THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTOR (EUROPEAN UNION) IN INDONESIA-ACEH’S PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The involvement of international agent in promoting peace and security settlement in overseas, gives promises and hope for the future. There are two logical questions appeared when disputants in a conflict seek the involvement of a third party: Firstly, who should be selected, that what is generally accepted is a third party able to assist in finding satisfactory solution to all, and secondly, is what kind of role should it play, there has been an attempt to map the different forms of third parties’ diplomacy assume in conflict resolution, by assisting to create a stalemate, launching negotiations or/and assisting in efforts to end the conflict. The term “intervention” has been used in international relation in many different ways. Intervention has been defined as “the dictatorial interference by a state in the affairs of another state for the purpose of maintaining or altering the actual condition of things “From gunboat diplomacy to humanitarian intervention.

Keywords: Conflict, Indonesia, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, Peace and European Union

A. INTRODUCTION

The Role of European Union (EU) in Indonesia-Aceh’s Peace Process

Asia’s global importance is growing apace. While the impressive economic performance of China and India are already well known, the increasing economic and political significance of ASEAN and it is largest economy, Indonesia, is increasingly attracting the attention of the world. That the development in Asia is also of global focus, is evident in fundamental international issues such as peace and security, economic and social development, including democracy and respect for human rights, stability of the world economy, and increasingly environmental issues. Nonetheless, the role of Europe in global security policy is constantly under transformation. Inquiries for European involvement in different conflict and crisis areas are increasing and the needs are both military and civilian by nature. In this context is seen the growing importance of ASEAN as a vital driver in fostering regional integration in Southeast Asia and in Asia as a whole and resulting new opportunities for Europe and Southeast Asia to forge closer political and economic relations. Therefore, many European countries such as Sweden, Norway, Switzerland consider

1 Jakarta Post, 21 April 2008
Indonesia a most strategic and important country\textsuperscript{3} GAM’s long standing strategy is to internationalize the Aceh conflict. Since the movement’s leaders went into exile in 1979, the lobbied the international community to pressure Indonesia into letting Aceh secede. This strategy gained momentum first with East Timor’s successful bid for independence as a result of international involvement and then with the Geneva peace process, which GAM saw as a key to drawing in as many international players as possible.\textsuperscript{4} The reaction overseas was muted, with protests from abroad rare, and the Indonesian government interpreted the international community’s relative silence as a sign of tolerance or even tacit support for it is action in Aceh. With western countries then focused about strengthening their military ties with Indonesia as part of the war against terror, this left the military free to launch what many Acehnese felt amounted to ethnic cleansing operations.\textsuperscript{5}

In November 1999, a GAM splinter group had approached President Martti Ahtisaari’s staff through a neutral researcher, who had good contacts at the office of the president, as well as among the Indonesian military.\textsuperscript{6} However, many in Brussels still believed that European Union (EU) role in monitoring an eventual peace process was a risky political business because of Aceh’s remoteness and relatively minor political importance for European Union member states.\textsuperscript{7}

At the time, president Ahtisaari was a serving as Finland’s president, and Finland was holding it is first European Union presidency. On the one hand, this made the Finnish Foreign Ministry weaker since it is resources were overstretched by the duties of European Union presidency. This was a serious consideration for the Finnish Foreign Ministry to try to stay out of the conflict problems of Indonesia (Kivimaki & David Gorman, 2008: 9). So far, the international actors knew that Indonesia was a powerful sovereign state, with important domestic actor’s hostile to international involvement. Therefore, international involvement was largely on terms set, or at least tolerated by the Indonesian government.\textsuperscript{8}

At the same time, the official role of President Martti Ahtisaari, not only as the head of a small European nation, but someone in a role on top of the European Union, made Indonesia worried. Moreover, any new role for the international organization as part of resolution of the Aceh conflict aroused suspicion that this intervention could be a Trojan horse designed to back up another separatist agenda, therefore a condition Jakarta was not about to permit in Aceh.\textsuperscript{9} Furthermore, an international treatment of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) could have put the GAM into international spotlight in par with the Indonesian government. In order to avoid this, Indonesia felt much more convenient with Hendry Dunant Center (HDC) facilitation and mediation, rather than with Japanese, Finnish

\textsuperscript{3} Jakarta Post, 21 April 2008
\textsuperscript{5} Bivar, Caroline. (2005). Emerging from the shadows: the EU’s role in conflict resolution in Indonesia. EPC issue paper No. 44. Europe Policy Center.
or European Union role in the Aceh conflict. But the „tsunami effect”, the desire for the European Union to play a political role, institutional competition and the persuasive power of Ahtisaari translated into new political momentum. Aceh hit the international headlines on 26 December 2004, due to the huge oceanic earthquake followed by a tsunami that killed thousands, injured many more and wreaked havoc in this northern province of Sumatra, Indonesia, as well as many other parts of the Southeast Asia regions.

In post tsunami, Malik Mahmud, GAM’s chief mediator felt that Ahtisaari would be powerful enough to guarantee fair procedures with his international prestige and authority, so that the military superiority of the Indonesian government could not be used unfairly in the negotiations. GAM was fully aware of the changed perception on the part of the Acehnese people. GAM also seriously affected as their supply sources were cut off by the tsunami disaster. This may have led to their readiness to compromise to reach a political solution.

GAM readiness for the negotiations was not the first time as such have taken. A peace process begun in early 2000, mediated by the Swiss-based Henry Dunant Centre (HDC) nongovernmental organization. Several agreements to bring a pause in, or an end to, hostilities failed because of the peace process. In May 2003, the talks finally collapsed, and the GAM negotiators in Aceh were arrested by the Indonesian military. A presidential decree imposing martial law was signed on the same day in Jakarta. The Government of Indonesia (GoI) was considered Ahtisaari’s prestige was naturally important to the Indonesian side, the fact that he was no longer acting as president appealed to the Indonesians. As a former president, his status no longer framed the negotiations so that it would be signal a de facto recognition of the state of Aceh. Also, the unofficial position of Ahtisaari ensured that the peace talks process was fully controlled by the negotiating parties. Indonesia felt that Aceh was an internal affair so it would have been impossible to accept a negotiation process under some formal or official arrangement.

The international presence expanded hugely after the tsunami, but international agencies still face considerable restrictions in their ability to involve in peace building work. For instance, international agencies have reportedly not been granted permission to provide assistance to conflicts internally displace persons (IDPs) and it remains difficult to access many of communities where the conflict have been most hard, like in Central Aceh where both pro-government militias and GAM guerrillas have a significant existence.

Almost immediately, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foreign governments started posing questions about Indonesia’s ulterior motive in asserting strict controls over the governments and foreign aid workers. Despite, opening the closed

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12 Bivar, Caroline. (2005). Emerging from the shadows: the EU’s role in conflict resolution in Indonesia. EPC issue paper No. 44. Europe Policy Center.
and military-controlled Aceh was not an easy move for Jakarta\textsuperscript{19}. The Indonesian military (TNI) which itself lost 199 soldiers and 19 marines in the tsunami, saw the arrival of some 3,000 foreign military troops, more than 2000 civilian foreign aid workers and dozens of journalists as a threat to its political influence and activities in Aceh\textsuperscript{20}. However, the opening up of Aceh to foreign assistance programmers in the aftermath tsunami was irreversible step that led to the consequential political developments\textsuperscript{21}.

Within hours of the tsunami, Europe responded by providing immediate emergency relief support, followed a few days later by additional assistance for primary help services, epidemic early warning systems and psychological support for victims. Civil protection assessment and coordination experts were sent without delay to coordinate the distribution of European aid, particularly medical assistance and water purification and to assess further assistance needs, in close cooperation with local authorities and other donors\textsuperscript{22}.

Without international help and assistance, many Acehnese would have died in the aftermath of the tsunami, due to the hunger, sickness and deprivation\textsuperscript{23}. It meant the international goodwill to assist Aceh strongly depends the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) as well.\textsuperscript{24} So far, at first, the European humanitarian assistance just was limited to the tsunami affected victims and was not broader to the political and conflict assistance.

After having severe pressure from the international community on both the government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), one month after tsunami and disaster, both parties welcomed to the peace talks or the purpose of permanent settlement to the conflict (Miller, 2009: 155). The Indonesian government seen the role that Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) and it is chairman Ahtisaari played was unofficial, informal and independent. This private diplomacy as was crucial, particularly Indonesian government, which did not want to internationalize domestic affairs\textsuperscript{25}. GAM’s readiness for peace talks was underpinned by it is prime minister’s saying Malik Mahmud that “Aceh had been in a conflict situation, but with the tsunami (that killed) more than 100,000 people) GAM saw that indeed the people in Aceh really needed peace. GAM took this opportunity to pursue peace negotiations. Also, at that time the international community came in throngs to Aceh to give humanitarian assistance and help to reconstruct Aceh. There was very strong voice in the international community that this was the time to continue negotiations. They were very supportive. GAM presumess they also monitored the progress of the previous negotiations collapsed, but this time, everyone was very sympathetic with Aceh. While helping tsunami victims, they urged and supported this peace initiative”\textsuperscript{26} The following time, in response to the GAM’s peace goodwill, president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

\textsuperscript{22} Jakarta Post, 27 February 2006
\textsuperscript{26} Jakarta Post, 28 May 2006
(SBY) made his statement by saying “The government of Indonesia knew that a military solution would not bring permanent peace to Aceh. The peace accord achieved what no military campaign could ever deliver; an immediate end to the fighting, the surrender and destruction of arms, the elimination of GAM as a military threat, security for our citizens and social cohesions all without firing a bullet”\(^{27}\)

From the beginning, both the government and GAM recognized that having neutral international monitors in Aceh and an enforceable mechanism for resolving disputes over emerged violations would be crucial to the success of any agreement\(^{28}\), but without compromising Indonesian’s sovereignty. Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) NGO was well placed for the mediation role given Ahtisaari’s widely accepted impartiality as a mediator and access to networks with governments, with the added advantage of being a Nordic” presence in close geographical proximity to Sweden, where the GAM leadership was based\(^{29}\). Therefore, CMI and its chairman president Ahtisaari were asked to facilitate talks between the government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM)\(^{30}\). Martti Ahtisaari eventually received confirmation that the two parties had agreed to meet in late December 2004, a few days before the Indian Ocean tsunami struck Aceh\(^{31}\). Ahtisaari’s CMI team studying and analyzing the 2002-2003 fail peace talks, consulting with individuals involved in that process, and trying at every stage to avoid the ambiguities and weakness that scuttled the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA)\(^{32}\).

**B. METHOD AND RESULT**

The Finnish Foreign Ministry responded favorably to the involvement of Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) NGO and indicates it is readiness to facilitate the talks. It made clear that the government of Finland did not desire a political profile but would help technical support (venue, transportation and logistics, and security)\(^{33}\). Although, the European is ASEAN”s second largest export market and the third largest trading partner after the United States and Japan\(^{34}\), the European Union (EU) was not very interested in terms of Asia, it paid more attention on the Middle East, Balkans and Africa, as well as no direct enthusiasm in Brussels\(^{35}\).

As Bosnia-Herzegovina was the first European Union (EU) civilian crisis mission only started in 2003 and since then expectations for the European Union (EU) to respond to multiple needs have increased. So far, the majority of the EU civilian crisis management missions have been police mission and operations focusing on border assistance and rule of law issues\(^{36}\). Other than Aceh Aceh’s isolated place and relatively less political importance

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27 *International Herald Tribune*, 14 August 2006
28 ICG, 15 August 2005
32 (ICG, 15August 2005: 5)
34 (*Jakarta Post*, 9 December 2005)
36 Lahdensuo, Sami. ( ). Building peace in Aceh-observations on the work of the AAceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) and its liaison with local civil society. Finland: Crisis Management Initiative (CMI)
for European Union member states, there were several other crucial factors that had discouraged European Union (EU) to involve in, such as:

1. Diplomatic worry, while a successful mission would have the additional benefit of providing a substantial boost to political relations with Indonesia and those ASEAN countries involved in the mission, should the mission fail there could easily be political fallout resulting in a negative impact on the European Union’s diplomacy in the region.37

2. The failure of the previous efforts. The stalemate of earliest peace talks to achieve a sustainable solution to the prolonged conflict had inflicted deep pessimism and hopeless among the people in Aceh as well as among international observers towards the chances of the peace process so succeed.38

3. The parties’ commitment. There were questions over whether the government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) were really committed to peace, how precarious the security situation was, and how fast monitors could be deployed.39

4. Aceh case was not under the European Union (EU) Political security Committee (PSC) target. There was not much enthusiasm at the EU Political Security Committee (PSC) for monitoring in Aceh, the large number of European Union states didn’t consider Aceh a priority for a European Union Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission despite its potential benefits from the ESDP perspective.40

CMI and its chairman Ahtisaari used their networks to convince the European Union (EU) about the relevance of having a European led crisis management mission in Aceh (Lahdensuo, p. 18).41 From the of February 2005, the CMI’s president Martti Ahtisaari, was in daily contact with Avramovic to seek assistance from the European Union Commission for the Aceh peace negotiations. The submission of an application was not only once submitted by the CMI, but number of proposals were applied, each of reflecting lengthy discussions with Avramovic who worked with his hierarchy to find a suitable formula.42

Besides the proposal submission, an information exchange and dialogue between the European Union Council (EC) and CMI was undertaken in a trusting and constructive spirit. During the fourth round of negotiations high level representatives from the European Council and the Commission were accepted to participate in one day of the talks to assess the possibilities for peace and monitoring needs. Javier Solana was played an important role, as High Representative for the (CFSP), he also had a trigger effect that provided a sense of Common purpose between the two institutions: The Commission and the Council became

38 Jarvinen, Trina. (www……………). Aceh Monitoring Mission and the EU’s role in the Aceh peace process. Available at
40 Jarvinen ( ). Aceh Monitoring Mission and the EU’s role in the Aceh peace process.
41 Lahdensuo, Sami ( ). Building peace in Aceh-observations on the work of the A Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) and its liaison with local civil society. Finland: Crisis Management Initiative (CMI)
stake holders in the peace process.\textsuperscript{44} The decision to deploy the European Union Mission was not such easy under the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) structure. While many member states saw chance to expand the reach of the ESDP to Asia and to demonstrate that the Union had matured into a serious international security player, others had concerns that the political and diplomatic risks to the European Union (EU) were high, while the short implementation time line coupled with the support requirements would be difficult to meet.\textsuperscript{45} The European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) was established at the 1999 Cologne European Council Summit. Four years later the European Union (EU) embarked on its first operation, the EU Police Mission (EUPM) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To date, the EU has launched both military and civilian crisis management operations, such as police, border control, rule of law training and peace monitoring missions.\textsuperscript{46} Seeing this hard debate among the EU member states over its involvement in the Aceh conflict, Ahtisaari had re-convinced the leaders of EU member states by taking the view that broader EU involvement would be advantages in the long run for support to any ensuing peace process.\textsuperscript{47} Eventually, the European Union was helped providing funding and support for the president Ahtisaari’s mediation between the government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).\textsuperscript{48}

Ahtisaari’s CMI enjoyed the European Union’s full support, in both legal and financial terms, and its efforts were based on Council Regulation No. 381/2001 establishing the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) it also fell within the scope of the RRM Policy Advice and Mediation Facility Decision 2002-2004.\textsuperscript{49} By earning the European Union support, CMI was not the only actor involved. It was also supported by network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, international organizations and individuals. This helped CMI to concentrate on the facilitation or peace talks without compromising its impartiality. For CMI, right from the start, it was vital to plan the Aceh peace process with a multi levels as well as multi track approach. CMI knew its own limits and the vital importance of the political leverage regional organizations such as the European Union and governments could bring to the process, should it succeed.\textsuperscript{50}

C. CONCLUSION

The European Union (EU) acceptance to participate in the Aceh peace process it was indicated that there was political and security shift within the EU member states. At first, Aceh was not priority important for EU”s perspective. This change might be encouraged by several leading factors:

1. Economic interests. In recent decades, the European Union has envisaged that Asia will emerge as a world economy at some stage in the 21st century. To achieve its ambitions as a global player, the EU must treat Asia as not only a strategic but also an

\textsuperscript{44} Lahdensuo, Sami. ( ). Building peace in Aceh-observations on the work of the AAceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) and its liaison with local civil society. Finland: Crisis Management Initiative (CMI).
\textsuperscript{48} Jakarta Post, 9 December 2005
\textsuperscript{49} Bivar, Caroline. (2005). Emerging from the shadows: the EU”s role in conflict resolution in Indonesia. EPC issue paper No. 44. Europe Policy Center.
indispensable partner. Within this framework, the EU regards Indonesia as one of the most important players in the region.\(^{51}\)

2. Expansion of EU’s influence. The European Union wanted to utilize its experience elsewhere to assume a role that UN had played in the past.

3. EU as high donator. The European Union has funded the peace talks in Helsinki between Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement.

4. Tsunami and disaster, to which the European Union contributed approximately 500 million euros (more than any other group)\(^ {52}\).

5. EU as global and American competitor. Nonetheless, from a political and a strategic perspective, the European Union has not just seen motivated by a desire to assist the humanitarian operations carried out by the United States and other countries in Aceh. It also wanted to show its commitment to the idea that conflicts should and can be solved through diplomacy, as well as strong aspiration to get closer to and acquire visibility in Asia\(^ {53}\).

Besides the above-mentioned reasons on the EU’s future economical, security, strategy and political objectives, its main ambition was to lead the world after America and United Nations is EU’s main purpose in the future. This aim was not well achieved without involving directly in the conflict peace settlement around the world as well as providing financial assistance other than technical help. It was possible opportunity for the European Union to expand its influence throughout the world, since many recent disputed countries need the role of EU’s involvement rather than the United States or the United Nations as well. Many observed that the EU’s role more neutral in resolving the respective countries internal conflicts, such as its role in Sudan, Africa, Middle East, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Therefore, Indonesia had no doubt on EU’s impartiality and neutrality as well as its ambiguity. Likewise, the free Aceh Movement (GAM) has seen EU as more promised institution which could mediate the Aceh conflict resolution and make pressure on Indonesia.

\(^{51}\) Bivar, Caroline. (2005). Emerging from the shadows: the EU’s role in conflict resolution in Indonesia. EPC issue paper No. 44. Europe Policy Center.


\(^{53}\) Bivar, Caroline. (2005). Emerging from the shadows: the EU’s role in conflict resolution in Indonesia. EPC issue paper No. 44. Europe Policy Center.
DAFTAR PUSTAKA


Bivar, Caroline. (2005). Emerging from the shadows: the EU’s role in conflict resolution in Indonesia. EPC issue paper No. 44. Europe Policy Center.


