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Regional aid to global disaster: Review EU Rapid Reaction Mechanism

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Abstract

In the era of globalization, capital, labour and even market can come in and out freely and internationally. So is a disaster. Of course, a disaster did happen in one place, but its impact carries both in domestic and abroad. For avoiding abroad disaster, European Community decides to create a mechanism to manage this issue to preserve EU interest. According to Council Regulation No. 381/2001, the rapid reaction mechanism needs triggering in order to stabilize society when crisis or disaster occurs in the beneficiary countries. Precisely speaking, this mechanism differs from other crisis management means, which merely focus on rehabilitation after disaster happened or prevented crisis before. Instead, rapid reaction mechanism not only involves in crisis management, but also stops carrying on damage to human beings.

In fact, EU creates this mechanism in order to prevent ongoing small or medium crisis to escalate into uncontrolled catastrophe, armed conflict or war. In addition, this mechanism observes the situation, and decides to employ what instrument to constrain crisis and what partner to cooperate in crisis management.

It can be denied that EU Rapid Reaction Mechanism carries out great effort during restoration of broken society or country. Nevertheless, it is obvious to rethink EU Reaction Mechanism in next generation. Obviously, aid includes money and labour, and EU Rapid Reaction Mechanism cost both highly. This research argues that EU Rapid Reaction Mechanism is not only subject to be a giver, but also to be a receiver in the future. Moreover, this mechanism needs adapting itself to receive aid from the third countries or international organizations. In addition, this mechanism can take global aid to deal with European regions' problem. This research argues to touch up EU Rapid Reaction Mechanism in order to release financial burden from EU member states. Moreover, EU member states can learn lesson from the third countries or international organizations during crisis management. Therefore, this research points out the phenomenon to rethink EU Rapid Reaction Mechanism.

Keywords: rapid reaction mechanism, crisis management, conflict prevention

1. Introduction

Crisis is very harmful to human and nature, and hence it is very necessary to figure out the solution to manage it. In general, crisis management is the common language to deal with crises. However, crisis is very different and has its characteristic; when using the wrong crisis management may not cope with problem, but generates another one. Therefore, identifying before managing crisis is very important to the crisis management team. This paper studies this type of crisis that happened rapidly, suddenly and sometimes unpredictably, and seemed expandable but could be controlled in advance. To tackle about rapid crises, EU designs RRM (*Rapid Reaction Mechanism*) to conduct disaster inside Europe and outside the world. RRM is civilian-oriented and EU-supervising crisis management tool and procedure. Of course, RRM also involves military action, but this kind mission still be conducted by EU member states, instead of EU

institutions. RRM competes against time and the huge resource of rehabilitation and reconstruction; having said that, RRM considers that time is very fertile ground for crisis, and it makes disaster bigger.

In addition, bigger disaster costs reconciliation and reconstruction more than smaller one. With regard to this reason, RRM is designed to avoid crisis worsening and to put it under control. RRM collects money from EU members, but this fund finance not only EU member states but also non-member ones; as per usual, the third party country outside Europe still benefits from RRM budget. In practice and theory, EU is the second international politics player in the world, and is very experienced in crisis management; this is no doubt to receive fund from outside EU member states to supplement RRM budget to take effect in rapid crisis management. Having said that, RRM could collect global aid to cope with regional disaster; that means RRM is not likely a financial burden for EU member states, but becomes a helper for them.

2. Crisis Management in Timeframe

a. History of RRM

RRM originates from RFM, and it funds all operation in critical areas or countries. In fact, RFM cannot satisfy EU member states nor those countries or areas where are in critical crises. Before RRM appeared, the Commission carried on crisis management to face critical situation. From Mission Poland and Hungary in 1989 to Mission Kosovo in 2000, the Commission discovered the necessity, and reveals weakness during operation. In order to satisfy needs, the Council accepts the Commission' proposal and European Parliament's opinions, and later creates RRM to mobilize all resources and human powers to curb sudden crises. In February 2001, RRM was created, and launched in May in the same year. The civilian

Rapid Reaction Mechanism is designed expectedly to balance the EU's military intervention, according to RRM provisions for the deployment of police, legal and civil administration experts to use non-combat method to cope with crises.

In the beginning, RRM only conducted 19 cases, but increased upon to 65 contracts in 2003, particularly boosted up to hundreds of cases in 2006. Especially, RRM started to fight terrorism in 2003; obviously, RRM broadens contribution and cooperate intensively with local conductors. RRM is viewed as civilian crisis management, it usually employ mediation, negotiation and other non-military tool to manage crises. Notwithstanding it cannot interpret that RRM uses no military force, but instead RRM made decision on military operation with the Council's permission. *EU Rapid Reaction Force* occasionally took the military part of RRM programme to complete police mission, and to prevent military conflict from escalating into war; and then military actions are contributed by each member country.

Nonetheless, RRM has already done its contribution, but it is time to be replaced in consideration of more broad aid in critical situation. In November 2006, Instrument for Stability officially replaces RRM to counter critical and sudden crises. Moreover, IFS acquires more budget, approximately €100 million to fund more operation in the countries or areas where are suffering disaster. In theory, RRM does not disappear, and instead ISF (*Instrument for Stability*) takes the responsibility to respond crises.

b. **RRM function and its characteristics**

Only the Council decides whether to launch RRM or not, but the Commission conducts all activities. According to No. 381/2001, EU ministers must gather within 72 hours to respond sudden crises. In this timeframe, QMV (*Qualified*

Majority Voting) is applied in the procedure of decision-making by the Council, but the Commission employs the procedure of accelerated decision-making to allocate all necessary resource and manpower to deal with crises. QMV helps the EU ministers to find common position on the rapid crisis management issue, and speeds up the procedure of decision-making.

Consequently, it should be noted that the introduction of QMV does not necessarily mean that states call for a vote as soon as they consider themselves in a majority coalition and that minorities are simply outvoted. Rather, the possibility of a formal vote urges all participants to search for consensus[1]. Furthermore, QMV can respond time pressure well, particularly happened unpredictable crises; on the other hand, accelerated decision-making speeds up the procedure of the Commission's execution in RRM programme operation.

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[1] Wagner, W. (2003). Why the EU's common foreign and security policy will remain intergovernmental: A rationalist institutional choice analysis of European crisis management policy. *Journal of European Public Policy, 10*(4), p.588.
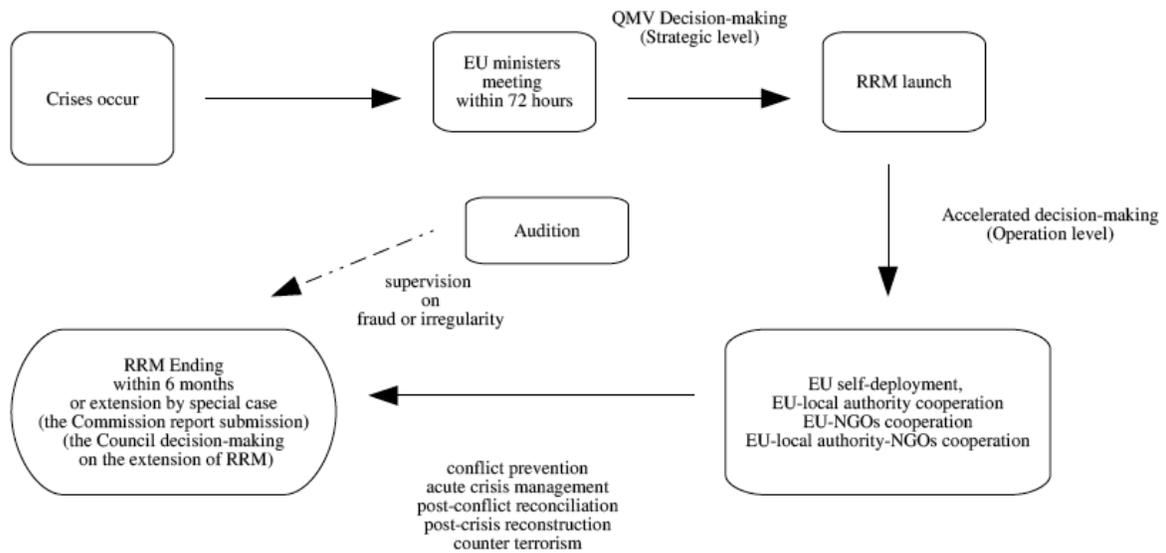
Figure 1 the procedure of Rapid Reaction Mechanism

Source: the author

Having observed that, RRM copes with many types of crises, and its main task is to stop crises becoming bigger one and even escalating into war. "Global aid, local management" appears RRM's characteristic, and it approves that globe consists of many locals. As we know, RRM is not a discriminative helper outside and inside Europe; however, local crisis management really takes crucial role in RRM. Apparently, some crisis management-related literature point out that misunderstanding or not decentralizing crisis management damage the effectiveness of crisis management; expectedly, EU gets the lesson, and respects the culture of local crisis management.

"One-off, kick start" is also another RRM's characteristic. The decision-making of RRM is in timeframe, and so is its operation. RRM operation cannot operate over six months, but some situation has privilege. In Article 8(3) indicates that the

exceptional cases, in view of the specific nature of the crisis concerned or its intensity, the Commission may decide on supplementary action. However, this supplementary action shall comply with the same requirements at the initial action. In general, however, RRM usually follows the regulation to operate activities within 6 months. RRM is one-off but not permanent crisis management tool, and it fulfill its mission and stop small-scale crises carrying on becoming bigger ones. Raising attention here, RRM stops functioning and this action cannot be interpreted that EU stops aid in crisis areas. Reversely, the other suitable tool involves in those areas, and continues crisis management. Having said that, this is exactly definition of kick-start.

The life of RRM is from 26 February 2001 to 15 November 2006. Although the life is short, it contributes not only in Europe but also in the rest of world. In fact, RRM idea still survives but in another form, and the new tool broadens aid and helps more. In practice, RRM did not vanish in the past, but instead it opens new page of rapid reaction in crisis management.

3. Regional aid to global disaster vis-à-vis global aid to regional disaster

In the era of globalization, crisis can cross the border to another countries or areas. As we know, crisis can imbalance stability of one country, and also can damage people and property. These victims or refuges may flee to the safer countries or areas, and that will jolt those places; therefore, that situation can be metaphor for *cross-crisis*. EU cogitates humanity and self-interest, and then decides to create RRM to help member states and the other countries while coming sudden crises. According to current regulation, EU agglomerates money from member states, and executes rapid crisis management. The RRM annual reports have pointed that the total budget from 2001 to 2006 is approximately €53 million, and this budget has

been employed in the filed of food aid, human rights and democratisation, anti-terrorism, police mission, mine Action, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

However, RRM can be modified; instead this mechanism could be allowed to collect budget from the third countries. Clearly speaking, the other countries can invest EU crisis management as well. In this way, EU member states would complain about hard burden of crisis management budget less, and moreover it can improve its crisis management via receiving more resource from the world. As a matter of fact, RRM has acquisition of global aid to manage European regional disaster, and EU citizen can support RRM more in this way. If RRM could not accept global aid, Europeans would feel unfair and have less willingness to support EU RRM. Therefore, RRM needs modifying in regard with EU interest of crisis management and vox populi.

4. Conclusion

When RRM is designed, EU realizes the relevance between time and the effectiveness of crisis manage. EU needs one rapid reaction procedure to tackle sudden crises and one flexible financing process to deploy every resource into the disaster areas. However, RRM still collect limited money to respond global crises, and this regulation is unreasonable and needs amending. RRM originates from rapid financing procedure, and it emphasizes rapid financing rather than the base of financing. In practice and theory, this old procedure will worse EU finance, and it is time to consider of broadening the base of EU rapid financing. EU contributes regional aid to global disaster, and the other countries also can devote global aid to European regional disaster. Having said that, RRM become both helper and receiver after modification, and this new variant can enhance the effectiveness of rapid crisis management.

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