

ASEM and its Future Contribution for the World Peace

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Abstrak

Kondisi konstelasi global di bawah ancaman unilateralisme Amerika Serikat dan sekutunya telah menciptakan suatu "orde global baru" yang mengedepankan perang melawan terorisme. Situasi ini sayangnya mendorong kondisi perdamaian dunia kearah yang lebih buruk dan rentan akan eskalasi konflik yang beranjak menjadi sebuah perang terbuka. Bagi ASEM, pada usianya yang kesepuluh, kondisi saat ini menuntut suatu perbaikan, baik secara internal maupun dalam hal peranannya untuk menciptakan dan mempertahankan perdamaian dunia, meskipun disadari bahwa ASEM tidak memiliki banyak pilihan amunisi untuk itu.

Key words: *trans-regionalism, terrorism, new global order, peace promotion and dialogue*

Introduction

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) was initiated in March 1996 with an inaugural summit of leaders from ASEAN, Korea, Japan and China and from the European Union (EU) member states and the European Commission. A decade down the road with five summits held in Bangkok (1996), London (1998), Seoul (2000), Copenhagen (2002) and Hanoi (2004), ASEM finds itself at a crossroads. Outwardly, the global and regional

environment in which ASEM activates has changed notably compared to ten years ago. Today's century has brought about greater uncertainty and challenges. The establishment of ASEM was also supported by several factors i.e. globalization power that encourages the challenges to nation-state to hold more interaction in regional and trans-regional partnership. This partnership is deemed to be necessary to determine the forward-moving of interdependent world.

Meanwhile ASEM has also been assumed as endeavors to keep the world balanced particularly in the post-*Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation* (APEC) launched.¹ East Asian economic growth, European Integration enlargement, emerging interdependence between Europe and Asia, more aggressive American unilateralism and the world economic fragmentation into 3 divided blocks (U.S., Europe and Asia) have been the backgrounds of structural condition which invite the forming of ASEM. The convergence of European Union Members' interests and their East Asian partners may be necessarily support the ASEM to exist. Moreover, ASEM interregional process has had a great influence on the European partners. It gives an overview of the adaptation of European partner's foreign policies towards East Asia as seen in the creation or modification of their overall strategies.² In addition, we surely cannot ignore the roles of ASEAN to run the ASEM process. In the wider East Asian group, ASEAN tried to drive the roles to counter EU

disagreement on human rights issues. Myanmar's condition particularly has become the stumble blocks to ASEAN-EU relations. If this circumstance continues, ASEM proposes the solution that determine to the state-to-state level.³

ASEM existence, theoretically, may refer to what James Rosenau has offered a useful definition of transnationalism, viewing it as the processes whereby international relations conducted by governments have been supplemented by relations among private individuals, groups and societies that can and do have important consequences for the course of events.⁴ In the context of trans-regionalism, Rosenau's thought on trans-nationalism may be similar to the concept of trans-regionalism which, of course, could have more comprehensive and integrated values since this concept illustrated the merger between two regionalism or more in order to improve their regional solidity and accept the external cooperation factor could possibly contribute to define the regional identity as a precondition in forming trans-regionalism.

¹ Leonard Hutabarat, "ASEM: Instrumen Diplomasi, Integrasi Regional, dan Pembentukan Rezim", in *Global-Jurnal Politik Internasional*, Vol.7, No.1 November 2004. Pg.59-60

² César de Prado Yepes, "The Effect of ASEM on European Foreign Policies", in *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, March 2005, Springer Berlin. Pg.25-35.

³ Leonard Hutabarat. *Op,Cit*, Pg.58-59

⁴ James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence: Essays on the Transnationalisation of World Affairs*, New York, Nichols, 1980. Pg.1

ASEM Meetings and Achievements

ASEM has been emerging to catch up with new global structure by establishing a comprehensive diplomatic framework which may echo the arguments to cope with the recent global challenges. Hence, the founding of ASEM might have been recognized as this framework. Consequently, the first ASEM summit took place in Bangkok in March 1996. ASEM 1 was hailed as a successful attempt to introduce previously distant interlocutors, and, in the eyes of certain observers, established the format for a 'whole new game' in international relations. The new partnership embodied in the ASEM process was designed to be based upon a common commitment to a market economy, to the open multilateral trading system, non-discrimination, liberalization and 'open regionalism'. It was built expressly upon pre-existing channels of inter-regional communication, such as the EU-ASEAN and EU-Japan dialogues, as well as pledges, like the EU's 1994 'New Asia Strategy', to improve mutual relations. While the first ASEM summit set the inter-regional tone of the multiple activities to be held in its name, ASEM 2 – despite the shattering effects of the Asian financial crisis – further embedded the idea that Asia and Europe were now meeting one another regularly. ASEM 3 saw

attempts to return to issues that could be addressed mutually, and the timely North-South Korean *rapprochement* enabled leaders to discuss means of opening a broad security dialogue. ASEM 4 continued the region-to region dialogue with a growing focus on the Korean peninsula and a host of other issues of mutual interest. ASEM constant search for credibility and relevance through increased concrete activities and decisions must also be reconciled with its strong preoccupation to avoid formal institutions and its intangible stated goal of promoting increased understanding and enhanced co-operation.⁵ The ASEM 5 allowed for enlargement to 13 new countries. The new members in the ASEM process are the ten new EU Member States and three new *Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (ASEAN) countries. The main theme of the Summit meeting was "Further Revitalizing and Substantiating the Asia-Europe partnership". In addition, the leaders commissioned the Foreign Ministers to define priority areas for cooperation. The 6th ASEM Summit at the level of Heads of State or Government will take place in Helsinki on 10 and 11 September 2006. It will be a historically significant event as it will also mark the tenth

⁵ David Fouquet, "ASEM IV in Copenhagen Seeks to Establish Identity", in *Euro-Asia Bulletin*, Vol.6, No.7 & 8, July-August 2002, European Institute for Asian Studies, Brussels. Pg.1-3.

anniversary of the ASEM cooperation forum. The ASEM 6 Summit⁶ will be the largest ever meeting at the level of Heads of State or Government hosted by Finland. The parties to the ASEM cooperation include the 25 Member States of the European Union, the European Commission, 10 ASEAN countries and China, Japan and South Korea.

Challenges to Peace Promotion

The post Cold War environment is one of increasingly open borders in which the internal and external aspects of security are indissolubly linked. Flows of trade and investment, the development of technology and the spread of democracy have brought freedom and prosperity to many people. Others have perceived globalization as a cause of frustration and injustice.⁷ Global development has become influential to determine applied policies by certain countries particularly U.S. and other advanced

countries that ironically have played great roles in increasing tensions with developing countries. It seems that international system will no longer be based on the consideration of narrow and rigid concept of national sovereignty but it will be likely formed by the emerging transnational issues both in politics and economy. Involved actors in international system will vary since it includes state and non-state actors in which conflict will come out in terms of asymmetric features between "the strong" and "the weak". As far as this, international crime and terrorism acts would dominantly become international issues.⁸ Then, terrorism is not only conducted by non-state actors but also by the state itself. This can likely be seen in U.S.' terrorism against Iraq and Israel's terrorism against Palestine and Lebanon. This such state terrorism is hiding in the slogan of "War against terrorism". For this reason, war deployment could be comprehended in several perspectives such as Kauppi and Viotti who argued that there are two conditions which are critical in terms of the "production of war": (1) the urge of a power to create a global

⁶ The priorities of Helsinki Summit are support for the multilateral international system, addressing security threats including global health threats such as the avian flu, questions related to energy security and climate change, support for a conclusion of the negotiation on the WTO, questions relating to globalization, competitiveness and structural changes in the global economy and intercultural dialogue.

⁷ European Security Strategy, "A Secure Europe in a Better World", Brussels, December 2003. Pg.2 www.ue.eu.int/uedoes accessed August 2, 2006.

⁸ Edy Prasetyono, "Keamanan Internasional dan Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia", in Bantarto Bandoro (ed) *Mencari Desain Baru Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta, 2005. Pg. 116-117.

order, and (2) particular properties and weaknesses of the global system.⁹

The first condition describes there recently has been a systematic scenario by U.S., as the sole super power, to unilaterally decide the new global order deserves for the present and future international affairs. This is by teaching democracy, universal human rights enforcement, and strategies to combat terrorism. Then, Kauppi and Viotti's second condition could be understood as today's international system failure to prevent the U.S.' pressures on applying this new global order. It, of course, refers to ineffective international law and weak international organizations in halting U.S' unilateralism. This notion is supported by diplomatic moves of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on brutal Israel's aggression on Palestine and Lebanon in the mid of 2006. She said "It is time a new Middle East, it is time to say to those who do not want a different kind of Middle East, that we will prevail, they will not".¹⁰ It, again, describes a very obvious explanation that U.S. has successfully hijacked the world to join U.S.' games to create new global order that

unfortunately causes broader conflicts and wars in the world.

Although, ASEM succeeds being consistent in conducting its routines, ASEM has been viewed incapable to meaningfully contribute answers to aforementioned security challenges particularly referring to the promotion of peace which is currently being threatened coarsely by radicalism and unilateralism. Local-dimensional and transnational conflicts emerging in Africa to Asia and especially in Middle East (Israel's aggression on Palestine and Lebanon) have described how volatile the world security is when unilateralism and radicalism ignore the global relations ethics due to their own interests and motives. As inter-regionalism entity, ASEM actually has enormous potency to refuse the anti-peace conducts.

In this perspective, It needs to be noted that the positions of Asia and Europe with their characteristics as continents having relatively solid regional cooperation and may be actually giving alternatives to ease the security frustration. To this point, Asia immediately owns the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that has merely played the driving seat in forming ASEM and Asia also has ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) which is the only Asian forum for security and politics dialogue. On the other hand, Europe has been precisely known as a more mature regional cooperation since its endeavors in

⁹ Mark V. Kauppi and Paul R. Viotti, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, and Beyond*, Third Edition, Allyn and Bacon, London, 1999. Pg.81

¹⁰ Sonja Pace, "Rice Says Censefire Must Come with Conditions", www.voanews.com, accessed on 26 June, 2006.

launching European Union (EU). This similar feature of Asia and Europe shall be presumed making ASEM as powerful inter-regional cooperation especially in rising the peace to human kinds. ASEM realizes that the world peace and stability have been immediately significance not only as its economic interests but also as its roles in determining international affairs construction. Moreover, ASEM will not be able to apply this peace-promotion responsibility when ASEM still faces certain internal problems and external challenges.

Recommendations to ASEM Initiatives to Peace Promotion and Enforcement

The aforementioned notion gives ASEM obligations to be responsibility to promote the peace. If Asia and Europe, in the context of ASEM, have come with collectively agreed point of views in understanding how peace could be endorsed and ways how to preserve them. Hence, ASEM must immediately take certain effective, concrete and feasible measures as a dialogue forum such as;

First, ASEM needs to intensify its high level dialogue on regional and international issues of common interests and on thematic issues affecting the peace promotion. It is necessary to realize that the ASEM characteristics as a dialogue forum have been encouraging its function. Dialogues are effective weapons to

determine the positions of ASEM Member Countries in order to view that war must not have any justifications. Although ASEM have several key players in influencing the global political constellation namely France, Germany, Italy and Spain in Europe as well as Japan, China and South Korea in Asia, ASEM does not seem to be confident enough to play bigger roles in promoting peace. However, information and standing points sharing lays in ASEM dialogue process ought to be viewed as crucial in harmonizing the angles of comprehending the international security crisis.

Second, it will also be important to consider how and when participation in the ASEM process might be enlarged. It is timely for our Asian partners to consider the possibilities for broadening the Asian presence in ASEM, and to address the expectations of Iran and North Korea Political and security constellation recently has performed "New emerging forces" that could determine the risk and peace calculation. Iran's and North Korea's nuclear issues have successfully attracted international curiosity. ASEM must consider inviting Iran and North Korea to join ASEM. ASEM must realize the significance of constructive dialogue on Iran and Korea may be conducted in ASEM process

Third, ASEM needs to map the

efforts on promoting and enforcing the peace. Consequently, ASEM members must be able to shape the consensus on their common future of peace. The creation of peace promotion and enforcement scheme might be tracked into short and long term peace initiatives. For a short term scheme, ASEM must immediately take concrete measures to solve the ongoing conflicts through ASEM mechanism. Meanwhile, for a long term scheme, ASEM must have capabilities to enhance public dialogue through education among the peoples of these two regions. In addition, the importance of engaging public opinion in support of an enhanced relationship between these two regions suggests that particular attention should be given to activities of direct relevance to a broader public including activities in the field of education, culture, and the public awareness and understanding of peace promotion. Parliamentary dialogues among ASEM members should likewise be enhanced including the European Parliament as well as national parliaments. And the active involvement of civil society in the dialogue between our two regions should be further encouraged. It is necessary to form ASEM common future of peace considering each member's perspectives and position of their competencies on peacemaking.

Fourth, In pursuing the better and safer global security, Europe should be engaging with Asian ASEM

partners in a security dialogue, which should complement this ongoing work by drawing in particular on the informality of the ASEM process, and in sharing Europe respective regional experiences in fields such as analysis, planning and training in relation to conflict prevention and peace-keeping, reconciliation process, humanitarian assistance and other aspects of "soft" security co-operation. Exchanges on "new security issues" including international crime and terrorism, information and other piracy and cyber warfare will also be important. Fostering support, in relevant forum, for determined action to stem proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, encouraging universal compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention could supplement the agenda.

Fifth, ASEM has been intensively running its dialogue function. Though, dialogues and deals would be meaningless unless they could be transformed into concrete and implementing actions. Therefore, transforming ideas to actions in the ASEM process becomes more crucial, not least to avoid "forum fatigue", a problem in which is not unique to ASEM. ASEM must highlight added value and lessen overlap with respect to ASEM dialogues, and ensure that

the interest and dedication of all participants is fully sustained by the focus, relevance and concrete output of the activities to promote and enforce the global peace. And ASEM must, in particular, work to guarantee that public opinion in a wide-ranging sense is fully engaged by ASEM work. It was suggested that ASEM true benefit lies in its informality that is dialogue rather than negotiation, in its multi-dimensionality concentrating on economic, political and cultural features, and in its high level in which heads of government forum linking these two regions. This capacity is required to produce ASEM implementing measures in promoting peace that might work parallelizing with each ASEM member's policy outside of ASEM framework.

Sixth, Dialogue between cultures and civilizations among ASEM Members must be enhanced. ASEM Members could take up issue-specific actions, which allow them to react to questions by launching a dialogue process on problems related to peaceful inter-cultural co-existence. In addition, further ways to manage the rise of extremism and prejudice within the different communities in the regions should be found. Intercultural and inter-civilization dialogue may contribute the solutions in coping with global security threats from other angles which could be widely accepted by international community since the humanity, cultural and religious

values are likely productive to meet the various people's understanding.

Seventh, ASEM should take any notice of what have been the consequences of U.S.' and Israel's unilateralism that have strong intention on flaming Middle East on behalf of war against terrorism propaganda. Forming the new global order unilaterally cannot be achieved through assassinating and violating the humanity. ASEM must be able urge U.S. and Israel to be irrational that political, economic, and social calculations caused by unilateral actions may then be damaging the war against radicalism if it is fought by the radical ways as well. ASEM must urge further the implementation of ceasefire and requesting for the immediate deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces in Lebanon. To this point, the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki must take this proposed conflict resolution to be set as ASEM agenda since the peace promotion is ASEM global responsibility. Moreover, certain ASEM member countries namely Indonesia, Malaysia, France, Italy insist on taking a part in the United Nations peacekeeping forces. The immediate solution for this Middle East crisis deems to be pragmatic in terms of protecting the world economy from any possible economic impacts, particularly the price hike of gasoline, due to the widening Middle East conflict. However, ASEM Joint

Statement is unfortunately seen inadequate; ASEM needs to formulate another alternative concept on Middle East Peace Promotion framework although in legal personality perspectives, ASEM does not have any bigger roles referring to ASEM is an merely dialogue club. However, public opinion shaping has expectedly been influential in giving other alternatives to the decision makers' consideration of humanity rather than radicalism.

Closing

ASEM challenges to perform and operate in a very dynamic international constellation need to be answered by formulating any possible internal enhancement and responsibilities to the world. ASEM has been placed to negotiate with responding to the anti-peace sponsored countries. The institutional and interregional capacity posed in ASEM process might be seen both as benefits and problems. This ASEM uniqueness cannot immediately contribute to the peace promotion and enforcement unless ASEM succeeds transforming dialogues into concrete measures. The current Middle East crisis has been a test case for ASEM to play bigger roles in maintaining the values of humanity. □

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