myanmar Crisis ... Retrieved December 20, 2017, from jakartaglobe.id/news/indonesia-laos-agree-help-solve-myanmar-crisis/

taken by ASEAN or non-regional states (such as through a UN resolution), it is likely that sanctions would be a first step to coerce Myanmar into halting the alleged atrocities. This would have a detrimental effect on each of the ASEAN member states in terms of trade, and if other influential states such as China do not follow the same path of sanctions it is possible trade will be lost for the long term, if Myanmar sets up strong ties with fewer trading partners. Furthermore, any negative economic outfall in Myanmar would have detrimental effects for the whole of ASEAN, in terms of the whole economy as well as reputation.

Some journalists argue geopolitical and economic considerations may be both the cause of the crisis as well as the reason ASEAN states do not want to interfere. A. Batrawy argues that the oil pipeline between the Middle East and China that starts in the Rakhine state needs physical security and stability, which could be an argument for driving Rohingya people out of the area. Furthermore, S. Sassen argues that Myanmar military may in fact take part in land-grabbing practices (through displacement of the Rohingya people and burning of their villages) to sell the land to Myanmar and foreign firms.¹⁴⁸ She underlines Myanmar's 2016 policy of designating 3 million acres of land within the Rakhine state to "the national list of land allocations for 'economic development'"¹⁴⁹ and China's plans to develop a deep-sea port and other industry in the Rakhine state amounting to a total investment of over \$10 billion, and suggests they might be linked to the displacement of the Rohingya people. She further proposes that religion is used as a legitimization of these land-grabbing practices, but may not be the main motivation for the atrocities being committed. It seems that these economic considerations could explain why China has asked for patience within the Security Council concerning Rohingya,¹⁵⁰ and instead arguing that Myanmar is "'capable of handling' the situation without

¹⁴⁸ Sassen, S. (2017, September 15). The Assault On The Rohingya Is Not Only About Religion

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Bodeen | AP, C. (2017, October 21). China supports Myanmar 'safeguarding peace and stability'. Retrieved October 30, 2017, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-supports-myanmar-safeguarding-peace-and-stability/2017/10/21/90205e4a-b625-11e7-9b93-b97043e57a22_story.html?utm_term=.2440c008d926

outside help”.¹⁵¹ China, like ASEAN and the ASEAN member states, also claims to adhere to the principle of non-interference, although they are infamously present in other countries because of economic considerations. The strong (institutionalized through ASEAN) economic ties between South East Asia and China as well as between Myanmar and other ASEAN member states may have discouraged some ASEAN states from confronting the issue to stay in China’s good books, and maintain economic ties with Myanmar, despite the negative impact on international reputation of their states with regards to human rights. For example, Indonesia continues to boost trade with Myanmar by \$1 Billion a year.¹⁵² Some ASEAN states are quite easily influenced by China through economic considerations, which can result in some states pushing through China’s vision of issues within ASEAN. In fact, Sharief has argued that some ASEAN states act as Chinese “puppets” to ensure a favorable outcome for China.¹⁵³ This is not far-fetched, especially considering that ASEAN states put their own interests first, something that is “perfectly natural” according to Almutaqqi.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, a top ASEAN diplomat recalled a sentiment that was present at the birth of ASEAN: in order for ASEAN to thrive, states must marry national and regional thinking.¹⁵⁵

Although ASEAN was created under political considerations, it has grown into focusing on its economic cooperation. If one compares the progress ASEAN is making to how the European Union (EU) formed, for example, the EU initially formed out of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), an economically motivated community which was created in 1952.¹⁵⁶ While one of the EU’s main goals is still the economic unity of its member states, it has since formed into an amalgamation of a political and economic union, dealing with both

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Batrawy, A. (2017, September 21). Business ties complicate Muslim states' response to Rohingya. Retrieved November 01, 2017, from <https://goo.gl/5W5kh9>

¹⁵³ F. Sharief, personal communication, 4 December 2017

¹⁵⁴ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

¹⁵⁵ Anonymous 2, personal communication, 6 December 2017

¹⁵⁶ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. (2014, May 25). European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Retrieved November 22, 2017, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/European-Coal-and-Steel-Community>

issues instead. *Finalité politique of the EU* - or looking to see what the EU will become after further integration - seems to be avoided in discussion, allowing the EU to take a course of integration that is fitting to the times without an end-goal in mind that may change individual states' attitudes when faced with a prospect of losing sovereignty. The same may be argued for ASEAN, as at times of crisis further political integration seems difficult, but may continue to integrate further nonetheless with increased political mechanisms and cooperation being implemented year after year. A top ASEAN diplomat argued that ASEAN never aspired to become similar to the EU, however, suggesting that it is unlikely that ASEAN will take a similar form.¹⁵⁷ According to Rodolfo Severino, a stronger ASEAN that can provide the “driving force”¹⁵⁸ of regionalism they have set out to achieve requires that political and economic integration stop being pursued independently from each other. Severino's statement suggests that politics and economics are inevitably intertwined, as can be seen by the possible economic consideration ASEAN member states have made when choosing to adhere to the non-interference principle towards the Rohingya crisis, such as their trade with Myanmar. ASEAN does not seem to want to slow down on their Economic integration, despite political tensions, leaving the two issues separate. Will ASEAN then, albeit more slowly, take a path to further political integration in a way that does not go hand-in-hand with economic integration, or will its political integration stagnate?

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous 2, personal communication, 6 December 2017

¹⁵⁸ Severino, R. C. (2007). ASEAN Beyond Forty: Towards Political and Economic Integration. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 29(3), 406-423. doi:10.1355/cs29-3b p.406-407

7. The Rohingya Crisis' possible effect on ASEAN

The Rohingya crisis may be an indication of a limit of political integration that ASEAN is not willing to cross. Domestic political and national economic interests of the member states seems to overpower human rights discourse considerations, and may be the leading reasons for ASEAN's inaction towards the situation in the Rakhine state. Despite political tensions resulting from the Rohingya crisis, such as Malaysia's disagreement with the Chairman's statement, ASEAN cooperation does not seem to have wavered. In fact, Almutaqqi argues that "it demonstrates the confidence of ASEAN, that they can disagree with one another and that it doesn't tear them apart".¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, the majority of ASEAN member states have shown that they are not willing to interfere with the Rohingya crisis, suggesting that they are not interested in increasing the ability of ASEAN to act in these types of crises. This falls in line with the reasons for the creation of ASEAN such as the reduction of conflict within the region. With their adherence to the non-interference and consensus principles in the wake of the Rohingya crisis, it seems that the Rohingya crisis may not be a limiting factor of ASEAN political integration, but only an indication of its current limit. It seems that most of the states are comfortable with ASEAN acting as a 'cow' rather than a 'horse', slow and stable rather than fast and powerful. Some writers have suggested that this is a likely course, with Kelly Gerard even suggesting that the reform of ASEAN is a "myth", and that "many key practices have not changed and are unlikely to do so".¹⁶⁰

New attitudes within ASEAN show potential for growth in political integration and mechanisms to address crises in the future. While the current ASEAN human rights mechanism in the AICHR is limited by its Terms of References and the non-intervention and consensus principles, it is an indicator of a change of attitude in ASEAN. While AICHR's scope and

¹⁵⁹ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

¹⁶⁰ Gerard, K. (2017, November 16). ASEAN's myths: creating continuity, rather than change. Retrieved November 22, 2017, from <http://www.newmandala.org/aseans-myths-creating-continuity-rather-change/>

potential to act upon man-made crises has either never existed or has been dismantled subsequently due to fear of offending the non-interference principle, the fact that the body was created is a step in the right direction. It provides a platform for ASEAN states to coming together and create stronger mechanisms to avoid or effectively cope with similar crises in the future. The fact that AICHR's Terms of References are open to revision in the future, Almutaqqi suggests, provides a hope that "over time the member states will start to be more comfortable with these mechanisms" and give the body more enforcement power.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, states such as the Philippines and Singapore have expressed their confidence that political differences will not halt political progress within ASEAN, instead finding ways around a lack of consensus through new and innovative methods of making statements. The Philippines stated that it respected Malaysia's distancing from the ASEAN Chairperson statement on the Rakhine state, and that the dissent in fact "demonstrates a new level of maturity on how we implement ASEAN's consensus principle when confronted with issues affecting national interests".¹⁶² With this, it can be argued that ASEAN is simply taking its time in developing conflict resolution and crisis response mechanisms, according to the ideal of ensuring each state is comfortable and is ready to move on.

The fact that Indonesia and Malaysia do not accept inaction over the Rohingya crisis brings into question the contemporary applicability of the non-intervention and consensus principles. For some years now, various crises such as the situation in East-Timor in 1999 have caused questions about the non-intervention principle, which shows that the issue at least in the sphere of discussion within ASEAN. Furthermore, the fact that the Rohingya crisis has caused for the second publicly flaunted break in consensus (after the 2012 South China Sea failed joint communique) suggests the principle is strained. The reactions of Malaysia and Indonesia to the

¹⁶¹ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

¹⁶² Dancel, Raul. "Philippines 'respects' Malaysia's dissent on Asean's Rakhine crisis statement." *The Straits Times*, 25 Sept. 2017, www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-respects-malaysias-dissent-on-aseans-rakhine-crisis-statement.

current crisis have shown that they do not accept that non-interference and consensus principles can prevent action being taken to alleviate the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. It seems that Indonesia and Malaysia do not plan to lose steam in promoting action being taken, which would suggest a need to adapt the founding principles of ASEAN after (or during) the Rohingya crisis, should these states be set on allowing ASEAN action in similar future crises. The rethinking of the non-intervention and consensus principles then would seem necessary, if indeed Indonesia and Malaysia put as much importance on the Rohingya crisis as they seem to. On the other hand, if it is indeed true that Malaysia and Indonesia are only using the Rohingya crisis as a discourse for domestic political gain, it is unlikely that they will push for change in ASEAN's foundational principles.

The majority of ASEAN member states' commitment to inaction regarding the Rohingya crisis may instead show the strength of ASEAN's founding principles. Considering that most ASEAN member states are in favor of non-interference regarding the Rohingya crisis, exemplified by ASEAN's inaction as well as the five individual member states' votes against the UNGA draft resolution on Myanmar, it makes sense that little change will be made to the non-interference principle despite Indonesia and Malaysia's calls. Furthermore, ASEAN's institutional culture is extremely strong. According to Almutaqqi "it is hard to see ASEAN ever abandoning the non-interference principles simply because it has worked for the last 50 years. I think government and diplomats and bureaucrats by nature are quite conservative, so their feeling will always be: if it isn't broken why try and fix it?"¹⁶³ Recalling the attempt by Thailand in to change the non-interference principle after the Indonesian crackdown in East-Timor in 1999, ASEAN has shown in the past it is not willing to change its founding principles. While history does not define contemporary considerations, the process failed despite knowledge that similar types of crises could occur in the future. This underlines the likelihood of a commitment

¹⁶³ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

by ASEAN to stick to its founding principles of non-interference and consensus despite these being questioned by Indonesia and Malaysia throughout the crisis, as they have served as a glue that keeps ASEAN together despite differing national and political interests. With this, it is likely that ASEAN will try and resolve the Rohingya crisis without breaking non-interference, for example by pressing the application of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State's recommendations on the basis that the crisis has regional effects.¹⁶⁴

ASEAN's reaction to the Rohingya crisis may have set a precedent for future crises within the region. If the Rohingya crisis has indeed identified a limit to political integration and crisis response mechanisms within ASEAN, it means that ASEAN currently and for the foreseeable future is unable to resolve large humanitarian crisis due to its states' national interests. The non-interference principle has stood strong throughout the crisis, which is an indication of its continued centrality in ASEAN. It is further likely that the consensus principle will allow states to say no to any sensitive topics they do not want to discuss, such as politically and religiously charged issues such as the Rohingya crisis, in order to maintain ASEAN unity. Thus, it may be the case that the Rohingya crisis has shown ASEAN's lack of ability to act. As argued before, it is unlikely that ASEAN will change its non-interference and consensus principles soon, which suggests future crises are likely to have a similar outcome if any one of the states' national interests oppose action. With this, ASEAN's political-security community cannot be depended on to resolve human rights abuses and humanitarian crises within its member states. Such crisis resolution therefore needs to come primarily from action by the states in which the problems present themselves. But what if the state is the actor perpetrating the human rights abuses? While this precedent may be positive for ASEAN unity and reducing tensions between its member states, it may have diverse consequences for ASEAN's reputation

¹⁶⁴ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

and its ability to address trans-national security threats, not to mention inability to halt human rights abuses.

Not responding to the situation in the Rakhine state or similar crises in the future may mean that ASEAN cannot effectively reach some of its political-security goals. The APSC concerns itself with non-traditional security threats such as trans-national drug trade, human trafficking and violent extremism which all have regional implications. Cooperation on these kinds of security threats can be considered one of the driving factors in political integration within ASEAN, according to various experts.¹⁶⁵ If ASEAN is not able to act upon crises such as that in the Rakhine state, it may not be able to address the root causes of such non-traditional security threats. For example, they wish to battle violent extremism, but the Rohingya crisis has been a rallying call for violent extremists to mobilize in support of the Rohingya Muslims. Furthermore, if the cause of the exodus of the Rohingya people is not addressed, the refugee problem will continue to worsen. Therefore, by not addressing the root causes of these regional security threats, the APSC may not be able to achieve its goals. This in turn may reduce the confidence in increasing political integration, as a lack of progress may indicate a waste of resources for ASEAN member states. On the other hand, L. Alexandra suggests that “you can’t really see that kind of common vision, or common perception as what you constitute as a security threat for ASEAN”, suggesting that cooperation on these issues might be difficult before even considering addressing the root causes such as the Rohingya crisis.¹⁶⁶ It is therefore difficult to determine to what extent the Rohingya crisis may influence the ability of ASEAN to address non-traditional security threats. Since cooperation on these types of security threats is beneficial to all ASEAN states and not politically sensitive, the member states will likely continue pressing forward to provide an integrated response to these threats.

¹⁶⁵ L. Alexandra, personal communication, 6 December 2017;
Anonymous 1, personal communication, 5 December 2017

¹⁶⁶ L. Alexandra, personal communication, 6 December 2017

ASEAN's and its member states' international images are extremely important for their international influence, and may prompt change in its inaction over the Rohingya crisis. Various member states use ASEAN to improve their international presence and image. As argued previously, creating a human rights body such as AICHR may have been a response to international pressure for ASEAN to become a more responsible community. Furthermore, many states see an integrated ASEAN as a strong international player, prompting the weaker ASEAN member states to continue political integration, "given the fact that they are economically weak, politically undemocratic, they just don't have enough exposure for the international community."¹⁶⁷ While Myanmar sees ASEAN as a "gate to the international community"¹⁶⁸, it can be argued that the human rights abuses in the member state have been "a sort of embarrassment for ASEAN".¹⁶⁹ The condemnations of the international community may not have had an immediate effect on either ASEAN's or Myanmar's actions, but in fact L. Alexandra suggests that the Myanmar government does significantly care about its international image.¹⁷⁰ With this, it seems that having some sort of increased international power through the ASEAN platform is indeed a significant aspect for most ASEAN countries. In order to preserve ASEAN's reputation in the world, it would seem that it may be prompted to act on human rights violations, as it is an influential topic within the international (and specifically, Western) discourse. If ASEAN is unable to act to stop human rights abuses such as the Rohingya crisis, it is possible that the international community may be prompted to interfere at some point. This would go against one of the foundational reasons ASEAN was created: to reduce external influences. With this, the issue of international image of ASEAN and international pressure may become a more significant consideration as the Rohingya crisis exacerbates. Therefore, if ASEAN wants to improve its image as a respected member of the international community and

¹⁶⁷ F. Sharief, personal communication, 4 December 2017

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

¹⁷⁰ L. Alexandra, personal communication, 6 December 2017

avoid external influence, it must improve its conflict resolution and crisis management mechanisms.

8. Conclusion

Despite the negative impact on ASEAN's international reputation, its member states will likely continue to put national interests first. As discussed, foreign policy decisions often result from a combination of economic, religious, and domestic political considerations for each member state. It is clear from considering each member states' stance on the matter that the issue goes deeper than the internationally popular human rights (arguably Western) narrative, further reinforcing Bellamy and Drummond's statement that ASEAN allows economic prosperity and political consolidation through the 'postponement of individual human rights for the greater good of national development.'¹⁷¹ National interests will always overpower regional considerations for ASEAN member states, despite the possible consequences for the community. With this stance, ASEAN may significantly damage its credibility as a modern regional community due to the watchful and concerned eyes of the international community. While this damage in credibility may be worrisome for ASEAN and its member states, it seems that the concern for ASEAN's reputation is secondary to domestic political and economic interests of the member states. In order for ASEAN to improve on this front, it seems beneficial if the member states take steps towards aligning national and regional thinking, as they can work hand in hand. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that ASEAN will cave to international pressure to act.

ASEAN is unlikely depart from its non-interference principle, despite Malaysia and Indonesia's calls for action. ASEAN has urged Myanmar to solve the issue itself, and seems to have placed its hope of finding a resolution to the issue on Myanmar following the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State's recommendations. While this course of action has not yielded results in ending the violence and the exodus of Rohingya people leaving the Rakhine state,

¹⁷¹ Bellamy, A. J., & Drummond, C. (2011). The responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia, p.184

ASEAN has made a clear statement that despite some of its member states protests, non-interference and consensus will remain principles central to ASEAN's identity. The fact that ASEAN will likely not have the means to solve crises such as the Rohingya crisis in the near future suggests problems may have a far wider regional implication, such as an overflow into other aspects of political cooperation such as violent extremism and refugee issues. However, it seems that ASEAN and its member states are generally very comfortable with non-interference and consensus, as they have been successful in preventing conflict between the states.

While there has been a change in attitude with ASEAN, significant change is unlikely to come any time soon. The creation of the AICHR has been a big step for ASEAN, but it may take a long time before it will have the ability to intervene in human rights abuses. In any case, such progress is unlikely to happen in time to provide an ASEAN integrated response to the Rohingya crisis. Incremental change is the most that can be expected from ASEAN, and the ASEAN member states to be comfortable with that. The *ASEAN Way* stipulates the idea that ASEAN will only move as fast as its slowest member, meaning it will remain a 'cow' and never become a 'horse'.

The regional response to the Rohingya crisis has thickened the line that ASEAN is not willing to cross. It has shown that there is a clear limit to what is possible to be discussed within the institution, especially regarding crises that are politically sensitive. ASEAN's willingness to work on other issues such as violent extremism suggests that ASEAN member states are only comfortable working together politically when their domestic political agendas overlap and a consensus is simple to achieve. According to these considerations, political integration will only develop insofar as the non-interference and consensus principles allow. Despite attempts for reform, ASEAN will likely continue to remain bound by its founding principles 50 years later, and be judged internationally for its inability to address human rights abuses within its region.

“Obviously, if you are a Rohingya refugee stranded in Bangladesh where you have been suffering a lot, it doesn’t mean much to them if you tell them it will take time but progress has been made. So, I guess that’s the main challenge for ASEAN, which is that there are very urgent problems taking place in ASEAN, and although ASEAN has made progress, it is not coming fast enough for the people that need it the most.”¹⁷²

Current academic debate could benefit from more insight into how current crises that have shown to challenge the concepts of consensus and non-interference may have an effect on the progress of ASEAN integration. While there is a wealth of literature on the changing nature of the non-interference principle within ASEAN, and its flexible application depending on pragmatic considerations depending on situational factors, this paper has aimed to add an analysis of whether the Rohingya crisis may lead to changes within ASEAN. Especially because humanitarian crises and violations of human rights together with a global change in norms concerning these issues have partly helped prompt change of the AU, this paper analyses the question of whether a large-scale crisis may have a similar effect on ASEAN’s principles.

Using a combination of secondary sources on ASEAN, primary sources from news organizations and personal communications with experts on the subject, this paper addresses how and why ASEAN has reacted to the Rohingya crisis. Previous academics have laid the groundwork for understanding ASEAN’s principles and their relevance to its actions. News articles allow current events and leader statements to be investigated to gain understanding of how different ASEAN member states feel about the crisis and the future of ASEAN, despite their possible international bias. These news articles have helped paint a picture of the motivations of these states for this stance, and the analysis of these motivations may suggest future actions in relation to other humanitarian crises in the region. Finally, the experts that were interviewed have provided a sense of what ASEAN wants to achieve, and helped form a narrative as to if ASEAN is actually considering making changes to its principles in light of the Rohingya situation. Together, they have portrayed a strong sense that ASEAN is not ambitious

¹⁷² I. Almutaqqi, personal communication, 7 December 2017

to follow the EU and the AU in implementing stronger mechanisms to collectively deal with human rights violations within its region.

Future research could look more into ASEAN's mechanisms of dealing with human rights violations and crises, and their ability to grow over time. The ability for organizations such as the AICHR to develop over time is present within their terms of references, but further research would be needed to identify how exactly this could come into practice. While this paper identifies the sentiments of the ASEAN member states concerning the future of ASEAN and its development in the realm of human rights and crisis response, it does not provide an outline of how such changes might occur pragmatically. While such a plan may seem as an imposition of Western thinking upon ASEAN, future research may consider to what effect changing non-interference and consensus principles as well as human rights and crisis mechanisms may have on regional dynamics. With this, a legal perspective concerning the documents of ASEAN bodies that deal with human rights and disaster response may be beneficial to fully understand the possibilities of change for ASEAN in the future. Furthermore, a discourse analysis of prominent leaders in the region concerning the future and possibilities for change in ASEAN would be necessary to identify whether such change is actually welcomed by the region. While such further research does not deal directly with the Rohingya crisis, it may serve as a pillar for understanding how and why ASEAN may or may not change because of regional political crises.

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Annex 1: Base questions for semi-structured interviews

The questions were sent to the participants ahead of their interviews. As mentioned earlier, the semi-structured method allows for departure from the base questions, as they are merely meant to prompt discussion.

Interview Questions on ASEAN Political Integration

1. What are the main driving factors of political integration within ASEAN?
2. What do you consider the motivations for ASEAN member states to integrate politically through the ASEAN framework?
3. What are some difficulties in the progression of political integration?
4. Looking at other regional communities such as the EU and AU, how do you think mechanisms that deal with crises differ? Furthermore, is there momentum within ASEAN to make such mechanisms more effective? (e.g. AHA, AICHR, etc.)
5. How do political crises affect the political cooperation and integration of ASEAN member states?