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BEYOND THE IVORY TOWER: CHALLENGES TOWARD REALIZING AN ASEAN COMMUNITY 2015

Agus Tri Hartono¹

Abstract

This paper identifies the key challenges of realizing so called ASEAN Community by 2015. Although, the ASEAN Community seems achievable, the paper argues that the realizing the Community faces some serious issues to fix. At the most basic, problems to consolidating ASEAN as a regional community is how to resolve the issue of shared values, the issue of re-evaluating ASEAN's 'decision making process' as ASEAN still utilizes consensus-based and unbinding one, and the issue about relegation of sovereignty and non-interference. Those affect to the paths of ASEAN step to a Community, ASEAN Secretariat Capacity Building, and other ASEAN's plan of actions. As there have been high political commitments to develop a regional community, consolidating all members' promise certainly needs for enormous willpower and efforts, specifically to transform such ASEAN's rhetoric into implementation. Otherwise, most of ASEAN-related achievements may be seen just talk shops.

Keywords: ASEAN, ASEAN Community, Regionalism, Regional Community

"We have just witnessed a watershed in the history of ASEAN. This is a document that will establish an ASEAN Community. That will make possible for our children and their children to live in a state of enduring peace, stability and shared prosperity"

(Megawati Soekarno Putri).²

Introduction

By signing the 2003 Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, also known as the Bali Concord II, ASEAN³ countries have staged a new regionalism experiment toward a regional community. The Bali Concord II as a basis to ASEAN Community consists of three pillars, namely ASEAN Economic

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² Megawati's speech in Bali Summit 2003, Quoted from Jörn Dosch (2007), *the Changing Dynamics of Southeast Asian Politics*, Lynne Rienner Publisher, p. 197.

³ In this paper the terms 'ASEAN' and 'the Association' are interchangeable.

Community (AEC),⁴ ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC),⁵ and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). These pillars strengthen each other to establish ASEAN as a regional community by 2015.

There has been high confidence in realizing ASEAN Community. The speech of former president Megawati, chairwoman of ASEAN Standing Committee in Bali Summit 2003, for instance, expressed praise and confidence of the future ASEAN since the Bali Concord II had provided fundamental building blocks to establish an enormous project of ASEAN Community in 2020. Similar poise was also echoed in the 12th ASEAN Summit 2007 in the Philippines with the decision to move the realization of the ASEAN Community from 2020 to 2015. Also, the signing of the ASEAN Charter in the 13th ASEAN Summit 2007 in Singapore and the agreement of so called the ASEAN Blueprint of ASEAN Political-Security Community in the 14th ASEAN Summit, in Thailand 2009, bring the ASEAN Community to be new "passion" of ASEAN cooperation and activities. Moreover, publishing the declaration on the road map for the ASEAN Community (2009-2015) spotlights the commitment of ASEAN Community at the point of no return.

Although, there has been a clear direction to a community by issuing the declaration on the road map for the ASEAN Community (2009-2015), inventing a regional community, however, is either a tough endeavour or a highly complex project. Although it seems achievable, applying the phrase "community" for the core of ASEAN cooperation in the near future certainly needs for enormous dedication. Amongst the basic questions following the efforts to creating ASEAN Community, the way of the Association handles the sensitive issues in its international relations such as sovereignty, decision-making process, and principle of non-interference, are the prominent appeals and questions.

This paper aims at identifying at a glance key ASEAN's challenges to the realizing the ASEAN Community by 2015. First, it spotlights the problem of shared values, which is inseparable requirement to build a "community". Second, it discusses the need for re-evaluating ASEAN's decision making processes as ASEAN still utilizes consensus-based and unbinding one. Finally, it clarifies problems related to relegation of sovereignty and issue of non-interference, which affect to the paths of

⁴ The AEC concept, which was first proposed at the ASEAN Summit in 2002 based on "ASEAN Vision 2020," is to achieve the end-goal of economic integration, in order to create a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ASEAN economic region; it also highlighted a free flow of goods, services, investment and a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development; and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities. Also, the AEC shall consist of elements of a single market and production base, turning the diversity that characterizes the region into opportunities for business complementation, see Denis Hew (ed) (2005), *Roadmap to ASEAN Economic Community*, ISEAS, Singapore, p. 1.

⁵ Previously the concept is ASC. The ASC is security cooperation in the area of political development, shaping and sharing norms, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post conflict peace building. The ASC is one of the pillars of the ASEAN Community. According to the 14th ASEAN Summit in Thailand 2009, the concept of ASC (ASEAN Security Community) expanded to APSC (ASEAN Political Security Community). For more information see <<http://www.aseansec.org/22337.pdf>>.

ASEAN Secretariat (the Secretariat) capacity building and other ASEAN's security resolution.

ASEAN Community 2015: A Long Road to Realize?

Towards realizing an ASEAN community by 2015 is not a one night story. At the beginning, the idea of a regional community came to fore following the idea of enhancing economic cooperation following the financial crisis 1997. ASEAN leaders have remained politically committed to the vision of transforming ASEAN into an economically integrated grouping within the framework of the economic community, displaying elements corresponding to the ultimate form of economic integration by 2020. While modalities and final design of the economic community are yet to be unveiled, the ideas have been on the edge around, nonetheless indicate encouraging trend about that has characterized the region until the outset of financial crisis in 1997.

The first and foremost, the ASEAN Community deals more than just economics. The security community idea also reflects ASEAN's demands for handling contemporary security issues in the region. Following the financial crisis 1997, ASEAN security can not be considered merely in

terms of traditional security,⁶ which emphasizes the military balance. Rather, so-called non-traditional security (NTS)⁷ issues have become significant both in quantity and variety. The idea of a security community was strongly sounded after the Asian financial crisis devastated the economies of several members, notably Indonesia and Thailand. The idea also came to the fore at a time when member states realized that the newly emerging regional challenges not only weakened ASEAN's standing internationally, but also eroded cooperation within the region.

Accordingly, emphasizing an ASEAN economic community in parallel with embracing two other critical approaches: the ASEAN Political-Security Community (ASC) and the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community (ASCC) are ASEAN strategy to achieve an ASEAN Community. As the former Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda, highlighted that since the three envisioned communities are equally essential, and thereby would be mutually reinforcing in efforts to materialize an ideal form of the ASEAN Community (*The Jakarta Post*, 2003). The ASC is essentially a security setting achieved by relying solely on peaceful and diplomatic processes in the resolution of intra-regional conflicts. On the other hand, the ASCC is an agreement whereby ASEAN countries would perform

⁶ Traditionally, security has been defined in geo-political terms, encompassing aspects such as deterrence, power balancing and military strategy. Moreover, the state and its defense are at the core of strategic studies. In short, it is about the study of "threat, use and control of military forces". See Ralf Emmers (2004), *Non Traditional Security in the Asia-Pacific: the Dynamic of Securitisation*, Eastern University Press, pp. 1-2.

⁷ Non Traditional Security is an alternative approach to security studies which puts a broad definition on security. It sees that security can not be only about the military dimension. There are many dimensions of threats faced by states and other actors in international relations. These include ecological degradation, HIV/AIDS, drug trafficking, ethnic conflict, illegal migration and others. *ibid*.

joint measures to develop human resources development, cut down unemployment, cope with environmental destruction and manage threatening diseases.

One of the important pillars of ASEAN Community is the Economic Community (EC). As highlighted by the former ASEAN Secretary-general, Mr. Ong Keng Yong, the community represents an option for developing economies to proceed with creating a wider economic space while still committed to the multilateralism. The AEC will enable bilateral FTAs, signed by individual members, to advantage the entire region. Also, the design of EC is to serve a political gesture that signifies the commitment of ASEAN in building a community and identity for the people of Southeast Asia.

However, ASEAN faces some serious issues to focus. At the moment, problems to consolidating ASEAN as a regional community are to what extent ASEAN members respond the issue of shared values, the issue of re-evaluating ASEAN's decision making process, and the issue on relegation of sovereignty and non-interference. The following are the snapshot to those problems.

The Shallow Common Values, the Artificial Regional Community

One of leading question remained to the foundation a regional community is the availability and the applicability of common value, or shared value, binding all members. A common value is the essential part should fundamentally be remained in all development of a community. While, there are no such need common principles in the

creation of other regional cooperation, which mostly requires a common interest regardless of each country's values.

For the most part, common value is the outcome of evolutionary process of socialization and identification. The value is also a result of conscious efforts, or even a socially constructed, at socialization and identity building amongst members of society underpinned by a common set of objectives. Put simply, a common value is an ultimate foundation for members to 'communicate' amongst them in the same 'language', and hand in hand to go to the same direction. Thus, at the most basic, it is the prerequisite ingredient to form a "we-feeling" (Acharya 2004: 227-8).

Why such value is significant? Unlike other kind of regional cooperation, a "community", borrowing the idea of Ernst Hass, refers to at least two basic characteristics: first, community is 'more than an instrumental relationship'; it is a social one which necessitates "trust, friendship, complementary, and responsiveness" (Hass, quoted in Acharya 2004: 227-8). Second, a community is neither group of culturally similar nor physical attribute in common. Thus, a community reflects other aspects namely: 'mutual responsiveness, confidence, and esteem' (Puchala, quoted in Acharya 2004: 227-8). Consequently, a community needs more than physical entity, but beyond.

That's why, the Bali Concord II 2003, and also the ASC Plan of Action 2004, highlights ASEAN values to be shared simultaneously. The values are transparency, rule of law, respect for human

rights, and democracy (<http://www.aseansec.org/15160.htm>). Also, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN Charter, signed 12 December 2005, reaffirmed democracy and respecting human rights as ASEAN values and commitment.

Considering that ASEAN consists of ten of states, almost half of relatively new members, which economically, politically, and even interests, are remarkably much different from the original members. In consequence, the foundation to manage the “huge” differences amongst members requires tremendous efforts. The acknowledgment of democracy and human rights as part of ASEAN’s goals, will also affect the domestic political systems of several ASEAN members, will change the characteristics of ASEAN, and will have implications to the relevance of both the ASEAN Way and the principle of non interference.

A common value is requisite in creating a community, especially as the diverse motivations of ASEAN members to knock ASEAN’s door is terribly clear. The motivation to become ASEAN members is different from country to country. For new members, known as CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam), economic benefit was the original motives to become ASEAN members, including the spill over of the FDI (foreign direct investment) from other members.

On the other hand, from ASEAN Six perspective, the basic idea of the community making, initially by creating the AFTA (ASEAN Free Trade Area), was mainly to attract FDI (foreign direct investment) from external economies (Narine 2002: 121) and created peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.⁸

Since the various motivations of ASEAN members are distinct, the adoption of common values is not only basic, but crucial. Moreover, there are a variety of the political environment and economic system, and even they experience history related to ASEAN in an extremely different way since some of them were bitter enemies in not too distance past. Understandably, implementing common values into day to day member’s dynamic is not easy. Nevertheless, it is the only way. Consequently, the long process in absorbing common values to be national values will not only threaten the spreading of so-called “we-feeling”, but also make the realization of ASEAN community at stake.

Learning from the advance regional community such as EU, we found that common value is both a prerequisite element and one of the basic requirements of its membership. Referred to European Union (EU), the EU strictly requires such values as democracy as the fundamental condition to be a part of the community. Unlike ASEAN, EU has even not welcomed countries with different political system (i.e. Communist), or level of economy and social value (i.e.

⁸ Membership expansion had another unspoken agenda: a part of ASEAN’s motivation to integrate Myanmar into the ASEAN circle was to pull Rangoon from Beijing’s orbit. See Shaun Narine (2002), p. 120.

Turkey) as a member. This fact showed that common value is vital in running the community.

Since ASEAN decided to underline transparency, democracy, rule of law and respect for human right as ASEAN common values, ASEAN indeed, still face problems with its values implementation. Members' commitment to uphold the common values, so far, is still not promising. In short, members' commitment to uphold the common values is still half-hearted. Implementing democracy, for instance, is varying from one member to another.

Regarding implementation of democracy, ASEAN original five seems have a better commitment than those new members. However, we have to note that the political situation in Thailand (one of ASEAN original five), followed the military coup in 2006 had negatively contribute to common values building in ASEAN. Other problem is the lack of progress in Myanmar's democratization process, which not only has frustrated its Southeast Asian neighbours, but also to some extent has been counter-productive to common values development. Moreover, as a non-permanent member, Indonesia's dilemma position to draft resolution at the UN Security Council in January 2007 to urge Myanmar to democratize and respect human rights showed a limit to the extent Indonesia and also ASEAN can translate such declaration intent into policies. Nonetheless, we have also to mention that Vietnam, Brunei and Cambodia responses to enhance their commitment to democracy need to be praised. Indeed, common values implementation is imperative for ASEAN

members to enter a community.

At the end, as common values are one of an essential ingredient to realize the community, ASEAN's paths to a truly commitment to democracy need to be improved. Despite complex, ASEAN need to lead and take part in an extra-active role in finding the solution of the Myanmar crisis, and support Thailand back to the democracy that Thailand used to be. ASEAN also need to encourage Brunei, new members Laos, and Vietnam, to take the path to a more democratic one. As a result, those would necessitate a plan, a strategy, a source, and a sustainability of political commitment.

Understandably, although ASEAN members agree to place the common values as an essential element for its agenda, considering the various backgrounds of members, it seems ASEAN places the values as fundamental goals rather than prerequisite elements.

However, running a regional community without any certain time-frame to each member' to adopt ASEAN common values is a hollow effort. ASEAN members need to make a bench-mark and indicator of the extent in adopting of common values of all members. A brave path and a breakthrough need to initiate. Otherwise, ASEAN Community is just a pseudo-community.

Decisions Making Process: Is the ASEAN Way Obsolete?

Other underlying problem in consolidating the ASEAN Community is how to re-examine consensus-based and unbinding decision-making of ASEAN,

known as the 'ASEAN Way'. Regarding to ASEAN decision making process, Bali Concord II (article 4) emphasizes that the ASEAN uphold "consensus-based decision-making". In the other words, ASEAN decision making relies on the 'ASEAN Way' mechanism.

The ASEAN Way spotlighted four principles in decision making process: (1) Emphasizing on the principle of self-restraint in other states internal affairs. (2) Underlining the importance of quiet diplomacy is indispensable in all ASEAN decisions making process. (3) Spotlighting the preference for consensus and unbinding plans rather than treaties or legalistic rules. (4) Relying on national institutions and actions and deliberation on each other's interests and sensitivities, rather than creating a strong central bureaucracy of the ASEAN (joint responsibility) (Katsumata 2003: 106-108, Kusumohamidjojo 2002).

According to Soesastro (1995) the "ASEAN Way" is a set of norms and procedures by which conflicts would be managed by the association. It includes the idea of seeking consensus and harmonies, the principle of sensitivity, politeness, non confrontation, and agreeability, as well as the principle of quiet, private and elitist diplomacy *vis a vis* public washing of dirty linen, and principle of non-Cartesian, and non legalistic.

Put in other way, the ASEAN Way can also be understood as "the style of diplomacy" by emphasizing "an informal and incremental approach to cooperation" through enhancing the tradition of consultation and dialogue while limiting

"the level of institutionalization in the association" (Katsumata 2004). Thus, it is easy to conclude that the ASEAN Way is to provide room for the various characteristic of the members. Borrowing Leifer argument, regardless of the benefit ASEAN has had with institution improvement, as to improve diplomatic weight to provide credible decision to accommodate differences of "the big family" of ASEAN (Leifer 1992).

However, considering the current ASEAN development of a community as well as economic regionalism, seeking consensus and non-legal binding principles as the main component of the ASEAN Way seem inadequate. Consensus-based and unbinding decision also raised most critics as a factor of low process, even uncertain process and implementation of ASEAN decision. So far, the principle was to do with the need of flexibility and effort to spread the comfort zone to among old and new members. Seeking consensus through ASEAN's "*musyawarah-mufakat*" has reflected the goodness to apply of "local genius" of Southeast Asia's traditional society. However, due to the complexity of problems ASEAN has faced so far, it seems that ASEAN need to apply a more "normal" decision-making process.

Facing ASEAN current development economy such as AFTA, AFTA-plus, or even a "common market minus" by 2015, will be difficult to achieve without any binding process and outcome. Seeking consensus is only consuming a lot of time and energy. Most importantly the result and its application of seeking consensus and non-

legal binding principles are totally unpredictable. Applying a “normal” decision making process, as modern institution usually use, will both save time in the process and produce decisions more knowable. ASEAN needs to improve its decision to be legal-binding ones to support its development, economically, and politically.

Moreover, this model of decision-making process also affects the association in a slow motion and even less responsive. Also, the model of decision-making so far has affected to the credibility of ASEAN’s diplomatic products’. ASEAN Way underlines all members respect to ASEAN decisions voluntarily. Therefore, in the age of the four decades, it has been bitter that ASEAN has only two agreements, which are legally binding, namely, Treaty of Amity and Corporation (TAC), and South East Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

In line with decision-making process in ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), ASEAN enriches the model by allowing members to defer agreement in certain issue and project through the model called “Ten Minus X formula”. The formula offers ASEAN countries to manage their participation in a certain stage of economic cooperation based on their own capability. This reflect ASEAN flexibility accommodate the deference’s amongst members. The formula underscores all ASEAN members can agree on a “specific” issue and target. On the other hand, in some cases, individual members can decide to join the decision later. If members would like to joint at the same moment, they

can also implementing at a more realistic pace (Marry-Caballero 2003: 96, Hew 2003).

Despite ‘comfortable’ for the time being, “Ten Minus-X” often makes ASEAN lead to set-back to the beginning. We can see that the formula is not credible as members could easily withdraw from their decision. For instance, Malaysia backtracked to it commitment on CEPT Scheme to shield their national automotive industries in 2000. Also, we could see the Philippines did the same to guard its national chemicals industries in 2003. Consequently, the model of decision-making process also put the association in a slow movement and even less responsive too.

To conclude, from the number of agreements and intensity of discussions ones may come to praise and optimism that a community is not far from ASEAN today. However, it is pertinent to note that one essential basic for achieving a security community if ASEAN can produce instrument, which impose a morally and legally binding rules and procedures. Without these elements, otherwise, most of ASEAN-related achievements may be seen as products of “talk shops” or just an “AFTA” (Agree First, Talks After).

Principle of Non-Interference and Relegation of Sovereignty

ASEAN members also face other fundamental problems specifically the relegation of sovereignty and the concept of non-interference. So far, both have been sensitive issues in ASEAN’s international

relation since all ASEAN members, except Thailand, are post colonial countries. Most ASEAN members historically experienced the trauma of colonialism, and currently they are in the nation building process lead ASEAN members present the sovereignty and the concept of non-interference principles in the high status of their relations. Accordingly, ASEAN states still have opinions that intervention into other states is a humiliating the dignity of other states as sovereign nations. Sovereignty and non-intervention are an essential aspect for ASEAN internal business.

However, the relegation of sovereignty and the concept of non-interference seemed to be contradictory to the idea of a "community" that frequently accompanies compromises of part of a country's sovereignty to the community. Thus, ASEAN commitment to move forward to the community not only seems half-hearted and problematic, but also to transform the ideal principle of community into practical creates the dilemma. Thus, surrendering some of states' sovereignty to the regional course is one of the elemental issues in achieving a regional community, which certainly ASEAN's members have not agreed yet.

Since the ASEAN requires concessions as part of its sovereignty, ASEAN members, so far, have not yet come to conformity to a supranational model of the Secretariat. Problem of sovereignty relegation affect to the slow process of ASEAN secretariat capacity building. The difficulties to develop

the capacity of ASEAN secretariat has reflected ASEAN leaders were not prepared to establish a supranational institution. Thus, one of challenges of consolidating a community is how to increase the capacity of ASEAN Secretariat as a leading institution to synchronize all ASEAN activities.

Dealing with improving ASEAN Secretariat, especially when ASEAN members consider the capacity building of the secretariat, ASEAN leaders come to situation the called "too much and too little" dilemma (Collins 2007: 203-205). "Too much" means enhancing ASEAN secretariat will lead a supra-national institution. Thus, the supra-national model of ASEAN Secretariat, like it or not, will lessen members' sovereignties to some extent. Reducing sovereignty so far is one of the most sensitive and even a 'taboo' of ASEAN members' interaction. On the other hand, "too little" means ASEAN need a primary institution to manage the process of achieving a community. Undoubtedly, without such institution all these ideal things, such as the ASC Plan of Action, ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Blueprint of ASEAN Political-Security Community, and the road map for the ASEAN Community, are difficult to be translated in to implementation.

In line with relegation of sovereignty, it seems ASEAN leaders were not prepared to establish a supranational institution. The lack of commitment to relegate sovereignty made the ASEAN Secretariat has not had a sufficient authority to manage the progress of ASEAN regionalism that they need to be.⁹

⁹ ASEAN ISIS roundtable discussion has highlighted this issue as one of ASEN important dilemma. See, Hadi Soesastro, ASEAN Economic Community: Concept, Cost and Benefit, in Hue (2005), *ibid.*, pp 22-24.

ASEAN Secretariat also has had less power to accommodate different stage of market development amongst the members. ASEAN Secretariat continues to lack the power to enforce the implementation of regional arrangements.

For instance, the secretariat was less responsive to responds Malaysia backtracked to its commitment on CEPT Scheme to safeguard its national automotive industries in 2000. Also, the Secretariat was also powerless to notify the Philippines to do shield its national chemicals industries in 2003. All in all, the ASEAN Secretariat has no power to make sure that all programs are on the right path. Moreover, the Secretariat has also no right to perform ASEAN legislation, budget, and programs, as European commission does.

Other example is ASEAN's mechanism of dispute settlement was not trustworthy, since ASEAN members preferred using third parties (such as the International Court of Justice, ICJ) to solve their problems instead of using ASEAN norms and mechanisms as instruments of problem-solving amongst members (Narine 1997: 975). The cases of the Indonesia-Malaysia conflict over the *Sipadan* and *Ligitan* Islands and the Malaysia-Singapore dispute over White Rock Island were good examples of the failure to utilize ASEAN's norms and mechanisms in handling territorial disputes among ASEAN states. Further, other ASEAN institution: the ASEAN Court of Justice to be responsible for Dispute Settlement Mechanisms (DSM) still not reliable.

Learning from other community arrangement a leading institution is necessary to manage the process and activities regionally, and so is ASEAN. It is true ASEAN Community was neither designed to replicate those of other security communities, nor governments of each member could not carry out all programs and agreement of the Community. However, without a special institution to pay attention to day to day business of the ASEAN Community, running the activities would be ineffective, slowly and even costly. Thus, empowering the Secretariat seems difficult, but it seems it is the only solution to move forward to a community.

Accordingly, nowadays ASEAN members are in a dilemma. ASEAN members are searching the "balance" between the need for an effective institution and call for protecting sovereignty of all members. The dilemma of relegation of sovereignty has made the ASEAN Secretariat, for instance, does not have sufficient power so far to manage the progress of ASEAN regionalism that they supposed to be. ASEAN Secretariat also has had less power to enforce the implementation of regional arrangement.¹⁰

Thus, related to the Secretariat, it is necessary for ASEAN to enhance the Secretariat capacity, as a leading institution to manage the agendas of ASEAN Community. Accordingly, ASEAN needs to find a consensus in dealing with the relegation of sovereignty. ASEAN needs to define the Secretariat's "supranational"

¹⁰ Author's Interview with Hadi Soesastro and Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Jakarta, 14 December 2006; and author's interview with Ikrar Nusa Bhakti, Kyoto, 7 July 2007.

degree which tolerable for all members. Indeed, since relegation of sovereignty is inevitably in building of ASEAN "community", the discussion on the topics need to be intensified.

Other implications of the problems of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference are ASEAN members still sensitive to discuss traditional security. Since the ASEAN members have a concern on both traditional and no-traditional security, discussion on traditional issues is not only normal but also unavoidable. Moreover, ASEAN members have inherited a lot of traditional security problems amongst them which need properly to handle.

One amongst essential factors to be discussed by all members is the possibility to expand the interpretation of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference. Since those issues have become the most pressing issues in the contemporary international relations, as well as frequently invoked but highly contested concept to respond the elemental change in ASEAN security dynamics, ASEAN members' interpretation on the issue will influence the smoothness of ASEAN path toward a 'community'. Simply, ASEAN needs to find an interpretation' of the extent the sovereignty of states acceptable to be exercised.

To some issues which have ramification to others or all members, ASEAN needs to develop its interpretation of both 'sovereignty' and 'non-interference' principles in the context of "interdependence" states relations. Such interpretation enables ASEAN to discuss issues in more constructive and comfortable way.

So far there have some ideas toward reinterpretation 'sovereignty' and 'non-interference' principles. The former Thai foreign minister, for instance, proposed the terms 'flexible engagement.' The idea implies that ASEAN needs to be more open and frank to talk each other. And this should not be considered as interference in other countries for the same purpose. Since domestic problems in one country have external dimensions, Surin Pitsuwan invited ASEAN to adjust its non-intervention principle to globalization and interdependence point of view (Collins 2000: 183).

Also, the concept coined by Ali Alatas of "enhanced interaction" to discuss problems which reside in one country but affected the other countries is one of the solutions to initial dialog on sovereignty and non interference. According to Ali Alatas, "enhanced interaction" means that the countries of ASEAN agree that when there is a problem that resides in one country but has effects on the other countries, and when there are transnational problems, then all members should convene and discuss these problems openly (Alatas 2001: 7).

One of the vital paths to solve this unlikeable situation is to intensify the intensity on dialogue to find common interpretation on these important, but highly sensitive issues. Creating an initial process to find "comfort level" dealing with the area of sovereignty among members is a necessity. Entering a regional community by 2015, without the availability common understanding of issue of sovereignty and non-interference, is substantially complicated and illusive.

Conclusion

In an increasingly globalized world and the spread of new security challenges, it has been crucial for ASEAN to promote economic, political and security cooperation to a community. Undoubtedly, these efforts could keep the Association as a valuable organization, which undoubtedly contributes to peace and stability, regionally and globally. Also, a successful ASEAN Community will obviously be a centre of ASEAN regionalism.

ASEAN Community will make the Association into the very first "regional community" in Southeast Asia, since ASEAN membership now encompasses all regional members. Moreover, politically the community may increase ASEAN's political and economic credibility in the international arena, strengthen ASEAN legitimacy to speak for all of Southeast Asia in the international community, bind all the members by 'one set of rule of conflicts management', and enable ASEAN to prevent external interference in order to strengthen ASEAN's regional resilience.

While realizing a community is not unattainable, ASEAN need to provide common values as the foundation to manage the "huge" diversities amongst members. ASEAN also needs improving its decision making process both in terms of process and binding, and finding a solution over the problem of sovereignty relegation amongst them. Otherwise, ASEAN community makes all these ideal things an "ivory tower". Furthermore, it is essential to improve ASEAN secretariat capacity to the degree in which satisfying all members without fear to reduce their sovereignty.

Indeed, as far as there is a vague and assertive direction in improving these issues, it seems that towards ASEAN community might be long to be consolidated.

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