

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLES OF ASEAN IN CONSTRUCTING MYANMAR DEMOCRATIZATION

ASEAN has important role in Myanmar democratization that its roles tend to be constructive way rather than interference to the issue directly. In order to make Myanmar achieve democracy, ASEAN has several role in constructing Myanmar democratization. The writer use concept of political development (democratization) to analyze the ASEAN roles toward Myanmar democratization, there are three main points in political development; effectiveness of government organization, political participation and political stability.

There are several roles that ASEAN implemented toward its members countries including Myanmar which effectively in constructing Myanmar democratization; by promoting democracy, by helping each other when natural disaster happened, by promoting cooperation and integration with International Community, by building the legal cooperation in the region, and by bringing young people together. Those roles are as a means of sharing value and norm in constructing Myanmar democratization effectively without interference to Myanmar directly.

A. Promoting Democracy by Forum

The writer has briefly discussed about ASEAN principle of democracy in the first chapter. It can be seen that ASEAN is an organization which helps to adhere and promote democracy in the region of Southeast Asia that it stated on ASEAN Charter chapter I, article 1, point 7 and chapter I, articles 2 point 2(h).

Besides in the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN member states desire in building democracy in the region of Southeast Asia also embodied in ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action (ASCPA). ASEAN Security Community (ASC) is one of the three pillars of ASEAN Community. The three pillars of ASEAN Community are the result of Ninth ASEAN Summits in Bali which adopted the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II.⁶¹

ASC has an obligation to ensure peace in Southeast Asian region and also the world can live in democratic and harmony environment. Beside ASC has been promoting the political and security cooperation in Southeast Asia, the political and security cooperation in ASEAN term, do not means military alliance or a joint foreign policy but, it more stand on the bilateral cooperation among ASEAN member states which recognize every state sovereignty and rights to pursue their foreign policy and domestic affairs, for instance in term of defense arrangements.⁶²

One of the main objectives of the ASEAN Security Community as envisaged in the Bali Concord II is to bring ASEAN's political and security cooperation to a higher plane. In working towards this

⁶¹ ASEAN Security Community Plan of Actions. (n.d.). Retrieved August, 2014, from <http://www.asean.org/news/item/asean-security-community-plan-of-action>

⁶² *ibid.*

objective, ASEAN Member Countries shall promote political development in support of ASEAN Leaders' shared vision and common values to achieve peace, stability, democracy and prosperity in the region. This is the highest political commitment that would serve as the basis for ASEAN political cooperation. In order to better respond to the new dynamics within the respective ASEAN Member Countries, ASEAN shall nurture such common socio-political values and principles. In this context, ASEAN Member Countries shall not condone unconstitutional and undemocratic changes of government or the use of their territory for any actions undermining peace, security and stability of other ASEAN Member Countries. (ASEAN Security Plan of Actions, [n.d].)⁶³

On the other hand, Indonesia and Myanmar have a good relation because both of them are the ASEAN member states. Indonesia is the most stable democracy in the region and it was the initiator of Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) in 2008. Bali Democracy Forum has main aim to push the participant of the forum to share the cooperation in the field of democracy and peace.

The forum is aimed at fostering dialogue-based regional and international cooperation in the field of peace and democracy through sharing of experiences and best practices that adhere to the principles of equality, mutual respect and understanding. (Bali Democracy Forum, [n.d].)⁶⁴

BDF has been held since 2008 and the latest was in the 2013 Bali Democracy Forum IV.

Surprisingly, Myanmar, a state which has a high number of human rights violation, joined the BDF. It can be seen through Myanmar's participation as the

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Bali Democracy Forum. (n.d.). *Institute for Peace and Democracy*. Retrieved August, 2014, from <http://www.ipd.or.id/bdf>

impact of legal binding that ASEAN build in ACS that to make a good relation among ASEAN member states. In the BDF's case, Myanmar is joined the forum to show of Myanmar's respects to Indonesia as the host and initiator of Bali Democracy Forum.

In Bali Democracy Forum, the sharing value and norm of democracy can be possible to be applied by Myanmar government because in BDF, a county can share it experience in term of democratization. It is a good chance to promote Myanmar democratization to be better because some reports indicated that was stuck democratization. That military regime struggled to keep the power in the country and also violate human rights violation toward minority group, especially toward the Rohingya ethnic group.

B. Being a Nice Partner For Myanmar

In the case of natural disaster, ASEAN member states have a commitment to help each other with international community, such as NGO, when natural disaster happened. Hence, in order to coordinate the member states of ASEAN in handling the natural disaster in Southeast Asia, ASEAN has a committee on disaster management. It is known as ASEAN Regional Programme on Disaster Management (ARPD M). "The Programme includes a response action plan, training, information sharing and communications, partnerships with governments and non-governmental organizations, and public awareness."⁶⁵

The ARPD M does not only function as a forum for ASEAN member states, but also for ASEAN dialogue partners, such as the Pacific Disaster Centre,

⁶⁵ Op cit, Know your ASEAN 2nd Edition. Page 33.

Asian Disaster Preparedness (ADPC), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, WHO, the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), etc.⁶⁶

The ARPDM holds 29 activities, which are divided into five major components in order to make some priorities of the ARPDM projects. They are

(i) Establishment of the ASEAN Response Action Plan; (ii) Refresher Courses/ Expertise Development; (iii) ASEAN Disaster Information Sharing and Communication Network (ASEAN DISCNet); (iv) Partnerships with Relevant Organizations and NGOs and Mobilizing Financial Support and Resources; and (v) ASEAN Day for Disaster Management and Enhancing Disaster Management Public Education and Awareness Programmes. (ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management, [n.d.]⁶⁷)

In Chapter III, the writer has explained briefly about the natural disaster which happened in Myanmar which is known as Cyclone Nargis. It is one of the natural disasters which received high response in ARPDM.

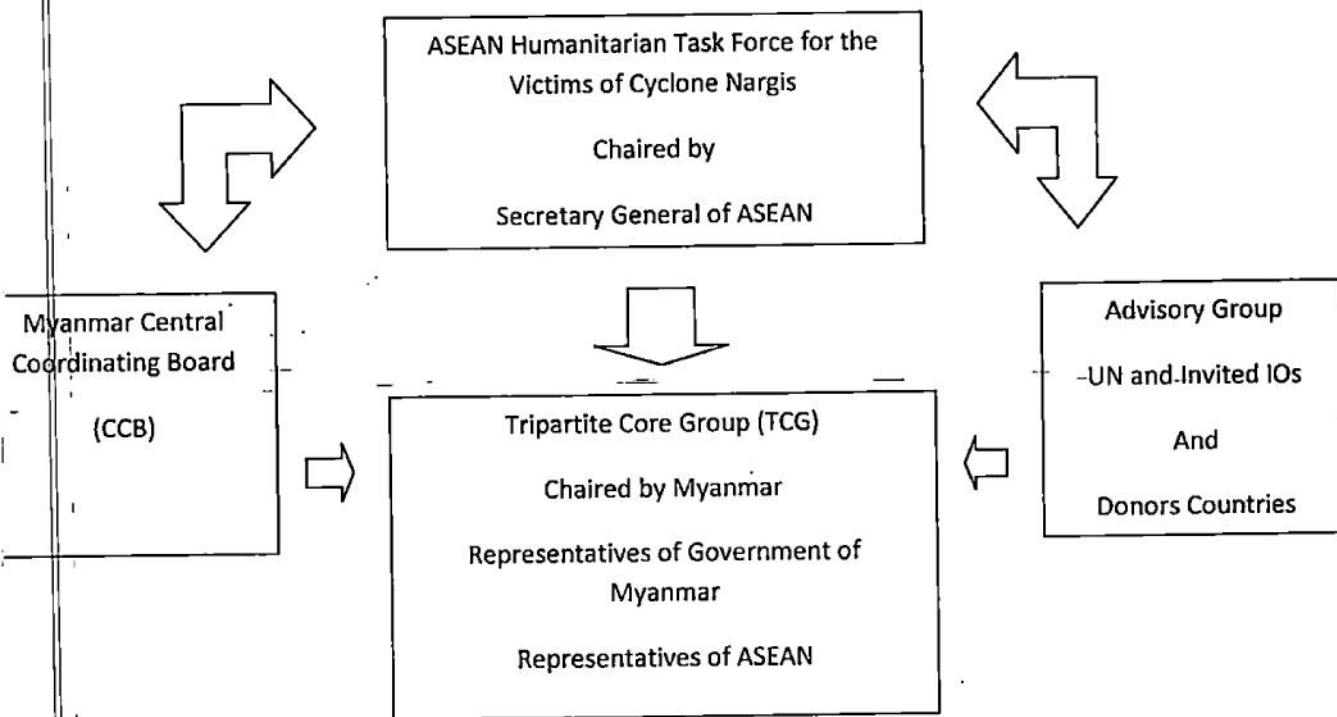
The Cyclone Nargis was the worst natural disaster happened in Myanmar in 2008. It caused approximately 140,000 casualties and 95% houses had been destroyed the economic losses were approximately 2,7% Myanmar projected GDP in 2008. In order to help Myanmar, ASEAN led the cooperation with UN and Myanmar Government as a humanitarian call. In the humanitarian assistance, there were included 4 groups of parties; ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force for the

⁶⁶ ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM). (n.d.). Retrieved August, 2014, from <http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-socio-cultural-community/category/asean-ministerial-meeting-on-disaster-management-ammdm>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Victims of Cyclone Nargis, Advisory Group, Tripartite Core Group, and Myanmar Central Coordinating Board.

Table 4.1
Structure of ASEAN-led Coordinating Mechanism



Source: A Humanitarian Call the ASEAN Response to Cyclone Nargis

ASEAN-led Coordinating Mechanism shows how complex the coordination itself and the coordination was successfully help the Myanmar society to recover the damage before Myanmar joining ASEAN. It was predicted to be impossible for Myanmar to cooperate with international community. It is a sign of how successful ASEAN was in encouraging Myanmar to achieve humanitarian assistance from overseas.

The Ministers exchanged views on the recent development in Myanmar. The Ministers took note of the briefing by Myanmar on the recent developments in the process of national reconciliation and peaceful transition to democracy as envisaged in the Roadmap to Democracy. The Ministers expressed concern on the pace of the national reconciliation process and argued Myanmar to show tangible progress that would lead to a peaceful transition to democracy in the near future.....⁶⁸

In addition, in the Meeting of the ARF Intersessional Support Forum in Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy which was held in Helsinki, Finland on 28-30 March 2007 stated about international support for Myanmar democratization. The forum expressed Myanmar to release political prisoners. Besides, participants of the forum argued the genuine political reforms. The transition problems to democracy should be responded by Myanmar Government.⁶⁹

On the other hand, the relation of ASEAN and Canada affects Myanmar democratization. Canadian Government really supports Myanmar to achieve democracy.

Through the Democracy Envelope of the Global Peace and Security Fund (GPSF), Canada is providing over \$2M in 2013-14 to consolidate Burma's move towards democracy. Programming aims to improve the knowledge of democracy and federalism among political actors and stakeholders, strengthen government-public engagement, and enhance the capacity of government representatives, administrators and civil society in practical skills for conflict prevention and democratic engagement.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ ASEAN Regional Forum Document Series 2006-2009. *Chairman's Statement of the Fourteenth ASEAN Regional Forum*. Manila, Philippines, 2 August 2007. Retrieved August, 2014, from <http://www.asean.org/archive/publications/ARF06-09.pdf>

⁶⁹ Ibid. Co-chairs' Summary Report of the Meeting of the ARF Inter-sessional Support Forum in Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy.

⁷⁰ Embassy Canada to Burma (Myanmar). (n.d.). *Canada Burma Relations*. Retrieved August, 2014, from http://canadainternational.gc.ca/burmabirmanie/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/index.aspx?lang=en

Canadian program above shows the international pressure toward Myanmar Government to improve its democracy. The pressures might not be on the side, if ASEAN could not press Myanmar to be more open to international community. It is as indicators of how important international community in constructing Myanmar democratization.

Beside the international pressure, promoting cooperation to international community could be set for Myanmar to the sharing value and norm of democracy. It would be the strongest way to influence Myanmar government to behave toward democratization rather than interference directly. This is how ASEAN Way in constructing Myanmar democratization.

D. Building Legal Cooperation in the Region

ASEAN has three pillars which are implemented as ASEAN's commitment to give treatment to society of ASEAN through ASEAN Community Council. They are ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community, and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. These are the ways of ASEAN to influence the member states to build legal cooperation in order to make the prosperity in the region. Building legal cooperation in Southeast Asia is really important. Considering the differences on ASEAN member states political system and culture, cooperation is a quite difficult thing. It is caused by their different point of view about an object. However, ASEAN has shown sincere commitment to mutual cooperation among its member to give society the prosperity.

One of the ASEAN Community agenda which receives high intention from international community is ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2015. AEC 2015 has shown ASEAN member states now have put one step to enter the new era as it reaches a major milestone in 2015. AEC plan was signed by 10 of ASEAN member states in Singapore in 2007. They reasserted the goal of regional economic cooperation and integration declared at the Bali Summit on October 2003.⁷¹

On the other hand, AEC 2015 aim is to transform ASEAN into a region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labor and freer flow of capital. With its four pillars as the reference of significant progress of ASEAN Economic Community; “(1) Single Market and Production Base, (2) Competitive Economic Region, (3) Equitable Economic Development, and (4) ASEAN’s Integration into the Global Economy.”⁷² Those pillars of AEC of course will affect toward ten of ASEAN member states behavior.

In term of AEC and Myanmar Democratization, it should be integrated among them as it is stated on four pillars of AEC point 3 and 4. First is Equitable Economic Development. It will be happened only if the political stability in Myanmar has been increase. It means the democratization should be maintained because the political stability will affect the investor behavior. If the political stability and democratization cannot be maintained, the development of economic in Myanmar cannot be achieved.

⁷¹ Thinking Globally, Prospering Regionally – ASEAN Economic Community 2015
Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, April 2014. Retrieved August, 2014, from
http://www.asean.org/images/resources/2014/May/AECKeyMessagesBooklet_FINAL30Apr2014.pdf

⁷² Ibid.

In addition, the ASEAN's integration on global economy also has correlation toward Myanmar democratization. It can be seen that economy is the best factor to increase prosperity in Southeast Asia. The cooperation on global economy is helpful for every state in the world which most of developed countries have been opening their market into global economy community. It is because they can cooperate in trading, economic dialogue, etc.

Both points above are how sharing value and norm in term of economic cooperation which effectively encourage Myanmar government to recover the democratization in Myanmar as the requirement to cooperate with international community to receive investment, trading, and free market. On the other hand, when Myanmar government had signed the AEC plan in Singapore in 2007 and discussed it in Bali Summit on October 2003, they should think carefully because it is not an easy decision. They will have competitors from the other ASEAN member states. However, if Myanmar is still in the bad position; many human rights violations and democratization are stopped, Myanmar economy be left behind by the other ASEAN member states such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines which have a good political stability.

E. Bringing ASEAN Youth Together

In the youth programs, ASEAN has ASEAN Youth Camp and Jamboree for ASEAN students. The camp can be in the form of student exchange, scholarship, and conference. For instance, some ASEAN member states provide a scholarship for ASEAN student such as Singapore. Singapore has been giving ASEAN Youth Fund to finance ASEAN student activities. Besides, the other non

ASEAN member states like Japan has been sponsoring cruises for more than 300 ASEAN and Japan students every year since 1974.⁷³ Usually, the forums are more focused on sharing culture and art.

In addition, the other forum that serves young people together is ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF). AYF has been existed for 5 years; Thailand (2009), Vietnam (2010), Indonesia (2011), Cambodia (2012, and Brunei Darussalam (2013). In 2014, Myanmar was the host of AYF which was held on March 17-20 in Yangon, Myanmar. The host for AYF is based on the chairmanship of ASEAN. Every committee of AYF has been trying to do their best in order to create the platform for youth which concern toward uniting young people, giving recommendation to certain issues in the region, and influencing policy making for the better and effective integration of ASEAN as one community.⁷⁴ There are several aims of ASEAN Youth Forum:

(1) To Promote meaningful youth involvement in building as ASEAN Community; (2) To enhance friendship beyond boundaries among ASEAN youth; (3) To be able to share local, regional issues that youth are encountering and to come up with efficient and effective strategies at the national and ASEAN Levels; and (4) To maintain peace, sustainability in education, environment and economic sectors.⁷⁵

In the writer's opinion, through the forum such as ASEAN Youth Forum, the possibility of sharing value, idea and norm can be archived by Myanmar young generation. In addition, young generation is the people who will lead the country in the future. The youth forum can influence the idea of the youth which

⁷³ Op cit, Know Your ASEAN 2nd Edition. Page 36.

⁷⁴ Introduction to ASEAN Youth Forum 2014. One Community, One strategy; Youth for Unity. *Strengthening the Power of Youth Engagement in Building a Peaceful and Productive ASEAN Community*. Retrieved August, 2014, from <http://www.aseanyouthforum.org/about.html>

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

will affect toward their interest and action. This is the way how ASEAN participates in constructing Myanmar political development (Democratization) through facilitating the young generation as the future leader in each ASEAN member states.