United States

US' domestic issues have global consequences

Jakarta, Kompas - The US government must quickly realise that any problem or debate inside the country will directly affect other countries in the world. In other words, there will always be some global consequences for every domestic problem of the US. If the US does not immediately realise this matter, other countries in the world can become chaotic as well.

This was said by Kishore Mahbubani from the National University of Singapore to *Kompas*, Tuesday (23/8) after presenting his new book, *Beyond the Age of Innocence: Rebuilding Trust between America and the World*, at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). "And no matter how small the US' action is, like it or not, other countries in the world will also be affected. This is for sure because currently the US is a superpower," said Mahbubani.

A case example given by Mahbubani is the Iraq War. Initially the "war against terror" was a domestic issue of the US in tackling terrorism, soon after the 11 September 2001 attacks happened. As often mentioned by US President George W Bush, it was better to fight terrorism by going straight to the countries involved than fighting terrorism inside the country itself.

This was reiterated by Bush when he spoke at Salt Lake City, Utah. By mentioning the 11 September attacks repeatedly - as reported by AP, Tuesday - Bush said, "The only way to protect US citizens is by pursuing terrorists until their homes."

But, the "war against terror" issue later became a world issue that must be handled together by the international community. This is because, said Mahbubani, the world currently seems to have grown smaller. If there is a small problem in one country - whatmore if it involves the US - other countries will report it too.

Mahbubani also deemed the US had made mistakes in making domestic and foreign policies which did not take into account the consequences on other surrounding countries. The US probably had not taken into account the impact of their decisions or actions that they had committed, such as an increase in anti-US sentiment among Muslims because of the Iraq War.

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If the US still does not realise that everything it does will affect the world, Mahbubani feared that the US' relations with other countries in the world would worsen. Whereas, around 20 or 30 years ago, the US' ties with various countries can be said to be harmonious.

Many quarters deemed that the US started having problems since Bush was elected as president. But Mahbubani was sure that the US' problems actually started since the end of the Cold War. "At that time, the US seemed to have isolated itself from the world. Various countries which were formerly loyal US alliances felt abandoned. Whereas they had helped it a lot. As in the case of Thailand, when they needed aid, the US was never there to help," he said.

Likewise with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan who had once helped the US in defeating the Soviet Union in the Cold War. Mahbubani believed it was this problem that triggered the September 11 attacks. There was disappointment and the feeling of being abandoned.

In the discussion session, the participants also expressed their anxiety towards the change in US' attitude. If in the past the US was deemed as friendly and open, now the US is seen as inconsistent and seems to always find enemies. The US' inconsistency started to be revealed little by little – for instance – when the Guantanamo case surfaced.

Or when the US beat the war drum against Iraq despite not getting the approval of the UN Security Council. Whereas, all along the US claimed to be the champion of human rights and followed international laws.

"It is the US' double-standard attitude that will cause problems for itself. More and more countries no longer believe in the US. This will certainly jeopardise the US' relations with the world," said Mahbubani.

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