

# **Model Asian Union 2013**

## **How we can realize Asian Union**

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## **What is Asian Union and realization?**

What is Asian Union? Before going into any constructive ideas, we need to make a clear distinction between a regional cooperation and union. Regional cooperation is merely an effort to better the lives of people residing, without any goals of integration. A union in contrast has a specific purpose of integrating members both economically and politically. In order to accomplish Asian Union however, there needs to be solid cooperation at a regional level prior to its creation. Realization, in this sense, is the preparation stage of integration prior to the inception of Asian Union. **Thus, the focus of this paper shall be on the process of setting the foundations in realizing AU, not the model itself.**

There have been much academic discussions upon why and how AU should be formed. However, we still face many practical difficulties in terms of realizing it. The objective of this paper is to prove 1) why there needs to be gradual efforts prior to institutionalizing AU; 2) how ASEAN+3 will lay the cornerstone for AU and; 3) how short-term projects can lead to AU. The model of AU we want to realize through this process is as follows.

## **Model of Asian Union**

**1) Principle:** The principles of AU are as follows; 1) benefit each and every member; 2) solve problems that individual nations alone cannot; 3) mutual respect for the sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations; 4) respect the fundamental political and constitutional structures of the Member States; 5) settlement of differences or disputes in a peaceful manner; 6) abide by AU authority and agreement reached by its members and; 7) to work towards economic and political integration.

**2) Membership:** Initial members are those of APT, but will be open to other nations. New members will be allowed membership when there is agreement by minimum of two-thirds of the members.

**3) Structure:** There will be three pillars under AU. First, councils that deal with culture and education, economy and security. Since APT already has multiple establishments for discussions, these will be fundamental grounds where councils will be based on. Second, general assembly that is composed of every member, will vote upon policies that are recommended from each council. Third, a supervising commission that has binding power will supervise the whole AU, in terms of whether members and policies are abiding by AU principles.

**4) System:** Within AU system, there are four phases. First, agenda setting, where members decide on which agenda they shall discuss upon. Second, discussions will be facilitated where members share ideas and views on the issue at hand. Within each council, members will suggest policies. Then, councils will determine which policies will be recommended to general assembly. Third, votes will take place at the general assembly and every member will be given equal representation. Two thirds of majority is required to pass policies. Fourth, Chairs of both councils and general assembly will be voted upon (only needs a simple majority) and will work to promote healthy discussions while observing the core principles of AU.

## **Necessity and urgency of Asian Union**

With the progress of globalization and increase of trade, nations have become economically interdependent. Regions across the globe have made block economies and individual nations alone are getting less competent in the global market. With successful economic integration, we can increase economies of scale and gain more market power as a block.

However, we cannot deny the presence of major disputes (territorial and historical)<sup>i</sup> and their influence on non-political areas. They directly hinder effective implementation of policies as we can see in the case of South Korea-Japan currency swap where territorial dispute led to the failure of extending swap contract in 2012<sup>ii</sup>. Although US has been playing a very important role when it comes to Asia, staying too dependent on "Pivot to Asia" may not be the best option for the region. US presence in the region is in the end temporary and US has often failed to fulfill its role, such as in 2012 when US declined attendance in APEC forum in Vladivostok and 2013 when Obama cancelled his trip to APEC due to domestic problem<sup>iii</sup>.

Thus, it is paramount that we take immediate actions at diverse levels. To efficiently progress economic integration and effectively resolve complex disputes with our own independent efforts, AU needs to be formed. Though we may not solve the prolonged problems in a short period of time, it gives even more reason to start acting now.

## **How to realize AU?**

To begin, we first have to concede that any radical formation of Asian Union will not only be infeasible but also ineffective even in the case it is possible. Thus, for sustainable formation to take place, we see the need to gradually increase regional cooperation through policies that deal with specific issues at

hand that serve members' interests. Therefore, Neo-functionalist approach<sup>iv</sup> that stresses the idea of "spillover effect" is most apt for Asia. We have witnessed how successful the concept can be through EU. The cooperation in ECSC was the cornerstone that led to the creation of EEC and EAEC and ultimately EU.

To successfully realize AU, we have to recognize problems, set the right direction and implement policies accordingly. Problems that impede the creation of AU are territorial and historical disputes, ethnical and cultural diversity, lack of common vision, identity and economic gaps. Among these issues we identify territorial and historical disputes and lack of common identity as major obstacles. The tensions regarding territorial disputes are ever more increasing since these directly affect one's sovereignty. Specific examples are 1) Asian paradox<sup>v</sup>, where even though China, Japan and South Korea share 20% of the world's GDP and are becoming more economically interdependent, conflicts on issues of history and territory have made cooperation in the region hard. 2) Tensions within APT, since China is neglecting the efforts of ASEAN to solve South China Sea issue.

**In a situation where complex conflicts exist, we should strive to achieve three complementary essential elements in forming a union: cooperation, common identity and dispute alleviation. In order to accomplish them among ASEAN+3 nations, we suggest three categories of specific policies.**

### **Why ASEAN Plus Three?**

Since its inception in 1997, ASEAN Plus Three (APT) cooperation has broadened and deepened to also focus on subjects other than finance such as the areas of food and energy security, disaster management, people-to-people contacts, labor movement, diseases, environment and transnational crime, including counter-terrorism. In combating transnational crime in the region, the APT Work Plan on Cooperation in Combating Transnational Crime was adopted in 2006. APT cooperation has deepened by regular dialogue and exchange of views through existing APT mechanisms, such as the APT Summit, APT Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) and as well as through track 1.5 and track 2 dialogue, including East Asia Forum and Network of East Asia Think-tanks<sup>vi</sup>.

APT is now moving from economic cooperation to political cooperation. Recently, president of South Korea proclaimed "Northeast Asian Peace and Cooperation Initiative" during her visit to the APT forum<sup>vii</sup>. The plan is a set of proposals to build trust and boost cooperation in the Northeast Asian region. This proposal was widely supported by APT nations. This shows that APT shares the common vision of regional cooperation not only at economic level but also political level. Therefore, APT is the right ground to start sailing towards Asian Union. We are going to implement policies through institutions under ASEAN and APT summit. The cooperation built from our policies will take APT a step closer to Asian Union.

### **Criteria on issue selection**

1. Cooperative issues that can build trust and interdependency among states.
2. Meet the interest of not only each state in APT but also APT as a whole.
3. Issues that are beyond the capacity of one nation or better done together.
4. Issues that respect the current charter of ASEAN

### **Policies in accordance to three elements**

#### **1) Cooperation**

##### **ASEAN+3 Natural disaster restorations (ANDR)**

In Asia, natural disasters such as flood, typhoon and earth quake are frequent. According to a UNESCAP report the annual cost of damages mount up to \$2,700 billion over the world and 90% of the cost came from Asia<sup>viii</sup>. Natural disasters need immediate assistance and often a state's capacity is not enough to cope with it. It is essential to get the resource and help in time. Asian states, due to its geographical proximity are the right actors to do so.

Although there are humanitarian aids when natural disasters occur, the specific policy will not only give imminent and secured help to the state in trouble but also build trust in Asia. The policy is to 1) have annual co-drill on natural disaster 2) create emergency relief funds. Assistance will be deployed under the following conditions; A) When disasters happen which go beyond national capacity such as earthquake, tsunami, typhoon and flood; B) When state in question calls APT for help; C) The emergency fund will be procured from existing "APT cooperation fund" and amount will be discussed in ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM); D) human resource is to be set voluntarily by each nation. Through this policy, Asia can build solid trust and belief by overcoming Mother Nature's tragedies with mutual systematic help.

#### **2) Building common identity**

### **ASEAN+3 Agreements on Exchange Student Program (AAESP)**

In order to meet our goal of building trust and cultural understanding, we emphasize the need to interact with each other at civilian level. Northeast Asian states (South Korea, China and Japan) have started a pilot project, which will end in 2015, where exchange university students among three nations are given a dual degree<sup>ix</sup>. Our plan is to extend this program in two ways. Firstly, to extend the program's duration to permanent level and extend the membership of this program to ASEAN states.

Secondly, but most importantly, we will open up an exclusive program to students of military academies of Northeast Asian nations. As students of military academies are direct future military leaders of a nation, it is crucial to create mindset of cultural understanding and mutual trust among them. The duration of exchange program can range from a semester to dual degree program and courses for foreign students can be arranged by each nation. This policy will be essential to our goal of alleviating military tension if not totally gone and it will make military cooperation in the future more possible based on cultural understanding. This policy will be implemented through ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM).

### **3) Conflict resolution**

#### **ASEAN+3 History and Territory Conflict Resolution Committee (AHTCRC)**

Over the past two decades we saw uprising issues such as the islands in the South China Sea and Dokdo/Takeshima that hinder building common identity and cooperation within Asia. These sensitive issues are crucial deadlocks that we have to face. Hitherto, governments have made endeavors to alleviate the regional tension but were far from success. The prolonged claims over territories have affected non-political issues and are ultimately blocking cooperation in economic sectors. Furthermore, citizens of each nation are also responsible in worsening the situation by acting emotionally such as in the case of anti-Korean demonstrations in Japan and anti-Japanese in China<sup>x</sup>.

After experiencing two world wars that devastated the region, nations that were once enemies could find common cause to cooperate and integrate coal and steel market. Only then was EU able to be formed. If there were to be such coal and steel in Asia, it would be controversial territories. In order to form Asian Union, we should learn a lesson from history and work towards it before a tragedy of our own occurs. To begin with, we recognize both the values and limits of track 1 diplomacy. Thus, we want to extend and strengthen the diplomacy spectrum to track 1.5 and 2. To be clear, increasing the number of people involved surely won't solve disputes immediately. However, only when comprehensive cooperation is made at a holistic level of society, can we achieve a better understanding of each other.

**A) Track 1.5 Diplomacy:** Unofficial forum will be held annually in the **AHTRC**. Meaning, that the contents of the forum will not be open for access to the public and the agendas will only deal with historical and territorial disputes, exclusive from existing forums and meetings such as ADMM and ARF. Eligible participants will be government officials, civil think-tanks and relevant scholars. The US will also participate as a formal member exclusively in this forum. Other nations are eligible for an observer status. By implementing this, participants will be able to share honest opinions and thoughts, without political pressure.

**B) Track 2 Diplomacy:** Particularly on territorial issues many people tend to be unaware of different aspects and only know that it is their land without the reason why. Even if they do, they are not fully informed on why other nations are claiming it otherwise. Thus, people become more emotional than necessary. In addition, people do not recognize the necessity of AU.

To address these issues, we have two sets of policies. Firstly, we will hold forums regarding history and territory. The forum will be composed of scholars and civilians; scholars will give lectures on facts and why nations each have different point of view regarding historical and territorial disputes, giving perspectives of every nation in dispute. Also, to stress the importance of AU, there will be discussions on the necessity, benefits and governing structures of Asian Union. Civilians can ask questions and share ideas with scholars. The forums will be broadcasted through Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU)<sup>xi</sup> which already exists today.

Secondly, we will hold a tournament, **ASEAN+3 Mock Trial on Territorial Dispute (AMTTD)**, where students from member states can participate. There will be four sessions; three sessions where trials will be held on different agendas and a non-trial session to share their ideas and views as a student, not a representative of one nation. Participants will be required to represent nations except their own, on each agenda which are: Dokdo/Takeshima, Senkaku/Diaoyudao and South China Sea. Through the policies, people will be more informed about the territorial disputes, necessity of AU. Furthermore, students will have objective views on the dispute.

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- i "Improving Chilly Japan-China Ties." *The Japan Times*. N.p., 13 Sept. 2013. Web. 11 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/09/13/editorials/improving-chilly-japan-china-ties/>>.
- ii Fackler, M. (2012, Aug 25). Japan places pressure on south korea amid islets dispute. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1034919313?accountid=11931/>>.
- iii "APEC Bali 2013 - President Obama Cancels Trip to Indonesia." *APEC Bali 2013 - President Obama Cancels Trip to Indonesia*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Oct. 2013. <<http://whitehouse.gov1.info/apec-2013/>>.
- iv Gehring, Thomas. *Integrating Integration Theory: Neofunctionalism and International Regimes*. Florence: Robert Schuman Centre, 1995. Print.
- Neo-functionalism*
- Simply put, it is a theory that puts emphasis on gradual progress and extension of cooperation. It argues how regional initiatives and collaboration on specific areas can lead to both economic and political integration, with the ultimate goal of forming a union. There are two main mechanisms that promote integration. Firstly, based on the theory, cooperation will lead to more cooperation on other areas as well due to spillover effect. This happens because diverse issues are interconnected and members, in order to get more and full benefits, are incentivized to extend their efforts to solve interconnected problems. Secondly, the spread of collaboration across fields then make it necessary for the region to form a union so that they can manage cooperation better. This theory suggests "technocratic automaticity" in which, as integration proceeds, the supranational institutions set up to oversee that integration process will themselves take the lead in sponsoring further integration as they become more powerful and more autonomous of the member states.
- v "Park Wins International Support for Regional Trust-building Vision." *GlobalPost*. N.p., 10 Oct. 2013. Web. 11 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/yonhap-news-agency/131010/park-wins-international-support-regional-trust-building-vi-1>>.
- vi "ASEAN Anthem." *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*. ASEAN+3, n.d. Web. 9 Oct. 2013.
- vii "ASEAN+3 Leaders Support Northeast Asia Peace Initiative." *ASEAN 3 Leaders Support Northeast Asia Peace Initiative*. Korea.net, Oct.-Nov. 2013. Web. 11 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Policies/view?articleId=113470>>.
- viii Bonapace, Tiziana, Sanjay Srivastava, and Sujit Mohanty. *The Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2012: Reducing Vulnerability and Exposure to Disasters*. Bangkok: ESCAP, 2013. Print.
- ix "CAMPUS Asia" Launched: The First Japan-China-Korea Committee for Promoting Exchange and Cooperation among Universities." MEXT, 16 Apr. 2010. Web. 13 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.mext.go.jp/english/highered/1303550.htm>>.
- x Ida, Torres. "8 Arrested as Groups Clash over Anti-Korean Demonstrations in Tokyo - The Japan Daily Press." *The Japan Daily Press*. JDP, June-July 2013. Web. 10 Oct. 2013. <<http://japandailypress.com/8-arrested-as-groups-clash-over-anti-korean-demonstrations-in-tokyo-1730707/>>.
- xi "About the ABU." *About the ABU*. ABU, n.d. Web. 10 Oct. 2013. <[http://www.abu.org.my/About\\_Us-%40-About\\_the\\_ABU\\_.aspx](http://www.abu.org.my/About_Us-%40-About_the_ABU_.aspx)>.

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