

Public Discussion Diplomacy by Objectives

Wednesday, January 30th, 2019 | 14.00 – 16.00 WIB | Bengkel Diplomasi, FPCI

Speaker: Ambassador Peter F. Gontha (Ambassador of Indonesia to Poland (2014-2019) and Founder of Jakarta International Java Jazz Festival)

Moderator: Dr. Dino Patti Djalal (Founder, Foreign Policy Community Indonesia)

Opening remarks by Dr. Dino Patti Djalal: Poland's role in chairing the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting, hosting the COP24, initiating solidarity movements during the Cold War, and becoming a champion of the new democracy in the world makes me confident of its increasingly important role at the regional and global level.

Ambassador Peter F. Gontha

On what does diplomacy mean to him: For me, diplomacy is about the interest of a country, profitability, and money. It all comes down to economic interest. Diplomacy talks about how to secure national interests through negotiation, promoting national interests in a peaceful manner, elevating bilateral cooperation, and creating a significant role for your country in the international order.

Eight main causes of war, in my opinion, are economically driven – when a country wishes to take control of another country's economy, territorial gain – when a country seeks to occupy certain areas or land, religion, nationalism, revenge, civil war, revolutionary war, and defensive war - which normally happens to relatively small countries, such as Singapore and Israel, who have fear of being invaded.

On the world's politic and economic landscape: Where are we now? We see the biggest change is happening in Asia. China's consumer behavior is a powerful indicator of future changes. Thousands of Chinese student are studying at western universities and the number of western-style education in China is rapidly increasing. I see that the West is getting into China, and China is adapting to western society. On the issue of inequality, I think China is coping with that. In fact, inequality has become a problem everywhere in the world. Inequality is a sign of economic growth.

The economic and trade relations between countries are also changing. It is moving towards the Internet and online transactions. Capital goods still need to be produced, of course, but we will increasingly see trade conducted online rather than physically. Small items will subsidize the big items. Diplomacy has to be built around everything that is happening within economic relationships between countries.

On his personal experience of being an Indonesian Ambassador to Poland:

Key things about the country that impressed me the most are the infrastructure and the prominent role of the Polish Diaspora in the world. Poland's cooperation with the European Union has generated advantages in developing its infrastructure to become one of the most efficient models in the world. On the latter case, compared to the big number of Indonesian Diaspora, Poland is actively engaging its 24 million Diasporas to promote the country's good bilateral relationship and preserve the established connectivity with the host countries. Poland also has a relatively low unemployment rate (8-10%). The people are very well educated. The education cost is relatively low (1/10th the costs of studying in the US).

In terms of promoting Indonesia to Polish people, I always tried to emphasize on Indonesia's strength that would appeal and attract specific demographics, such as beautiful beaches, nice hotel, shopping center, and good food. Rather than using the conventional method, I believe that people will be much more interested in decent things like good Internet connection and delicious food. We can learn from Singapore, which has 22 million visitors annually despite its lack of a prominent culture and small geographical area. People come for security, food, and good hotels.

To make my mark in Poland and to be better at promoting Indonesia, I always tried to demonstrate a strong personality. I rode a motorcycle with an Indonesian flag around Poland and invited South Korean and North Korean Ambassadors to take a picture together. All happened before the talks of uniting North and South Korea begun.

On how Indonesia should move forward: I see that Indonesia needs to improve its negotiation power and strategy. On the case of palm oil, for example, the lobby should be done not only at the first layer (high-level Ministerial meeting) but also on the second and third layer (informal relationship among diverse actors).

Indonesia is reluctant to impose certain environmental standards because it will affect the product's competitive advantage. The European company takes advantage of this by sending its manufacturing to be done in Southeast Asia countries despite the negative impacts on the environment. Indonesia needs to negotiate better and address these contradictions. Indonesia should move away from the defensive stance and fight for its interests.

On the other hand, the relationship between Indonesia and Poland is improving. Nowadays, Indonesia has become better known in Poland, and vice versa. Both countries need to explore shared interests and cooperate to achieve common goals. Poland is now having issues with the EU regarding its production of coal and the use of coal for energy. Indonesia and Poland can work together on this issue and create mutually beneficial cooperation.

Conclusion: Overview of where the world is heading, the current trends bring big question marks: Is Britain going to pull out of the EU? What is the future of NATO? Is it going to survive? Will WTO's power be decreasing? What is the future of protectionism and the breakdown of the global, and to some degree, regional institutions?

The biggest market now is the online world. For the past decade, we have seen a fast improvement from AMPS to 4G (20 times faster than 3G). Soon we will have 5G that is 50 times faster than LTE. In 2021, 40% of cars in Europe will be operated using electricity. In 2040, the whole of Europe will be 100% electrified. Where is Indonesia in the midst of this vast development?

Indonesia should not let its bureaucracy and certain people's interests hamper its development. Indonesia needs to work more on its education, science and technology sectors in order to continue developing. As a comparison, China has 650.000 Ph.D. and most of them studied science and technology. Indonesia only has around 35.000 Ph.D. The issue of education must be seriously addressed and fixed in order to ensure a better future of Indonesia.

Questions and Answers Session with Dr. Dino Patti Djalal:

As a private sector guy, what are the most surprising things for you once you entered the government sector?

P: I think the Indonesian Foreign Ministry has the best administrative procedure and accounting system anywhere in Indonesia. It manages to control all the 140 representative offices all over the world. On the other hand, bureaucracy is bureaucracy. I take action, I do not wait. I make decisions when I feel like I need to.

When you were the Ambassador, did you speak freely as Peter or did you feel like you need to tailor your comments to make it in line with the government stance?

P: I made my comments as an Indonesian citizen. I said what I had in my heart. I always made sure to not make any hoaxes. I said things with facts and proofs.

In Poland and throughout Europe, the key issues are immigration, political swing, and identity. How does Poland deal with it?

P: The Polish government chose to apply the anti-immigration policy and they do not accommodate refugees. Poland is now relatively safe.

Poland is controlling 47% of trucking in Europe all the way to Ukraine, but the Polish do not want to be truck drivers. They are seeking the Indonesians to fill those positions with decent pay. This is the issue we are currently working on with the Polish government.

How is Poland relationship with Russia right now and how is the Trump policy affecting Poland?

P: Poland is wary about both the US and Russia. The Polish are always on guard. However, Poland keeps on gaining support from the US, NATO, EU, and its neighboring countries.