

Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement  
of the PhD in International Relations

**The Kinship Factor in International Relations: Kinship,  
Identity Construction, and Nation Formation in Indonesia-  
Malaysia Relations**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the question of why the kinship factor has not been able to provide a viable basis upon which Indonesia-Malaysia relations can be organised, despite the fact that the language of kinship continues to frame diplomatic discourse between the two “kin states”.

As a study of the phenomenon of kinship in international relations, the thesis discusses the basis of kinship discourse in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, how kinship was politicised in terms of its conceptualisation and application, and why its dominant motif has been rivalry more than harmony, despite its regular evocation. In order to understand the kinship factor as a political phenomenon in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, four issues are considered: (1) the anthropological and sociological nature of kinship, (2) the politicisation of kinship in terms of the perception and interpretation of its attendant expectations and obligations, (3) the association of the kinship factor with the historical process of identity building and nation formation in Indonesia and Malaysia, and (4) the discrepancies between popular pressures to emphasise kinship, which imply extra-national loyalties, and the political calculations of leaders based on conceptions of sovereignty.

Consequently, the study makes the observation that despite the fact that there is a basis upon which to define Indonesia and Malaysia as kin states, their “special relationship” has been characterised predominantly by tension. It argues that this state of affairs has been a consequence of the perceived failure of these kin states to fulfil the expectations and obligations of kinship. This, in turn, has been borne of fundamental differences in their respective historical experiences and the forging of their national identities, which contravened the loyalties wrought by the kinship factor. Having said that, there remain avenues for co-identification on the basis of kinship, particularly in reference to the influence of the “Chinese factor” that has traditionally been a cause for concern for the national identities and security of Indonesia and Malaysia.

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## Glossary

<i>Adat</i>	Customary law
<i>Arkib Negara</i>	National Archives of Malaysia
<i>Bangsa</i>	Nation; sometimes used interchangeably with race
<i>Berkampung</i>	To come together as in a village community
<i>Daulah Islamiyah</i>	Regional Islamic state
<i>Diplomasi Serumpun</i>	Racial diplomacy
<i>Dunia Melayu</i>	Malay World
<i>Ganjang Malaysia</i>	Crush Malaysia
<i>Hikayat</i>	Story/Tale
<i>Indonesia Raya</i>	Greater Indonesia
<i>Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat</i>	Peoples' Education Board
<i>Kaum Muda</i>	Reformists
<i>Kaum Tua</i>	Conservatives
<i>Kerajaan</i>	Royal government
<i>Ketahanan Nasional</i>	National Resilience
<i>Masuk Melayu</i>	Become a Malay
<i>Melayu Raya</i>	Great Malay nation
<i>Melayu Sungguh</i>	Authentic Malay
<i>Musyawaharah dan Muafakat</i>	Consultation and consensus
<i>Orang Asli</i>	Native
<i>Pemuda</i>	Youths
<i>Pribumi</i>	Indigenous
<i>Rabitatul Mujahidin</i>	League of Warriors
<i>Rukun Negara</i>	Articles of Faith of the State
<i>Rumpun</i>	Race or stock
<i>Sejarah Melayu</i>	Malay Annals
<i>Sekolah Rakyat</i>	Peoples' Schools
<i>Semenanjung Melayu</i>	Malay Peninsula
<i>Suku Melayu</i>	Malay ethnic community
<i>Wawasan Nusantara</i>	Archipelagic Outlook

## List of Abbreviations

ABIM	<i>Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia</i> (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia)
AMDA	Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BPKI	<i>Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia</i> (Committee for the Investigation of Preparatory Efforts for Indonesian Independence)
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service
FPDA	Five-Power Defence Arrangement
Fretilin	<i>Frente Revolucionaria do Timor Leste Independente</i> or Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor
GAM	<i>Gerakan Aceh Merdeka</i> (Aceh Independence Movement)
GBC	General Border Committee
ICMI	<i>Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals' Association)
IKD	<i>Institut Kajian Dasar</i> (Institute of Policy Studies)
JI	<i>Jemaah Islamiyah</i>
KMM	<i>Kesatuan Melayu Muda</i> (Young Malays Union)
KMM	<i>Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia</i> (Mujahidin Movement of Malaysia)
MABBIM	<i>Majlis Bahasa Brunei, Indonesia, dan Malaysia</i> (Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia Language Council)
MATA	<i>Majlis Agama Tertinggi Malaysia</i> (Malayan Supreme Religious Council)
MNP	Malayan Nationalist Party
MSS	Malay Security Service
NAA	National Archives of Australia
PAS	<i>Partai Islam Se-Malaysia</i> (Islamic Party of Malaysia)
PEMESTA	<i>Piagam Perjuangan Semesta Alam</i> (Universal Struggle Charter)
PIJ	Political Intelligence Journal
PKI	<i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Communist Party)
PMIP	Pan-Malayan Islamic Party
PNI	<i>Partai Nasional Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Nationalist Party)
PRO	Public Records Office
PRRI	<i>Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia</i> (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia)
PSI	<i>Partai Sosialis Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Socialist Party)
SEAFET	Southeast Asia Friendship and Economic Treaty
SEANWFZ	Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SITC	Sultan Idris Training College
SWB	Summary of World Broadcasts
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality

*“He who kills me, who will it be but my kinsman;  
He who succours me, who will it be but my kinsman.”*

- Lozi Proverb

## INTRODUCTION

According to mainstream paradigms of International Relations, the arena of international politics is populated by sovereign states all pursuing their own “self-interest”<sup>1</sup>. While this may be to large extents true, one particular category of inter-state relations stand out, in which the pursuit of material interest may only be half the story told. This pertains to what is referred to in international politics as “special relationships”<sup>2</sup>.

The concept of “special relationships” describes relations between states whose populations share historical and sentimental bonds, and whose leaders impute meaning into their relations on the back of these bonds. Such relationships warrant an almost immutable belief (on the part of their leaders and populations) that they, at least in theory, are meant to share a relationship driven by more than purely material factors<sup>3</sup>. One can observe such dynamics, for example, in Australian involvement in the First World War and the Boer War, and American support of Irish nationalism; it has also featured in Pan-Africanism and Pan-Arabism, Anglo-American relations, and a host of other bilateral and multilateral relationships. Yet often too, one notices discrepancy between the persistent use of the discourse of “special relationships” and the regular collapse of such relationships into animosity. It is precisely this dichotomy that interests this study. While realists might not find the collapse of “special relationships” puzzling given their belief that international relations is fundamentally competitive, it is suggested here that since social anthropological logic lies at the heart of these relationships, such approaches might offer up equally persuasive modes of understanding as to the matter of cooperation and rivalry between states who share “special relationships”<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> By mainstream, this study refers primarily to realism and liberalism.

<sup>2</sup> Detailed examples of “special relationships” in international relations will be discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>3</sup> In a sense, this is not unlike Martin Wight’s conception of the cultural basis to international society in that common culture forms the base upon which to build common identity and shared norms. See Martin Wight, *Systems of States*. [London: Leicester University Press, 1977]. Nevertheless as will be suggested later, the “special relationship” between kin states is premised on much more than shared culture.

<sup>4</sup> The case for a social anthropological approach to studying International Relations is presented in C.A.W. Manning, *The Nature of International Society*. [London: MacMillan, 1975]; see also

The point of entry of this study is the suggestion that one distinctive character of the concept of “special relationships” is the factor of kinship; that is, states which share historical ties based on common ethnicity, language, culture, and ancestry between the vast majority of their populations, and who attempt to organise relations on these premises. One such case is the Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral relationship, where political leaders have incessantly chosen to articulate their ties in terms of “blood brotherhood”. Specifically, the study looks to understand the politicisation of kinship in Indonesia-Malaysia relations – what is the basis to this kinship discourse, how both conceptualise kinship and apply it in their relations, and why, despite the regular reference to this idea in diplomatic discourse, it has been unable to form a consistent basis for harmony in relations.

## I. Locating kinship in the IR research agenda

Few would disagree that the lexicon of Southeast Asia’s international relations remains predominantly realist<sup>5</sup>. Several reasons account for this. The path to independence for many states in Southeast Asia has been defined by domestic and international struggle and conflict<sup>6</sup>. This legacy remains to inform policy choices today, and politics continues to be viewed through realist eyes, where the state continues to dictate the policy process in the name of national interest and where power, security and threat remain key preoccupations insofar as international affairs are concerned. Added to that, the mainstay of classical realism, the vital role played by statesmen in orchestrating international affairs, remains relevant in the political context of Southeast Asia. Hence despite the

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Hidemi Suganami, “C.A.W. Manning and the Study of International Relations”, Review of International Studies, Vol.27, (2001); Peter Mandaville, “Reading the state from elsewhere: towards an anthropology of the postnational”, Review of International Studies, Vol.28 (2002); Jack Snyder, “Anarchy and Culture: Insights from the Anthropology of War”, International Organization, Vol.56, No.1 (Winter 2002).

<sup>5</sup> See Tim Huxley, “Southeast Asia in the study of international relations: the rise and decline of a region”, The Pacific Review, Vol.9, No.2 (1996); Tan See Seng, “Rescuing Realism from Realists” in Sheldon Simon (ed) The Many Faces of Asian Security. [Landham, M.D.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001].

<sup>6</sup> For an exposition of the strategic environment in which the states of Southeast Asia came of age, see Gordon Brown, The Dimensions of Conflict in Southeast Asia. [New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1966]; Peter Lyon, War and Peace in Southeast Asia. [London: Oxford University Press, 1969]; Michael Leifer, Conflict and Regional Order in Southeast Asia. [London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1980].

paucity of work in the International Relations field that deals explicitly with Indonesia-Malaysia political relations, it can be conceivably argued that any study of Indonesia-Malaysia relations should begin in the realist camp<sup>7</sup>.

International relations, so the realist mantra goes, are premised on power, be it an end in itself or a means to survival<sup>8</sup>. The importance of power and perceptions of power in the international politics in Southeast Asia have come across starkly in the writings of many scholars<sup>9</sup>. Extrapolating from this, neorealism will suggest that Indonesia's larger size and bountiful resources make it a preponderant power in Southeast Asia, and the Malaysian response should be a policy of "balancing"<sup>10</sup>. Realists are also likely to suggest that Indonesia-Malaysia relations are conducted on the basis of "states acting as states", where both pursue their respective interests based on material calculations, what Morgenthau termed the "guiding star" of decisions. Bilateral differences then, reflect a "clash" of these interests, and enmity between Malaysia and Indonesia is to be expected owing to the size, power and capability differentials in this bilateral relationship. Indeed, given the track record of contentious relations between these two key players in the Indo-Malay World, realism appears vindicated.

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<sup>7</sup> The implicit application of this paradigm comes out in Firdaus Abdullah, "The Rumpun Concept in Malaysia-Indonesia Relations", The Indonesian Quarterly, Vol.XXI, No.2 (1993); Al Baroto, "Similarities and Differences in Malaysia-Indonesia Relations: Some Perspectives", Indonesian Quarterly, Vol.XXI, No.2 (1993) 156-157; Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Indonesia in ASEAN: Foreign Policy and Regionalism. [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994] 228-229; Leo Suryadinata, Indonesia's Foreign Policy Under Suharto. [Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1996] 69-74; N. Ganesan, Bilateral Tensions in Post-Cold War ASEAN. [Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999] 30. While Lee Kam Hing's broad survey of "milestones" of Indonesia-Malaysia relations from 1957 to 1990 provides what until now is the most detailed study of contemporary Indonesia-Malaysia relations, the articles offers little by way of theoretical frameworks. See Lee Kam Hing, "From Confrontation to Cooperation: Malaysia-Indonesia Relations, 1957-1990", Sarjana, Special Issue (1994). Furthermore, his study, as well as Firdaus Abdullah's, makes no mention of the importance of co-affinity in opposition to the increasing prominence of ethnic Chinese in both countries. This phenomenon, as this study will argue, is vital to an understanding of the underlying dynamics of Indonesia-Malaysia relations.

<sup>8</sup> This distinction lies at the heart of the defensive-offensive realism debate. See Jeffrey Taliaferro, "Seeking Security Under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited", International Security, Vol.25, No.3 (Winter 2000/2001).

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Michael Leifer, Conflict and Regional Order; Tim Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia: A Precarious Balance?", Pacific Review, Vol.4, No.3 (1990).

<sup>10</sup> Supporters of Waltzian neorealism would, of course, be the key proponents of this argument. See Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics. [New York: Random House, 1979].

While realist observations on the conflictual end-result of international politics may be true, its means of arriving at these conclusions demand scrutiny. It is suggested here that the foci and objectivity of realist international relations theory, and in particular its behaviouralist strains, essentially lend themselves to an over-simplification of international politics. The ambiguity of power, for example, has been well documented<sup>11</sup>. How does the positivist realist measure or “operationalise” it? Are material yardsticks its only measurements<sup>12</sup>? How does one reconcile, for example, Geertz’s argument, made specific to the Indo-Malay World, that power could in fact be culturally constructed<sup>13</sup>?

Vagaries arising from privileging the state as the primary unit of analysis lead further to the problem of defining the concept of “interest” so often evoked by policy-makers and realist scholars as an explanation for state policy. “Interest” is ultimately a normative concept, and without further conceptual clarification its applicability in academic study will be diluted<sup>14</sup>. One scholar has intimated the elusiveness and ambiguity of the concept of “interest” is such that “political objectives remain so frequently hidden behind the verbal flannel of political argument that some political scientists are tempted to dismiss the concept (of interest) altogether”<sup>15</sup>. Indeed what precisely is the “national interest” involved for Malaysia and Indonesia, and what is its source? As this study will show, the ambiguities surrounding these concepts are problematic when applied to cases such as those under scrutiny here - of sovereign states who experience, particularly in the immediate post-colonial years, tension between the pursuit of

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<sup>11</sup> For example, Joseph Nye, “The Changing Nature of World Power”, Political Science Quarterly, Vol.105, No.2 (1990); Stefano Guzzini, “Structural Power: The Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis”, International Organization, Vol.47, No.3 (1993).

<sup>12</sup> Even realist scholars themselves have begun considering more cognitive aspects of power. See, for example, Stephen Walt, Origins of Alliance. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987].

<sup>13</sup> See Clifford Geertz, “Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power” in Geertz (ed), Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology. [New York: Basic Books, 1983] 121-146; also Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture” in Claire Holt, Benedict R. O’G. Anderson and James T. Siegel (eds), Culture and Politics in Indonesia. [London: Verso, 1972] 1-69; Anthony C. Milner, Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule. [Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982].

<sup>14</sup> For an illuminating theoretical study of the problems inherent in current understanding of the concept of national interests, see Martha Finnemore, National Interests in International Society. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996] 1-33.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Frankel, National Interest. [London: Pall Mall, 1970] 17.

“national interests ” as the elite see it, and the enduring communal loyalties of their respective populations.

Realism’s conceptual shortcomings have led students of International Relations to search elsewhere for equally, if not more, persuasive explanations for international political phenomenon. The gradual shift from material to cognitive and sociological contents and perspectives that one witnesses in the field in recent times is indicative of this trend<sup>16</sup>. Consider, for example, the resurgence of interest in ethnic conflict, where scholars have found underlying explanations in non-material factors<sup>17</sup>. Consequently, this move to conceive the international political environment as a social rather than natural phenomenon has spawned a literature that has introduced concepts such as culture and identity into the International Relations lexicon<sup>18</sup>. Culture and ideology, for example, have been pinpointed as alternative lenses through which issues of conflict, war, and policy formulation can be viewed<sup>19</sup>. The material yardsticks for measuring power, the cornerstone of realism’s objectivity, have been challenged by scholars who have identified “soft power” as equally important to understanding influence in international politics<sup>20</sup>. Likewise security, another mainstay of realist theory, has

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<sup>16</sup> There is an increasing pool of scholars from the Southeast Asia IR community who are exploring non-material bases to the international politics of the region. See Amitav Acharya, The Quest for Identity: International Relations of Southeast Asia. [Singapore: Oxford University Press, 2001]; Jürgen Haacke, ASEAN’s Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development, and Prospects. [London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002].

<sup>17</sup> For example, David Lake and Donald Rothchild (eds), The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998]; Vamik Volkan, Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism. [Boulder, C.O.: Westview Press, 1998]; Thomas Ambrosio, Irredentism: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics. [London: Praeger, 2001].

<sup>18</sup> These issues lie at the heart of the so-called “structure-agency debate”. See Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds), The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory. [London: Lynne Rienner, 1996]; Stephen Hobden and John Hobson (eds), Historical Sociology in International Relations. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002].

<sup>19</sup> Some examples include Alistair Iain Johnston, Cultural Realism. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995]; Peter Katzenstein, The Culture of National Security. [Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1996]; Michael Barnett, Dialogues in Arab Politics. [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998]; Dominique Jacquin-Berdal, Andrew Oros and Marco Verweij (eds), Culture in World Politics. [London: MacMillan, 1998]; Christian Reus-Smit, The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999]; Beate Jahn, The Cultural Construction of International Relations. [New York: Palgrave, 2000]; Chris Brown, “Cultural Diversity and International Political Theory”, Review of International Studies, Vol.26, No.2 (April 2000). For a general discussion on the role of culture in theory, see Margaret Archer, Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999].

<sup>20</sup> See Rodney Hall, “Moral Authority as a Power Resource”, International Organization, Vol.51, No.4 (Autumn 1997); Thomas Risse, Stephen Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink (eds), The Power of

been considered an issue of identity as much as “interest”. Wendt notes, for instance that: “The distribution of power may always affect states’ calculations, but how it does so depends on the intersubjective understandings and expectations, on the ‘distribution of knowledge’, that constitute their conceptions of self and other”<sup>21</sup>. Accordingly, it has been suggested by proponents of identity that questions of how states relate to their environment necessarily begin with the perception of “self”<sup>22</sup>. These trends in IR scholarship indicate that while concerns of realist international relations theory are well taken, it is likely that international politics is dictated by factors in combination with tenets of realism, if not beyond it. Identity and culture certainly cannot be bracketed out of the discussion. Correspondingly, while accepting the premises of realist theory, this study argues that the contribution of social-communicative renditions of international politics needs also to be considered. Such an approach, this study believes, will do more to illuminate upon the multifaceted and difficult-to-unpack phenomena of international relations, particularly when one takes into account the fact that relations between kin states encompass both fraternity and rivalry, as the study will uncover.

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Human Rights. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999]; Andreas Wenger, “The Internet and the Changing Face of International Security”, Information and Security, Vol.7 (2001); Joseph Nye Jr., The Paradox of American Power. [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002].

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics”, International Organization, Vol.88, No.2 (1994) 397.

<sup>22</sup> In Wendt’s words, “interests are dependent on identities”. See Alexander Wendt, “Collective identity formation and the international state”, American Political Science Review, Vol.88, No.2 (1994) 385. For a sample of the IR literature of identity, see David Campbell, Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity. [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992]; Ole Weaver, Insecurity and Identity Unlimited. [Copenhagen: Center for Peace and Conflict Research, 1994]; Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (eds), State Sovereignty as Social Construct. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996]; Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999]; Bill McSweeney, Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999]; Rodney Bruce Hall, National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems. [New York: Columbia University Press, 1999]; Jutta Weldes, Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis. [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999]. Indeed, questions of identity have become the basis of the research

## II. Methodological and epistemological issues

The inability of popular realist concepts to deal with social-anthropological problems in international affairs flags another problem associated particularly with the neorealist *zeitgeist* - its ahistorical rendition of international politics. While classical realism fares better on this front, neorealism fails to take into account the fact that “the key actors on the international stage are themselves historically constituted subjects who understand their mutual relationships in historical terms”<sup>23</sup>. Many modern states for instance, and in particular those from the so-called “Third World”, often arise out of older communal bonds and identities, many of which pre-date the “modernity” of Westphalian statehood by centuries, but were nevertheless thrown together into a singular political entity, often via plotting of colonial political boundaries. Others consist of distinctly different, sometimes even antagonistic, sub-national identities that had modern statehood thrust upon them without recourse for historical antagonisms. How does a state’s policy arise out of these historical complexities? As will become evident by the end of this study, the timeless propositions of neorealism are ill-equipped to explain change in a case such as that being studied here, where historical context is central<sup>24</sup>.

The problems above highlight the fact that positivist realists too often assume important precepts in international politics to be empirical while neglecting passions, beliefs and perceptions of policy makers, and of historical context in which they function, despite the fact that very often power and interest, the cornerstones of realism, stem from the beliefs and perceptions of the actors themselves<sup>25</sup>. Stanley Hoffman has observed that focusing on abstract concepts

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agenda of both the so-called “Minnesota” and “Copenhagen” schools of thought in sociological IR.

<sup>23</sup> Hidemi Suganami, “Narrative and Beyond”, paper presented at ISA 2001 Convention, Chicago, 24 February 2001, 3. Even E.H. Carr, one of the pioneers of American realism, stressed the historical conditioning of any thought on the international system. See E.H. Carr, The Twenty-Years Crisis, 1919-1939. [London: MacMillan, 1949] 65.

<sup>24</sup> For a critique of neorealism, see Robert Keohane (ed), Neorealism and its Critics. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985].

<sup>25</sup> This point was raised by Kratochwil and Ruggie, who wrote in their discussion on regime theory: “Precisely because state behaviour within regimes is interpreted by other states, the rationales and justifications for behaviour which are proffered, together with pleas for understanding or admissions of guilt, as well as the responsiveness to such reasoning on the part

such as power “neglects all factors which influence or define purposes”. Marcel Merle intimates further:

Confronted with the accumulation of works devoted to the state or to power, one nevertheless cannot fail to be surprised by the virtually systematic removal of the international dimension from the phenomena studied, as if the construction and functioning of a political society could be perceived and understood in isolation from the context and surroundings in which they began and where they are developing<sup>26</sup>.

No doubt concepts such as national interests, power and the balance of power remain critical to attempts at understanding issues of world politics. Nevertheless should one choose scientific approaches to social-political inquiry, these concepts still demand clarification if they are to generate any analytical traction. Otherwise to contend that problems in international relations proceed from clashes of national interest or disparities in power without illuminating the transition from the concept to its operational definition is not to “explain”, but to abandon explanation altogether. In other words, these theoretical concepts have to be made more intelligible, if not more identifiable, if one is to avoid a theoretical *cul-de-sac*<sup>27</sup>.

Another means through which to circumvent this problem is actually to break out of the paradigmatic rigidity of behaviouralist realism. This however, raises another concern. This time, it is the epistemological problem associated with the empiricism of the American social scientific tradition, which focuses on explanation via the construction of covering-law models. Intra and inter-paradigmatic restructuring, even metatheorizing for that matter, remains markedly difficult within this tradition because of the need to maintain theoretical “parsimony” and “determinism” in maintaining the all-important core premises of “first-order theories”. Any attempt to engage in such an exercise within the

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of other states, all are absolutely critical component parts of any explanation involving the efficacy of norms. . . . To be sure, communicative dynamics may be influenced by such extra-contextual factors as state power, but that is no warrant for ignoring them”. Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie, “International Organization: A state of the art on an art of the state”, *International Organization*, vol.40, No.4 (Autumn 1986), 768.

<sup>26</sup> Marcel Merle, *The Sociology of International Relations*. Translated by Dorothy Parkin. [Leamington Spa, Hamburg, New York: Berg, 1987] 7-8.

<sup>27</sup> See part III of Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little (eds), *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism*. [New York: Columbia University Press, 1993].

American tradition is quickly labelled as the “degenerative” compromising of intellectual beliefs<sup>28</sup>. Consequently, scholars are epistemologically straightjacketed. As Gunther Hellman rightly observes:

The thrust of their (American social science positivists) argument is the equivalent of an unfriendly takeover in the business world: The liberal/epistemicist bid involves defining and delimiting the “proper” borders of the territory that realists can rightly claim, thereby expanding the jurisdiction of liberal and epistemic rule. Paradigmatic battles such as these, however, tend to occur in an anarchic realm of science, where the knowledge dilemma assumes the role of the security dilemma in international relations: If realists could rightly claim more knowledge territory, paradigmatic liberals, epistemicists, institutionalists, and idealists are likely to perceive that there is less knowledge for them to claim. As a result, each side charges its opponents with lacking “coherence”, “distinctiveness”, and other sorts of epistemological ammunition<sup>29</sup>.

From an academic perspective this is an unfortunate state of affairs, and as Barry Buzan has highlighted, there certainly is a need to “broaden the perceptions of those within realist orthodoxy, and build bridges to those who . . . are unnecessarily outside it”<sup>30</sup>.

In view of Hellman’s critique and Buzan’s exhortations, it is argued here that the conundrums of Indonesia-Malaysia relations may be better comprehended via a more subtle approach to theory. This can be achieved by beginning or ending with, but not necessarily confining oneself to, readily-identifiable realist assumptions. Practically speaking, this would involve the marrying of sociocultural factors (such as culture and identity) with realist tenets within definitive historical contexts, emphasising what Wittgenstein termed “family resemblances” among theoretical strains. In point of fact, such an approach has a legacy reaching back to the pre-positivist era, when scholars emphasised the

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<sup>28</sup> See for example, John Vasquez, The Power in Power Politics. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], Andrew Moravcsik and Jeffrey Legro, “Is Anybody Still a Realist?”, International Security, Vol.24, No.2 (Fall 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Gunther Hellman, “Correspondence: Brother can you spare a paradigm?”, International Security, Vol.25, No.1 (Summer 2001) 170.

<sup>30</sup> Barry Buzan, “The timeless wisdom of realism?” in Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (eds), International Theory: Positivism and Beyond. [Cambridge: Cambridge University

explicit reliance upon the exercise of judgement born out of theorizing from the disciplines of philosophy, law, and history, and when scholarship was equated to careful study of narratives and historical processes<sup>31</sup>. This epistemological tradition, which continues to enjoy a vibrant following outside North American International Relations, is markedly more sympathetic to the need for intra and inter-paradigmatic exchange in order to understand the very complicated social and political world of international politics<sup>32</sup>. Collectively, this movement has come to be known as the classical approach, and is found, among others, in the English School<sup>33</sup>.

Such an approach can take advantage of epistemological space offered in classical and English School realism, which allow for the possibility that “such things as the national interest, power and the states system are not just pre-given in the sense that they are not “natural” categories but . . . are historically contingent”<sup>34</sup>. Focus on historically-premised and cross-paradigmatic approaches to International Relations, while clearly falling outside the comfort zone of contemporary American social science tradition, will be a worthy endeavour if it provides a better understanding of; (1) how Indonesia and Malaysia came into

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Press, 1996] 63. Jack Snyder has also suggested the marrying of “material” and “symbolic” factors in explaining war and international relations. See Snyder, “Anarchy and Culture”.

<sup>31</sup> See Hedley Bull, “International Theory: The case for a classical approach”, World Politics, Vol.18, No.3 (1966).

<sup>32</sup> In this sense, the “realism” of the classical tradition should not be mistakenly lumped with positivist neorealism. While some would argue that classical and English School realists remain essentially epistemological positivists, the distinction remains between the inclusive nature of classical theory as opposed to the exclusive and reductionist tendencies of neorealism. See Barry Buzan, “From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School”, International Organization, Vol.47, No.3 (1993); Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, “Revisiting the “National”: Toward an Identity Agenda in Neorealism?” in Lapid and Kratochwil (eds), The Return of Culture and Identity.

<sup>33</sup> The case for a historical approach to understanding international relations has been made in Martin Wight, “Why Is There No International Relations Theory” in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds), Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966]; Hedley Bull, “The Theory of International Politics” in Brian Porter (ed), The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics, 1919-1969. [London: Oxford University Press, 1972]; Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), The Evolution of International Society. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984]; John Lewis Gaddis, “Explaining the Data Base: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Enrichment of Security Studies”, International Security, Vol.12, No.1 (Summer 1987); Adam Watson, The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis. [London: Routledge, 1992]; Paul Schroeder, “Historical Reality versus Neo-realist Theory”, International Security, Vol.19, No.1 (Summer 1994); Odd Arne Westad (ed), Reviewing the Cold War. [London: Frank Cass, 2000].

<sup>34</sup> Marysia Zalewski and Cynthia Enloe, “Questions about Identity” in Smith et.al, International Theory, 295-296.

being as kin states; (2) the role of the kinship factor in the permutations of Indonesia-Malaysia relations; and (3) how the concept of kinship can advance the understanding of notions of power and interest in the context of Indonesia-Malaysia relations.

### III. An “English School” approach to understanding kinship relations

The English School of International Relations provides epistemological and methodological background to the present work in two ways<sup>35</sup>.

First, unlike the behaviouralist tradition, the English School is more receptive to conceptual plurality. It is an inclusive rather than exclusive approach to grappling with material and “ideational” assumptions behind international order, both of which carry equally important explanatory weight. Such an approach, exemplified for instance in the concept of international society and its exploration of the balance between material power and norms in the organisation of international relations, is welcomed, for international politics is too complex for unchanging sets of paradigmatic core assumptions conveyed in sweeping terms<sup>36</sup>. As for Indonesia-Malaysia relations, this approach also permits the tapping of the rich tradition of area studies scholarship that have identified non-material bases to concepts such as power and interest in Southeast Asian society<sup>37</sup>.

As the evolution of kinship as a political phenomenon is socially embedded in interpretative features such as race, culture, and ethnicity, this study can be conceptually located at the intersection of literature on identity and nationalism, both of which deal with the effect of social-cultural and even genealogical-biological factors on the shaping of politics. Having established this correlation however, the main analytical point of departure that distinguishes the kinship factor from studies on nationalism and identity in International Relations

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<sup>35</sup> For purposes of convenience, the Classical Realist approach and the English School approach are taken here to be synonymous. See Hedley Bull, “International Theory”.

<sup>36</sup> See Gunther Hellman, “Correspondence”.

<sup>37</sup> See for example, A.C. Milner, *Kerajaan*; Lucian Pye, *Asian Power and Politics*. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985]; Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990].

is the fact that it is concerned primarily with expectations, obligations, and the mobilization of the same bonds characteristic of ethnic politics and nationalism specifically for purposes of organising relations between sovereign states. This is a phenomenon yet to be addressed in International Relations, even though, as this study will illustrate, it has manifested itself with sufficient regularity to warrant scrutiny.

Second, the reflectivist tradition of the English School, focusing on evolutionary processes and historical sociology in international relations, also permits one to delve to a greater extent into the historical contexts that frame Indonesia-Malaysia relations. Just as the English School tradition deals with the evolution of contemporary international society across history, so too the emphasis here will be the context against, and process through, which historical kinship links between Indonesia and Malaysia have intersected with the emerging identities and politics of the Indo-Malay World. In the context of its attempt to understand the role and impact of the kinship factor in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, this project should involve “delving into history not as a bank of information which might falsify a theory, but as a narrative which permits a greater appreciation of the origins, evolution, and consequences of an event”, for political phenomenon never take place in a political or historical vacuum<sup>38</sup>.

Central to this approach is the objective of “understanding” international relations phenomena. Indeed, the importance of historical context to the study of social-political phenomena has been registered in Gerald Cupchik’s admonition that “phenomena are therefore events that unfold and recur in the flow of time and are only meaningful when understood in context; they are processes and not essences”<sup>39</sup>. This point has also been impressed upon by Partha Chattarjee, who noted that “there are no substantive affinities that define identity regardless of context”<sup>40</sup>. To that can be added Robert Jackson’s contention that “international relations . . . is socially constructed and can thus have different shapes and

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<sup>38</sup> Ngaire Woods, “The Uses of Theory in Studying International Relations” in Woods (ed), *Explaining International Relations Since 1945*. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996] 11.

<sup>39</sup> Gerald Cupchik, “Constructivist Realism: An Ontology That Encompasses Positivist and Constructivist Approaches to the Social Sciences”, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol.2, No.1 (February 2001) 3.

substances at different times and places”<sup>41</sup>. Finally, as Gary Goertz has discovered:

The social sciences in their more behavioralist and positivist modes have sought laws of behavior and generalizations independent of culture and historical accident. After years of effort one may come to the conclusion that simple context-free laws of behavior do not exist. Researchers have often found that relationships may be positive in one period then negative in the next or changing from one country to another. From the empirical literature in world politics the conclusion imposes itself: simple bivariate hypotheses have no simple answer<sup>42</sup>.

That context is important to the study of social-political phenomenon is certainly supported by the fact that these scholars from such varied intellectual backgrounds share a common belief in its import.

A historical approach further permits the study to consider the evolving character of the sovereign nation-state rather than ipso facto take it for granted<sup>43</sup>. Although the English School has traditionally concentrated on identifying broad patterns in the evolution of the international system, it also allows for the consideration of idiographical characteristics<sup>44</sup>. Studying the kinship factor entails taking into account how states, nations and sovereignty come together, as well as the residues of this process. To that end, central to this study is the need to reconcile the distinct dynamics of the Indo-Malay World’s pre-colonial,

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<sup>40</sup> Partha Chattarjee, The Nation and its Fragments. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993] 222.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Jackson, “Is there a classical international theory?” in Smith et.al, International Theory, 209.

<sup>42</sup> Gary Goertz, Contexts of International Politics. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994] 1.

<sup>43</sup> This characteristic is most often associated with, though not necessarily confined to, the neorealist and neoliberal tradition of International Relations as well as the rational choice school. See for example Robert Keohane (ed), Neorealism;; David Baldwin (ed), Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate. [New York: Columbia University Press, 1993]; Michael Brown, Owen Cote, Jr., Sean Lynn-Jones, and Steven Miller (eds), Rational Choice and Security Studies: Stephen Walt and his Critics. [Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000]. It should also be noted here that while the English School is also “state centric” in the sense that it accepts nation-states as the only members of international society, it is the “spirit” of the English School, i.e. its concern for the historical evolution of contemporary international society into its present form through the transformation of the nation-state from earlier entities such as sovereigns and the sovereign state, that distinguishes it from positivist “state-centric” approaches.

<sup>44</sup> See Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), The Evolution of International Society, 217-322.

colonial, and post-colonial political character. The importance of particularistic methodology has been emphasised by Adda Bozeman:

As one reviews the present national and international systems, which certain particularly talented European nations have brought into constitutional forms through generations of revolutionary thinking and planning, one cannot avoid the realization that these nations in their overemphasis on the political and constitutional aspects of their social development have disregarded many sources of cultural strength, not only in their own civilization, but also in the realms that they came to dominate, and that, as a consequence, the world has been to this extent not only impoverished of its human heritage but also prevented from attaining the full measure of its possible cultural records<sup>45</sup>.

A historical and idiographic perspective would be especially pertinent to the present study, which essentially involves two new “Third World” nation-states consisting of much older societies with their own sense of identity and history reaching back into the pre-colonial era<sup>46</sup>. This intersection between old and new dispensations creates conceptual and practical problems, for it leads to contradictions surrounding non-Western nation-states’ desires to associate themselves with what is clearly a predominantly Western international society through the declaration of independence and the establishment of political and territorial boundaries, while still maintaining what their nationalists have identified as pre-colonial identities<sup>47</sup>. To various extents, the factor of kinship reflects these abiding tensions between nation and state within international society. Recent “encroachment” of International Relations scholarship into the area of Southeast Asia has elicited criticisms from area studies scholars (particularly, though not exclusively, historians) who view these attempts

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<sup>45</sup> Adda Bozeman, Politics and Culture in International History. [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960] 8.

<sup>46</sup> For a study of the history-identity nexus, see Gerrit Gong (ed), Memory and History in East and Southeast Asia: Issues of Identity in International Relations. [Washington: The CSIS Press, 2001]. For a broader discussion, see Consuelo Cruz, “Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember their Past and Make their Futures”, World Politics, Vol.52, No.3 (April 2000).

<sup>47</sup> It should be evident here that this study prefers Anthony Smith’s model of nationalism as opposed to Ernest Gellner’s in regard to its interpretation of Indonesian and Malaysian nationalism. Chapter One deals with these theoretical issues in greater detail.

precisely as lacking historical understanding and empirical depth<sup>48</sup>. Their call for more extensive empirical research on case studies is certainly warranted, and it is in this regard that the study looks to place greater emphasis on historical research and factual interpretation by looking beyond secondary literature and undertaking extensive archival research and interviews, as well as a careful reading of local histories.

Another facet of the classical approach that is useful here is the emphasis on statecraft, which introduces the normative role of perceptions and interpretations of the kinship factor among policy practitioners<sup>49</sup>. Perception and interpretation are vital considerations for scholars of international politics because they:

Interleave(s) the logic of more materially driven theories of the international system . . . with the view that sentience makes a difference, and that social systems cannot be understood in the same way as physical ones. When units are sentient, how they perceive each other is a major determinant of how they interact<sup>50</sup>.

Consequently it is not power and interest *per se* that are the *diktat* of international politics, but the employment of instruments of power in pursuit of the values of security and survival as perceived and interpreted by statesmen.

Two reasons lie behind the need to consider the role of practitioners of statecraft here. First, it is a fact that as agents of the state, personalities such as Abdul Rahman Putra, Sukarno, Suharto, Abdul Razak, Ghazali Shafie, Adam Malik, Mahathir Mohamad and Subandrio dictated the course of Indonesia-Malaysia relations through their domination of policy formulation. It is through the perceptions of these statesmen, as well as their interpretations of the terms of kinship relations, that the politicisation of kinship has been conceptualised. Second is the fact that many of these practitioners identify their counterparts as

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<sup>48</sup> See for example, Ralph Smith's review of Khong Yuen Foong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992] in *Pacific Review*, Vol.6, No.4 (1993) and John Sidel's review of Acharya, *The Quest for Identity in Survival*, Vol.43, No.4 (Winter 2001-2002). Even Michael Leifer, the pre-eminent scholar of the international politics of Southeast Asia, criticised Acharya's "reliance on secondary material" leading to "factual errors".

<sup>49</sup> See Robert Jackson, "The Political Theory of International Society" in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds), *International Relations Theory Today*. [Oxford: Polity Press, 1995] 124-126.

<sup>50</sup> Barry Buzan, "The English School as a Research Program", paper presented at the BISA Conference, Manchester, December 1999. See [www.ukc.ac.uk/politics/englishschool/buzan99.htm](http://www.ukc.ac.uk/politics/englishschool/buzan99.htm).

kin. Ghazali Shafie and Adam Malik for instance, were distant cousins, and not surprisingly their domination of foreign policy in their respective states coincided with the “golden years” of bilateral relations. Likewise, Abdul Rahman’s close relations with the Sultanate of Langkat in Sumatra certainly played a role in his interpretation of Malaysia’s ties with Indonesia in relation to Sumatra, and Abdul Razak’s Buginese descent may well have influenced his archipelagic outlook during his office.

#### **IV. Kinship and Indonesia-Malaysia political relations**

Interest in the politics of kinship begins with an observation that discourses of “brotherhood” have been employed regularly and liberally in Indonesia-Malaysia relations. The idea of politicised kinship first took on prominence with the evolution of anti-colonial discourse. Early nationalist movements in both Indonesia and Malaysia were not averse to the contemplation of a unified ethno-religious and historically based identity defined as *Indonesia Raya* (Greater Indonesia) or *Melayu Raya* (the greater Malay kingdom). This was certainly the case at least until the end of the Pacific War in August 1945, although pockets of activists continued to agitate for unification in the 1950s. Through the ideas of prominent Indonesian and Malay thinkers such as Muhammad Yamin, Ibrahim Yaacob, Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, Ahmad Boestamam, Ishak Mohamad, Mokhtaruddin Lasso, and Sukarno, attempts were made at conceptualising an independent political entity predicated on the premise that a Malay World existed and thrived in the pre-colonial era, and which could be revived in the context of post-colonial territorial boundaries with this historical legacy and bonds built across time as a chain of reference<sup>51</sup>.

Though the political discourse of pan-unity eventually subsided as a result of the consolidation of Indonesia and Malaysia into sovereign political entities in their own right, it remains a residual phenomenon linking pockets of political groups within Indonesian and Malaysian society. The recent resurgence in collaborative civil society activities across the Melaka Straits draws attention to

this, as do revelations of the depths of collaboration between Islamic groups in Indonesia and Malaysia, where evidence has emerged that not only have links between moderate Islamic movements like *Muhammadiyah* (Indonesia) and ABIM (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* or Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia) strengthened over recent years, but more fundamentalist movements such as the *Jemaah Islamiyah* as well<sup>52</sup>. While such relations are not taken as representative of Indonesia-Malaysia state or societal relations as a whole, the persistence of such ties against the historical background of bilateral relations commands attention.

The discourse of kinship among political elite too, survived the demise of the Pan-Malay project. Leaders of Indonesia and Malaysia, as this study will go on to show, have persistently looked to kinship for meaning and intelligibility as they grappled with issues in relations. This has been most pronounced in the regular assertion of *Pribumi* (indigenous) identity against Chinese minorities, which harken attention to kinship defined as an identity based on exclusivity. These concerns seemed to be implicitly written into former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid's recent diatribe against Chinese-dominated Singapore for the latter's apparently insolent attitude toward the "Malay" community<sup>53</sup>. While Wahid's evocation of ethnic solidarity between Indonesia and Malaysia may be tenuous from an anthropological point of view (as chapter two will show), what remains valid is the sub-text of his statement, which clearly implicates Chinese communities (in this case Singapore) as a viable "other" against which Indonesia-Malaysia brotherhood can be reinforced. Some time later, the rhetorical device of kinship was evoked again when an Indonesian minister called on Malaysian authorities to take in greater numbers of Indonesian labourers by impressing upon them that "after all, Indonesia and Malaysia are part of the Malay Archipelago and are one big family"<sup>54</sup>. As will become evident by the end of this study, such statements were modelled along a tradition of political discourse rendered on the basis of "blood brotherhood" and repetitively employed by leaders to romanticise

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<sup>51</sup> For a biographical account of the thinking of several of these personalities, see *Massa*, 29 August 1998, 29-33.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Syafi Ma'arif, Singapore, 20 November 2001.

<sup>53</sup> "Why Gus Dur is not happy with Singapore", *Straits Times*, 27 November 2000.

<sup>54</sup> "K.L. sends back shiploads of overstayers", *Straits Times*, 20 November 2001.

the foundation of the “special relationship” between these two states. The sense that Indonesia-Malaysia relations have an immutable base in the form of blood brotherhood can be summarised in the following comment by former Malaysian deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ghazali Shafie made at the Third Indonesia-Malaysia Colloquium held in Bali in December 1992:

What I am driving at is that the relationship between the peoples of Indonesia and Malaysia goes back to the age of *Rumpun Melayu* (Malay stock). It was colonialism of the West which divided the Malay world and now perforce we are discussing in Bali about the relationship between two peoples, the people of which belong to the same cluster like bamboos with each tree growing on its own or “*hidup berkampung*” that is in togetherness<sup>55</sup>.

Such is the apparent resilience of common identity in the diplomatic language between Indonesia and Malaysia, it regularly informs academic study as well, specifically those of the area studies tradition<sup>56</sup>. Particularly evocative, if historically flawed, intellectual thinking on the kinship factor has derived from the ideologies and writings of prominent Indonesian and Malay nationalists who championed the pan conceptions of *Indonesia Raya-Melayu Raya*<sup>57</sup>.

These academic and ideological traditions illustrate how many have tried to understand aspects of Indonesia-Malaysia relations from the perspective of kinship. The popularity of indigenous scholarship on shared Indo-Malay historical, ethnic, and cultural consciousness indicates that although the political unity of the region in the post-colonial era has so far been elusive, the sense of co-

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<sup>55</sup> Ghazali Shafie, *Malaysia, ASEAN and the World Order*. [Bangi: Penerbit University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2000] 382.

<sup>56</sup> Some of these include Thorning Svensson and Per Sorensen (eds), *Indonesia and Malaysia: Scandinavian Studies in Contemporary Society*. [London & Malmo: Curzon Press, 1983]; Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *Pensejarahan Melayu: Kajian Tentang Tradisi Sejarah Melayu Nusantara*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992]; Michael Hitchcock and Victor T. King (eds), *Images of Malay-Indonesian Identity*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1997]; Alijah Gordon (ed), *The Propagation of Islam in the Indonesian-Malay World*. [Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2001], and for more dated studies, John Bastin and R.Roolvink (eds), *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964]; Syed Naquib al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1963]; R.M. Koentjaraningrat, *Introduction to the Peoples and Cultures of Indonesia and Malaysia*. [Menlo Park, C.A.: Cummings Publishing Company, 1975].

<sup>57</sup> For a critique, see Kwa Chong Guan, “The Historical Roots of Indonesian Irredentism”, *Asian Studies*, Vol. VIII, No.1 (April 1970).

identity remains sufficiently significant an issue to be pondered<sup>58</sup>. Many of these themes have also been discussed in numerous Indonesia-Malaysia public forums, including the Meeting of the Malay World Conference, the Malindo (Malaysia-Indonesia) Youth Forum, and the Indonesia-Malaysia Conference.

It is clear then, that at the level both of rhetoric and abstract thought, scholars and policy practitioners have continued to look to the kinship factor for added meaning to Indonesia-Malaysia relations. The regularity of these invocations among both Indonesian and Malaysian political leaders in itself is telling of how they perceive of each other and their ties. Hence, rather than being brushed aside as pure rhetoric this propensity should be subjected to greater study in order to comprehend these impulses. The extent to which personal and cultural identity can be grafted onto the political sphere is a matter of interest for this study. Two questions can be asked here to that effect. One should first raise the issue of the distinction between the “foreign policy of words” and “foreign policy of deeds”. In other words, has rhetoric been translated into action, and if not, why. An equally important, if perplexing, question to raise would be why, if the kinship factor indeed has by and large failed as a viable basis upon which to organise relations, has the discourse (of kinship) persisted.

Historical records provide evidence both of concerted attempts to present the factor of kinship as a viable basis upon which to foster policy coherence, and incidences when relations have gone awry. Several examples stand out: (1) Jakarta’s opinions of Kuala Lumpur’s position taken in times of domestic crises in Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s. Malaya was chided for its lackadaisical support in the wake of Indonesia’s Sumatran/Sulawesi crisis in 1958, yet was later taken to task when Kuala Lumpur sought to play an active role in mediating Indonesia’s West Irian crisis of 1960; (2) Malaysia’s policy of “self-induced subordination” toward Indonesia that began in the late 1960s, and that heralded a “golden age” of bilateral relations, in fact took place barely a few years after the termination of the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation of 1963-1966, during a time when from a truly realist perspective, Kuala Lumpur would have been expected to remain wary of Indonesian intentions and cautious of rapprochement; (3)

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<sup>58</sup> This is argued, for example, in Ismail Hussein, *Antara Dunia Melayu dan Dunia Kebangsaan*.

Indonesian President Suharto's personal frustration at what his administration construed were attempts by Kuala Lumpur during the late 1980s and 1990s to usurp Indonesia's "rightful" position of political primacy in the region; (4) across the time line of Indonesia-Malaysia relations, but especially so in the early years, popular opinion has always been noticeably strong on issues regarding bilateral ties, and has been a critical factor to why political leaders have continued to search in kinship for greater meaning to bilateral relations. All these issues will be dealt with at greater length in the following chapters. Suffice to mention here that the form, context, and regularity of such events are telling of the particularistic and ultimately contradictory terms of this "special relationship" as perceived by Indonesia and Malaysia.

It is by way of these opening observations that this study moves to consider the kinship factor as one dimension of Indonesia-Malaysia relations. It is not contended here that kinship is the only dimension, nor even the most significant, in relations between kin states. Nevertheless it does contend that that when one adopts a historical perspective on International Relations, it will be evident that the kinship factor has been of some consequence from time to time, when states try to use the notion of kin affinity and blood brotherhood to generate harmony and policy coherence. In other words, kinship claims do provide meaning and intelligibility to Indonesia-Malaysia relations at certain times, and is not merely an ideological/utilitarian device for rationalising self-interested actions, although it could certainly be used in such a fashion.

A historical perspective will also enable one to observe how the kinship factor transforms over time, depending on how relatedness is understood and constructed by its proponents in relation to evolving national identities, and on whether the expectations and obligations that underpin the kinship factor are met. Kinship discourse, as engaged in regularly by policy-makers and scholars, is ultimately a historical concept, as talk of common culture, language, ethnicity, religion, and historical experience ultimately reflect a historically-based perception of affinity through time.

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[Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1990].

Finally, from an epistemological vantage, the kinship factor also provides the all important context through which one can better understand the terms and conditions of the conceptualisation and pursuit of power and national interest among the policy-makers of Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur when they formulate policy towards each other.

## **V. Thesis structure**

Given the general observations made above, the following chapter presents in greater detail the theoretical framework by laying down the definitions of kinship and the process through which it is politicised, borrowing primarily from Carsten's work on kinship identities and Anthony Smith's on nationalism, as well as identifying general patterns of its manifestation in the arena of international relations. The chapter introduces three characteristics that are emblematic of kinship and the kinship factor: (1) genealogical and biological relations, (2) socially and culturally constructed relatedness, including the "functional aspects of relatedness", defined by the perception, interpretation and fulfilment of expectations and obligations associated with identification as kin, that provide the terms under which kinship becomes applicable to international relations, and (3) its inclusive-exclusivist nature. From here the chapter introduces the concept of kin states, ponders how the factor of kinship manifests itself in the course of international relations, and explores the phenomenon of "kin rivalry".

Because the discourse of kinship in Indonesia-Malaysia relations is always initiated with a reference to the past, it is necessary to revisit this past in all its complexities in order to verify the basis on which Indonesia and Malaysia can indeed be considered kin states. This entails an examination of the origins of explicit notions of kinship in political discourse in the Indo-Malay World. This exploration of pre-independence ideas and processes spans two chapters and provides the context to the politics of kinship in the post-colonial era. As a "start point" for causal narratives, these considerations are vital, for, as Suganami noted, "all social events may be thought of as the outcome of a concatenation of some

mechanistic, volitional and contingent factors, starting from a set of initial conditions”<sup>59</sup>.

Chapter Two discusses the search for precedents in the construction of kin identity among the respective political elite and ideologues in the Indo-Malay World, looking at how the phenomenon of trade and migration led to the spinning of a genealogical web across the Indo-Malay World and the building of kin identity, and exploring social-cultural avenues of kinship construction such as language, religion, and concepts of statehood and community. More importantly, the issue of colonial intervention and its introduction not only of terrestrial borders (which were non-existent in the pre-colonial Indo-Malay World), but also ideas such as race, ethnicity, and nationalism which eventually inspired the mobilisation of kinship for political purposes in the form of pan-Malay identity that echoed the romanticism of Western nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is explored in detail. Consequently, the chapter looks at how this search for precedents yielded different understandings of the past, resulting in contested versions of the basis of Indo-Malay kinship.

The construction of kin identity and mobilisation of kinship by pan-Malay nationalists in the anti-colonial movement is the focus of Chapter Three. This chapter investigates the rise and demise of the pan-national concepts of *Indonesia Raya-Melayu Raya* within the framework of contested prescriptions for nationhood not only within, but also between, the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya. Here it plots the different paths chosen to nationhood - civic and republican nationalism on the part of Indonesia and ethno-nationalism on the part of Malaysia, and how these choices laid the basis for subsequent perceptions and interpretations of kinship in the post-colonial era.

Chapter Four marks the first of three chapters that look specifically at the functional aspect of relatedness insofar as political relations between kin states of Indonesia and Malaysia were concerned. It covers the period from Indonesian independence up to its confrontation with Malaysia, focusing on key events during this first phase of post-colonial relations between Indonesia and Malaya, and ending with the termination of Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation.

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<sup>59</sup> Suganami, “Narrative and Beyond”, 8.

Chapter Five covers the period from 1967 to 1980, when a significant upturn in relations brought about by both the euphoria of the termination of *Konfrontasi* as well as the advent of the Tun Abdul Razak administration in Malaysia was evident. Once again, key events are explored, as well as the apparent change in mindsets and outlook in Kuala Lumpur towards Jakarta.

Chapter Six carries the study into the 1990s. This chapter looks at what is essentially bilateral relations during the “Mahathir era” of Malaysian foreign policy, seeing that Mahathir Mohamad had succeeded Tun Hussein Onn in 1981. Again, it is not just the policies that are of interest, but also the perceptions and outlooks of political leaders as both Indonesia and Malaysia pursued activist foreign policies in what appeared to be a contest for primacy in the Indo-Malay Archipelago, resulting in a prestige dilemma that bore some semblance to earlier epochs in bilateral relations.

Finally, the conclusion assesses the transformations of the kinship factor over the course of this historical study by addressing the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter: (1) what was the basis to kinship discourse, (2) how kinship was conceptualised and applied, and (3) why the success of kinship to organise relations was extremely limited. In the process, the conclusion pays particular attention to: (a) the anthropological strengths and weaknesses of kinship conceptions, (b) the sociological mobilisation of kinship in terms of perceptions and interpretations of expectations and obligations, (c) the factor of kinship in bilateral relations as a function of the historical process of state formation and identity building, (d) the paradox between popular and elite conceptions of kinship, and (e) possible scenarios for the future of the kinship factor in Indonesia-Malaysia relations.

#### **A note of sources**

This thesis is the first major study in Southeast Asian International Relations that is built around not only key secondary texts, but primary resources such as archival material, which have hitherto been unpublished, and local (in the case, Indonesian and Malay) historical writings as well. Two caveats have to be

made here regarding archival fieldwork. First, the archival material utilised has been limited to British and Australian sources. While attempts were made to obtain access to indigenous sources in Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, the “sensitivity” of the topic and absence of a the 30-year rule governing the release of classified government material meant that access to Malaysian and Indonesian archives effectively denied the author. Indeed, this unfortunate circumstance continues to hamper good historical research on the region. Be that as it may, there are benefits in relying on British and Australian material, not least for the fact that they are likely to be more impartial and objective in their reporting of events and negotiations that transpired between Indonesia and Malaysia. Second, the study becomes empirically thin in the last chapter, owing to its more recent nature and the unavailability of primary material. Nevertheless, the extension of the study into the contemporary era remains a worthy exercise, and effort was made to overcome empirical limitations with alternative sources of primary information, such as interviews with policy-makers concerned<sup>60</sup>. The use of local historical texts too, is an important contribution to this study in the sense that it provides insight into how Indo-Malay kinship was conceptualised and perceived in indigenous historical and anti-colonial discourse.

In adopting a methodology premised on extensive primary research and close perusal of indigenous historical texts, this study responds to criticisms regularly levelled by historians and area studies specialists that scholars of the international relations of Southeast Asia are empirically weak and often overly reliant on secondary sources. Historians will see that much of the primary material used here, with the possible exception of the material on Confrontation, is new<sup>61</sup>. Similarly, Area Studies specialists too will see that chapters Two and

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<sup>60</sup> For interviews, the author focused mostly on high-ranking, retired officials, as they were the most likely to have significantly less at stake in sharing their insights on policy-making.

<sup>61</sup> Recent release of classified material on the 1963-65 Indo-Malay Confrontation by the Public Records Office has spawned a cottage industry comprising colonial historians who have conducted sound research on this episode of bilateral relations on the basis of these documents. See for example, Greg Poulgrain, The Genesis of *Konfrontasi*: Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, 1945-1965. [Bathurst: Crawford House Publishing, 1998]; John Subritsky, Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation. [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999]; Matthew Jones, Conflict and Confrontation in Southeast Asia, 1961-1965: Britain, the United States, and the Creation of Malaysia. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001]. It must be said, however, that these narratives

Three introduce a new dimension to indigenous historiography of the Indo-Malay World by comparing local renditions of Indonesian and Malay histories in order to explore their intersections and points of departure. Finally, there is also a substantial amount of anecdotal evidence, accrued through interviews with retired policy-makers, which reveal not only the intricate details of statecraft and diplomacy between the leaders of the two states, but also the perception and interpretation of the kinship factor and the role it has played in decision-making.

There is a fundamental reason why primary evidence is important to this study of the kinship factor in Indonesia-Malaysia relations. As this study will endeavour to show, it is precisely in the primary material, both archival and anecdotal, that the kinship factor becomes even more pronounced. Unlike secondary sources, primary source material permit scholars an insight into what were “real-time” considerations that motivated and impacted upon decision-makers, and which were seldom, if ever, publicly expressed. It is contended here that a close perusal of such records will reveal the influence and pressure that the kinship factor played in the minds of Indo-Malay political elites as they pondered policy decisions vis-à-vis each other, particularly in the immediate post-colonial era. Likewise, one can also see how perceptions and interpretations of kinship transform over time in relation to the process of national identity building. Given that a key feature of the English School tradition is an epistemology focused on the normative nature and character of political decision-making (which in the case of Indonesia and Malaysia has always been dictated by a select few individuals) that emphasises what Hedley Bull termed the “exercise of judgement” in an international arena which Martin Wight characterised as “a realm of human experience”, such a methodological approach corresponds with the objectives of this study. Put differently, while the English School does not deal explicitly with kinship, as a mode of inquiry it opens channels to which, as this study suggests, the kinship factor can be seen to have assumed some measure of prominence in the consideration of policy-makers as Indonesia-Malaysia relations took shape.

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locate Confrontation in the broader perspective of the Cold War, and focus mainly on the policies of the external players towards the region rather than the indigenous dynamics of Confrontation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Kinship Factor and International Relations

#### Introduction

Three dimensions of kinship are useful for the analysis of international relations. First, the concept of kinship can refer to the existence of genealogical-biological ties encapsulated in shared notions of race, ethnicity, and ancestry. Second, kinship can also take the form of social-cultural construction as opposed to “ontological truth”, where it is the functional aspect of relatedness that takes on prominence. Here it will be necessary to recognize that kinship has a dynamic component, and consideration should be given to the “act” as much as to the “state” of being kin. This distinction is important when one considers that the utility of kinship can be determined by the fulfillment of expectations and obligations; it is also this distinction that defines the phenomenon this study identifies as “politicized” kinship. Finally, kinship can also be premised on a logic of exclusion, where an “external” entity is used as a yardstick to reinforce kin identity (this refers also to what identity literature terms the “inside/outside boundary”)<sup>1</sup>.

In the main these attributes affect how the concept of kin is interpreted and expressed between the leaders and societies of so-called kin states, and hence determine how the kinship factor might influence the conduct of foreign policy and the flow of international relations. While one could argue that a potential ontological tension might exist across these definitions, this study takes the position that insofar as Indonesia-Malaysia relations are concerned, they reinforce each other and contribute to characterising affinity in the Indo-Malay World. There is a strain of historical continuity that defines relations between the populations of Indonesia and Malaysia in genealogical terms, traceable to the pre-colonial era, and it is this historical linkage that feeds the later construction of

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<sup>1</sup> See Roxanne Doty, “Sovereignty and the Nation: Constructing the Boundaries of National Identity” in Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (eds), *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996] 122.

affinity along social-cultural lines<sup>2</sup>. After all, it is through migration and marriage that cultures and traditions interact and extend the web of kinship across societies. Kin affinity between Indonesia and Malaysia then, has been “imagined” and constructed along social-cultural lineages borne of and extended from a narrower conception of literal blood relations. Moreover, these ties can, and often are, strengthened in the face of threats to common identity.

### **I. Defining kinship – A matter of blood or obligation?**

Within the social sciences, kinship describes a principle of association originating from the field of anthropology<sup>3</sup>. Understood from a biological perspective, kinship refers to the characteristic of blood ties that define relations within a family structure. This manner of relation is determined both by patrilineal or matrilineal ties and essentially narrows the scope of kinship studies to smaller structures of human interaction. Within the anthropological literature, the superlative statement in support of genealogical-biological interpretations of kinship has been that of Meyer Fortes, who in studying kinship made reference to “the irreducible genealogical connections, the given relations of actual connectedness, which are universally utilized in building up kinship relations and categories”<sup>4</sup>. Fortes then proceeds to contend that kinship “arises from the generally recognized fact that the relations they designate have their origin in a distinct sphere of social life, the sphere which, for both observers and actors, is demarcated by reference to the base line of genealogical connection”<sup>5</sup>. While bloodlines and descent are clearly important dimensions to the understanding of kinship, anthropologists since Fortes have begun questioning if kinship is indeed an ontological given. By this regard, quite apart from direct blood ties, descent or biological characteristics, it has been claimed that the concept of kinship can carry other meanings as well.

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<sup>2</sup> Here, the works of Anthony Smith on the ethnic origins of nations provide insight into the relationship between kinship and politics. Smith’s contribution will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> David Sills (ed), International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol.8. [New York: Mamillian Co and the Free Press, 1968] 309-413.

<sup>4</sup> Meyer Fortes, Kinship and the Social Order. [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969] 52.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

In a critique of Fortes' narrow interpretations, David Schneider argued that the idea of kinship carries a plurality of meanings, and does not merely adhere to the so-called "natural" facts of procreation or genealogy<sup>6</sup>. Central to Schneider's concern is the fact that kinship is not so much a biological but social phenomenon, whose meanings and interpretation is subject to social and cultural influences. Schneider's conclusions have since been corroborated by others who observe that "kinship comes in a variety of packages and with a multitude of meanings attached. . . . Instead of insisting on universal characteristics as a precondition for the analytical validity of kinship, variation is viewed as a practical necessity resulting from detailed fieldwork and observation of social reality that does not *a priori* privilege certain aspects of social relatedness over others"<sup>7</sup>. Further emphasizing that kinship is not only biologically prescribed, others have concluded that:

The boundaries of kindred and descent-based groups are shifting constantly, as are the interpersonal relationships that are defined in terms of kinship. . . . Kinship may appear to have distinct biological roots, but in practice it is flexible and integrates non-biological social relationships that are considered to be as 'real' as any biological relationship. . . . Kinship relationships are not always permanent states (as a strict biological interpretation would suggest) . . . it is a system that is inherently flexible and allows extensive improvisation in that people can choose their kin<sup>8</sup>.

Indeed, convictions of kinship and myths of common ancestry need not, and often do not, accord with biological descent. Cultural symbols are often used as markers of biological affinity, and the basis for an existential sense of community<sup>9</sup>. Implicit in these observations is the argument that kinship can also be said to exist when social interactions within cultural frames of reference allow genealogical logic to be transcribed onto non-biological relationships. In the

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<sup>6</sup> This was Schneider's seminal treatise published as David Schneider, A Critique of the Study of Kinship. [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984].

<sup>7</sup> See Peter Schweitzer, "Concluding Remarks" in Schweitzer (ed), Dividends of Kinship. [London: Routledge, 2000] 207.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Nuttall, "Choosing Kin: Sharing and subsistence in a Greenlandic hunting community" in Schweitzer (ed), Dividends of Kinship, 34.

<sup>9</sup> Walker Connor, Ethno-Nationalism: The Quest for Understanding. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994] 197-212.

main, such approaches extend the meaning of kinship beyond the immediate family structure and suggest that kin relations can be based on the assumption of ethnic similarity and shared cultural identity as well – untraceable, but yet sociologically “real” kinship<sup>10</sup>. Social anthropologists refer to this as “quasi”, “pseudo” or “fictive” kinship, implicating an imagined or constructed idea, where “kinship . . . is not necessarily a correlate of biogenetic or agnatic ties, but rather a culturally defined domain”<sup>11</sup>. Even political scientists have adopted such notions in their explication of the “mythical kinship community”<sup>12</sup>.

The fact that meanings of kinship may be extended outside the genealogical grid is illustrated, for example, in the work of Clifford Geertz, who applies kinship in this manner when he relates the metaphorical concept “blood brother” to the interaction of what he calls “primordial attachments”, a common historical and cultural relation that underpins the relationship between two groups<sup>13</sup>. Here the idea of “blood”, commonly used in the study of genealogy, is applied in a broader sense to denote a close relationship grounded on familial-like affiliation, suggesting “a relation of alliance or consociation by which individuals not related by kinship acquire ties of pseudo-kinship, the rights and duties that compose the relationship being modeled on those of brotherhood”<sup>14</sup>. Kinship used in this sense hence implies more than just familial relations. It has not merely ethno-genealogical dimensions, but social and cultural ones as well. Mark Nuttall notes: “kinship is a cultural reservoir from which individuals draw items they can use to define and construct everyday social interaction”<sup>15</sup>. In other words when ascribed to a particular relationship, the kinship factor may be equally understood as a social-cultural construction as well as a natural “reality” of blood ties.

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<sup>10</sup> For a recent exploration of this debate in anthropology, see Janet Carsten (ed), Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000].

<sup>11</sup> Jenny B. White, “Kinship, reciprocity and the world market” in Schweitzer (ed), Dividends of Kinship, 124.

<sup>12</sup> See David Brown, Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural and Multicultural Politics. [London: Routledge, 2000] 42.

<sup>13</sup> See Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures. [New York: Basic Books, 1973] 255-310.

<sup>14</sup> Julius Gould and William L. Kolb (eds), A Dictionary of the Social Sciences. [New York: The Free Press, 1964] 58.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Nuttall, “Choosing kin”, 34.

Recent anthropological literature has taken this re-conceptualisation of kinship further. Carsten proposes in a recent volume to adopt “a broad and imaginative view of what might be included under the rubric ‘kinship’” and to describe “the ethnographic particularities of being related in a specific cultural context” (of kinship)<sup>16</sup>. This is accomplished by introducing the concept of “relatedness”, which she maintains allows her to “suspend the assumptions behind the biological and social faces of kinship” and to circumvent the analytical dichotomy between the biological and the social<sup>17</sup>. In using the concept of relatedness one could conceivably explore a particular relationship via the implicit paradigm of kinship without having to rely on an arbitrary distinction between biological-genealogical and social-cultural, and without presupposing what constitutes kinship. In turn, this permits one to see the unity as opposed to the separation of the biological and the social<sup>18</sup>. Other scholars however, have not shied away from explicit attempts at merging the two interpretations. Strathern for example, contends elsewhere that quite apart from conceptual distance, kinship is a “meeting place between nature and culture”<sup>19</sup>.

The implications of these findings are critical to the understanding of kin affinities. No longer is kinship confined to biological affinity; it also refers to identities constructed along social and cultural lines where congruities of language, religion, custom, and history all have an ineffable cohesiveness in and of themselves, working to bind one to one’s kinsman or fellow-believer not merely out of necessity or interest, but also by virtue of some absolute import attributed to the very tie itself. In sum, social and cultural ingredients impute into relationships a corporate sentiment of oneness that make those who are charged with it feel as if they are kith and kin.

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<sup>16</sup> Janet Carsten, Cultures of Relatedness, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> This idea is expanded in the chapters by Hutchinson, Edwards, and Strathern in Carsten, Cultures of Relatedness.

<sup>19</sup> Marilyn Strathern, After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992] 87.

## II. Kinship as a functional aspect of relatedness

An important corollary to the social-cultural construction of kinship is the fact that it is action that gives intelligibility and meaning to relationships characterized as that between kin. Again, this has been reflected in recent trends in the field, where anthropologists have argued for a shift in attention from what “kinship is” to what “kinship does”, or as Janet Carsten puts it, to “the hard work of making and maintaining relations”<sup>20</sup>. Focusing on the functional and dynamic dimension of kinship performs three important tasks; first, it gives further clarity to the argument that kinship can be a social-cultural construction by providing the terms upon which such kin identities take shape; second, it opens analytical avenues for the detailed study of the impact of relatedness on social-political action, either between people, communities or even between modern nation-states; finally, it provides a framework for the conceptual separation of kinship from interrelated notions of identity such as ethnicity.

Presenting what remains a widely accepted definition, Max Weber contended that the basis of ethnicity essentially revolves around characteristics such as customs, the belief in and partaking of common history and ancestry, shared language, and religion<sup>21</sup>. Common ethnicity then, implies two communities or groups that share some or all of these traits. At first glance, the difference between ethnicity and social-cultural interpretations of kinship appears merely a matter of semantics. It has been argued for example, that even ethnicity is not a given, but chosen and contextual<sup>22</sup>. Yet there is a subtle but crucial difference between ethnicity and kinship insofar as analytical consequence is concerned. While kinship shares the same core assumptions or bases of ethnicity, its major conceptual point of departure lies in the more self-conscious and assertive nature inherent in its meaning. That is, one could say that the concept of “relatedness” carried in the meaning of kinship takes on a more dynamic and

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<sup>20</sup> Carsten, *Cultures of Relatedness*, 26.

<sup>21</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Vol.1. [New York: Bedminster Press, 1968] 385-398.

<sup>22</sup> Orlando Patterson, "Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance," in Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan (eds), *Ethnicity: Theory and Practice*. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975].

functional form than in ethnicity. *This is because although ethnicity denotes likeness, kinship connotes action in the name of or resulting from it.*

In point of illustration, people may share common histories or historical myths (as with common ethnicity), but it is how they perceive and interpret these commonalities that determines if they form the basis or impetus for social-political mobilisation. This distinction carries important implications, for the factor of kinship involves not only sharing common ethnicity, but also the *translation of such relatedness into socio-political action*. Put differently, this entails its utility as a “value” through which policy-makers view their world<sup>23</sup>. In that manner, kinship provides the reference point for relations between states who are perceived to share historical commonalities. Drawing attention to this distinction between kinship and ethnicity, it has been noted that “ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as being culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. It can thus also be defined as a social identity (based on a contrast vis-a-vis others) characterised by metaphoric or “fictive kinship”<sup>24</sup>. However, formulated and presented thence, the symbols of ethnic identity must be appropriated and internalised before they can serve as a basis for orienting people to social-political action. It is suggested here that it is the sense of kinship that invests these bonds with a potential for action and mobilization.

The kinship factor can therefore be understood as ethnicity appropriated, internalised, and politicized, where common ethnicity, history, and social-cultural relatedness such as similar religion and cultural practices are constructed to create a strong psychological sentiment between two groups of people not necessarily directly linked by bloodline, which in turn encourages political action on behalf of they who are considered kin. In the study of a social or political relationship, the kinship factor refers to how this socially and culturally constructed relatedness between two groups or populations results in co-identification, which is often expressed in terms of bonds of kinship despite the paucity of direct consanguineal or affinal relations. Such a functional notion of kinship then, as David Schneider

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<sup>23</sup> For the role of “values” in foreign policy-making, see Joseph Frankel, *The Making of Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Decision Making*. [London: Oxford University Press, 1963] 111-122.

has described, “is more one of *doing* than of *being*. It is based largely on the interaction, the doing, of exchange and less on the state of being, of having some substance, quality, or attribute”<sup>25</sup>. This distinction is particularly important to the objective of understanding how kinship can or cannot be a factor in relations between nation-states who perceive their relationship along the terms of such constructed relatedness.

It should be evident that because it often exists as a social and cultural construction, the presence and operation of the kinship factor is also based largely on perception and interpretation, particularly of those who evoke and appropriate it for political causes. The matter of the perception, interpretation and appropriation of kinship metaphors for political purposes hence, is fundamental to any attempt to understand the discourse and function of the kinship factor between people, communities or states. Put differently, the kinship factor entails obligations and expectations.

Expectation and obligation is largely accepted as a given in the context of biological kinship, but takes on equal importance for kinship defined as socially and culturally constructed relatedness. Put simply, expectations and obligations are the norms of kinship that distinguish it from other less intimate forms of relationships. Likewise as a functional and dynamic concept the kinship factor also dictates that concern be given to how these norms work out in the behaviour and action of peoples and groups identified as “kin”. Again, the importance of interaction among, and expectations of, kin can be found in the anthropology literature. Roy Wagner, for example, surmised “exchange defines; consanguinity relates”<sup>26</sup>. Elsewhere, Rita Astuti has concluded that notions of identity and relatedness are established through performance rather than substance<sup>27</sup>. Similarly in Charles Stafford’s work, he emphasizes the importance of obligation and reciprocity in the construction of relatedness<sup>28</sup>. Likewise, Barbara Bodenhorn

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<sup>24</sup> Kevin Yelvington, Producing Power: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in a Caribbean Workplace. [Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995] 168.

<sup>25</sup> David Schneider, A Critique, 75, emphasis in the original.

<sup>26</sup> Roy Wagner, The Curse of Souw: Principles of Daribi clan definition and alliance in New Guinea. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press ] 66.

<sup>27</sup> See Rita Astuti, People of the Sea. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995].

<sup>28</sup> See Charles Stafford, “Chinese patriliney and the cycles of yang and laiwang” in Carsten, Cultures.

contends that it is the work process more than birth or blood that creates “immutable rights” associated with kinship<sup>29</sup>. Indeed, extending Schneider’s critique of Fortes’, it can be suggested as an extreme that without consideration for the functional aspects of relatedness, the “state” of being kin may well be rendered meaningless.

### III. Kinship exclusivity

It is also the functionality of kinship that allows it to be conceptualized along the inclusion-exclusion frontier. As Walker Connor has argued, kinship is the psychological bond that joins people and differentiates (them) from everyone else<sup>30</sup>. Viewed from the perspective of identity, it can be argued that kinship functions to translate relatedness into the “we” effect of inclusion. Alternatively in emphasizing relatedness and affiliation, it is inexorable that an “other” (or “they”) is implicated<sup>31</sup>. The difference between kin and non-kin is perceived as being manifested through one set of people whom one can trust and rely on, whose identity is perceived to be dynamically linked with one’s own and, on the other hand, the set of all others who are non-kin, whose responses are less “predictable”. Kin then, are those of whom one has expectations, and who have obligations toward their fellow kin. Likewise from a functional perspective, it is the fulfillment of these expectations and obligations that define one as kin. It is this phenomenon that has been manifested in the sphere of international politics. Consider for example, relations between Israel and the Arab League, or of Maphilindo, a still-borne organization that nevertheless had as its implicit logic kin-based unification of the Malay peoples of Southeast Asia (namely Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines) against the increasing presence and political assertiveness of the Chinese diaspora in the region. Perhaps the most vivid example of such exclusion took the form of German expansionism in the 1930s, where Nazi Germany’s pursuit of *Volkstumspolitik* in resolving the Sudeten

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<sup>29</sup> See Barbara Bodenhorn, “‘He used to be my relative’: exploring the bases of relatedness among Inupiat of northern Alaska” in Carsten, *Cultures*.

<sup>30</sup> Walker Connor, *Ethno-Nationalism*, 92.

<sup>31</sup> See for example, the chapters by Seiser, Pedroso de Lima and Brumann in Schweitzer (ed), *Dividends of Kinship*.

problem led to the exploitation of the ethnic German population in Czechoslovakia as a fifth column that eventually resulted in the subjugation of the Czech state<sup>32</sup>.

#### IV. The politics of kinship: Nationalism and beyond

In his investigations into the origins of nationalism, Anthony Smith argues that the basis of the modern nation can be found in the *Ethnie*, which he defines as “clusters of population with similar perceptions and sentiments generated by, and encoded in, specific beliefs, values and practices”<sup>33</sup>. Smith later refines it to “named units of population with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historic territory and some measure of solidarity, at least among their elites”<sup>34</sup>. One should note that the idea of *Ethnie* defers from that of the nation, which Smith presents as “a named human population which shares myths and memories, a mass public culture, a designated homeland, economic unity and equal rights and duties for all members”<sup>35</sup>. Hence, while Smith would concede that nationalism is a modern doctrine, to him it is based on pre-modern premises<sup>36</sup>. By suggesting that this dimension of identity comprises “historical clusters of myth, memory, values and symbols”, Smith in fact evokes Geertz’s notion of the “primordial attachments” of kinship<sup>37</sup>. More importantly, his definition of *Ethnie* reflects the kinship factor at work at forging a national identity, for he identifies the manner by which ethnic bonds are mobilized toward the formation of a nation-state. To Smith’s mind, the sense of shared destiny that underscores the birth of nationalist ethos is based primarily on

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<sup>32</sup> Radomir Luza, The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans: A Study of Czech-German Relations, 1933-1962. [New York: New York University Press, 1964]; Ronald M. Smelser, The Sudeten Problem, 1935-38. [Kent: Dawson, 1975].

<sup>33</sup> Anthony D. Smith, Ethnic Origins of Nations. [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986] 97 and Smith, National Identity. [London: Penguin, 1991] 21.

<sup>34</sup> Anthony D. Smith, Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era. [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995] 56.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>36</sup> It is notable that Anthony Smith is more sympathetic to such primordial forces than other theorists of nationalism. See Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983] and Encounters with Nationalism. [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994].

<sup>37</sup> That said, it must also be emphasized that Smith’s reading of primordialists such as Geertz is more nuanced and as such, Smith would not consider himself a “primordialist”, even if he does share in some of their assumptions.

the construction of relatedness on the back of perceived commonalities, not least of which is a particular interpretation of its own history. It is interesting too, that Smith emphasises the importance of “historical clusters, or heritages, of myths, memories, values and symbols for cultural community formation” over the state of ethnic ties, emphasizing that the *Ethnie* is in fact more than common ethnicity<sup>38</sup>.

The relevance of Smith’s version of nationhood for this study will come to the fore in the following two chapters when an analysis of how kinship discourse was framed by nationalists either side of the Melaka Straits precisely in terms of a shared interpretation of a common history (what Smith terms the “myth-symbol complex”) is undertaken, for it is through the lens of history that the kinship factor is mobilised in nationalist discourse<sup>39</sup>. The matter of the need for careful distinction between kinship and the modern, Western nationalist enterprise is also critical to this study for as Chapter Three will show, tensions arose when these Western conceptions of nationalism and nation-statehood were applied to the pre-war and immediate post-war anti-colonial struggles in British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, where conceptions of nation were blurred by kinship loyalties. This was illustrated most poignantly in the agitation for pan-Malay unity.

Returning to the theoretical association between kinship and nationalism, in Smith’s view there is a very distinct political dimension to the co-affiliation dynamics generated within the *Ethnie*. This lies in the process through which the *Ethnie* becomes a modern nation. This process takes place through essentially five stages: the inclusion of whole people (masses), the constitution of a ‘legal-political community’, legitimisation through nationalist ideology, integration in the international system, and the delimitation of a national territory<sup>40</sup>. The pertinence of Smith’s conclusions for this study can be distilled at two levels. First, he has clearly illuminated how the kinship factor can function through the politicisation

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<sup>38</sup> Anthony Smith, “Theories of Nationalism” in Michael Leifer (ed), *Asian Nationalism*. [London: Routledge, 2000] 12.

<sup>39</sup> See Natividad Gutierrez, “Ethnic Revivals Within Nation-States?” in Hans Rudolf Wicker (ed), *Rethinking Nationalism and Ethnicity: The Struggle for Meaning and Order in Europe*. [New York and Oxford: Berg, 1997] 166-169. See also Anthony Smith, “Ethnic Myths and Ethnic Revivals”, *European Journal of Sociology*, XXV (1984) and “Ethnic Election and Cultural Identity”, *Ethnic Studies*, No.10 (1993).

<sup>40</sup> See Smith, *Nations and Nationalism*.

of relatedness in the context of *Ethnies* for the objectives of national self-determination. In other words, it can be argued that it is the kinship factor that drives people to sacrifice and die for “their people” in the name of national liberation. This point was further emphasised by David Brown when he described the “invention” of the ideology of nationalism as “individuals (who) sought imagined communities which could *mimic* the kinship group in offering a sense of identity, security, and authority”<sup>41</sup>. Similarly, while Anderson would suggest that the co-affiliation of Smith’s *Ethnies* in and of themselves are insufficient in scope to shape a population into a nation-state with territorial boundaries, he does agree that “primordial forces” such as kinship are important in the “imagination” of the nation-state<sup>42</sup>: just as the nation-state is imagined on this basis, so too kinship can be constructed. Yet one need also consider that the transition from *Ethnie* to the modern nation is not necessarily unilinear. One critical point to keep in mind is the fact that even assuming that the “nation” would ultimately find territorial expression, many of its “members” could also conceivably be left outside its borders. It is here that one finds distinction between kinship and nationalism.

Forces such as colonialism, migration and war for example, can conceivably separate an *Ethnie*, leading eventually to the creation of *separate* nation-states from the same *Ethnie*. The question to be posed here in this event, and one that has eluded studies of nationalism in international relations, is to what extent the kin ties that bind the people within an *Ethnie* continue to define, organise and influence relations between nations and nation-states constituted into different territorial entities, but originating from the same *Ethnie*. Put differently, what happens to kinship when *Ethnies*, or nations (which for Smith are the successors to the *Ethnie*) for that matter, evolve into separate states, and how does one reconcile the similarities that kinship has with nationalism, stopping short of a claim of one state for one *Ethnie*? This would certainly pose a conceptual problem if the modernist principles of nationalism include the acceptance of

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<sup>41</sup> David Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism*, 40.

<sup>42</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* – Second Edition. [London: Verso, 1991]. Anderson suggests that the advent of print capitalism is the crucial catalyst in the imagination of the nation as it assisted in the spread of the national “myth”.

Mayall's "national idea" that the nation is the proper basis for the sovereign state<sup>43</sup>.

## V. The concept of kin states

While there is no "theory" of kinship in International Relations, there is evidence of it in terms of the dynamics of relations between "kin states". In his study of secessionist movements in South Asia, Rajat Ganguly contends "ethnic kin states are typically those states which border or are close to the secessionist region and which contains co-nationals of the secessionists with whom the secessionists share and maintain strong ethno-cultural and ethno-religious bonds"<sup>44</sup>. A kin state for Ganguly then, is a sort of "motherland state", and kinship operates in terms of movements seeking to enlist political or military assistance from the "motherland state" either to create their own state, or even to foster political union with the motherland. Often, such a kin state relationship is driven by the close ethnic and people-to-people ties between some or all of the nationals in the "motherland state" and the ethnic communities that are agitating for autonomy in or independence from a host state<sup>45</sup>. The issue of geographic proximity is also a feature of Ganguly's definition, for secessionist groups often are located physically in close proximity to their motherland states.

Beyond assisting ethno-nationalism and secession however, kin affinity can also operate at other levels; namely, that between independent territorial nation-states. When one speaks of the kinship factor among independent territorial nation-states, one refers to the strong sense of affiliation that might bring the majority of a nation-states' population to identify with those of other nation-states with which they share commonalities such as those described by Smith. It follows that nation-states that enjoy a relationship based on these shared

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<sup>43</sup> See James Mayall, Nationalism and International Society. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993] Introduction.

<sup>44</sup> Rajat Ganguly, Kin State Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts: Lessons from South Asia. [New Delhi and London: Sage Publishers, 1998] 9.

<sup>45</sup> See James Rosenau (ed), International Aspects of Civil Strife. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964]; Evan Luard, The International Regulation of Civil Wars. [London: Thames and Hudson, 1972]; Alexis Heraclides, "Secessionist Minorities and External Involvement", International Organization, Vol.44, No.3 (Summer 1990).

characteristics can also be termed kin states. It is clear that the idea of kin states employed here shares Ganguly's general assumptions of primordial, ethno-cultural and ethno-religious bonds, yet these bonds can exist not only between diasporas or secessionist movements and irredentist states, but between two separate sovereign, independent territorial nation-states where a significant portion of their respective populations share historical-symbolic, linguistic and religious ties as well. Beyond that however, the populations of these states must also have shared a high degree of historical interaction not only for these bonds of kith and kin to be established, but also for them to subsequently be politicised. This influence of historical interaction is crucial to an understanding of the kinship factor as political action, for there can be states whose populations share some measure of kin affiliation, but whose relations have not been politicised<sup>46</sup>.

For the purposes of this study then, kin states can be defined as sovereign states where a significant percentage of their populations (but not necessarily the entire population) share common ancestry as well as ethnic and cultural (particularly religious and linguistic) affiliations with each other that have been established through a historical process of close interaction (not unlike Smith's concept of *Ethnies*)<sup>47</sup>.

Returning to an earlier point, the kinship factor also has that functional element, the "act" of kinship, which is defined by the existence of expectations and obligations. In considering the notions of expectation and obligation it is not surprising that kinship is often equated with amity. Fortes for instance suggests that amity is a universal content of kinship, and he offers the operative feature of the kinship factor as "the axiom of prescriptive altruism"<sup>48</sup>. This approach presents connection and inclusion not merely as desirable but inevitable, while exclusion is likewise cast in negative terms. Further elaborating on kinship as amity, Julian Pitt-Rivers has noted:

The reciprocity (of kinship) is undifferentiated in that it requires that a member of the group shall sacrifice himself for another, that kinsmen

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<sup>46</sup> One thinks of the Scandinavian countries, which the rest of Europe sees as conspicuous kin states.

<sup>47</sup> The majority is taken as the definition of a kin state because there are very few homogenous states in the world today.

<sup>48</sup> Fortes, *Kinship and the Social Order*, 110.

shall respect preferential rules of conduct towards one another regardless of their individual interests. Such reciprocity as there is comes from the fact that other kinsmen do likewise<sup>49</sup>.

Hence relations between kin states can be defined not only by the ethno-cultural and historical links their inhabitants share, but also by the expectations and obligations these sovereign states have of each other as a result of their co-identification. Expectations and obligations take on greater precedence when one considers relations between kin states, where pressure almost always exists for them to organise their relations on logic beyond material calculations of “interest”.

## **VI. Kinship as a factor in International Relations**

By way of the above as a theoretical springboard, it follows that kinship can be considered one of a range of factors that conceivably account for the state of relations between kin states, particularly if one favours an inter-paradigmatic and historical approach to understanding international relations. Of particular import for purposes here is how the anthropological concept of kinship illuminates what Mandaville describes as “political dimensions of various transnational social forms, some of which seem to challenge the limits of the political as defined by the modern state . . . . because transnationalism creates forms of political identity which do not fit the taxonomies of political modernity”<sup>50</sup>.

Reflecting the conceptual premises established earlier, when evoked, the kinship factor immediately brings to mind solidarity based on biological or social-cultural relatedness between populations. Such solidarity is often manifested in resolute support expressed toward the party considered “kin” in times of crisis. It is in this sense that kinship relatedness among kin states can be articulated as a functional concept. It is not surprising then that such deep-seated relations can conjure up images of blood relations reflected in such ideas as “blood

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<sup>49</sup> Julian Pitt-Rivers, “The Kith and Kin” in Jack Gooding (ed), *The Character of Kinship*. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973] 101.

brotherhood” and “blood ties”. These metaphorical images reflect attempts to give greater meaning and intelligibility to relations, and from there create conditions of possibility out of which policies may arise.

A common exercise of politicised kinship takes the shape of activities such as diplomatic, political and cultural support for the cause of national self-determination<sup>51</sup>. In Mao’s China for instance, the policy of “dual citizenship” for overseas Chinese harkened attention to the power of the kinship factor. The example of Irish-American relations illustrates further the relevance of kinship. Irish involvement in American affairs dates back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when British subjugation and oppression, along with famine, drove millions of Irish migrants to the greener pastures of America. Physical dislocation however, did not bring about the severance of emotional ties with the homeland. Irish immigrants would bring along with them culture, language and religion. More importantly, political values and nationalist ethos were transported across the Atlantic as well. The Irish stood as America’s ally during their war of independence against Britain, a war in which Irish-Americans fought proudly<sup>52</sup>. So too, as a result of perceptions of kinship that existed, “the question of Irish self-government became an American question as surely as it was a British one”<sup>53</sup>. The Secretary of State in Theodore Roosevelt’s government noted how the Irish in America were a powerful interest group which he could not discount in US-British-Irish relations<sup>54</sup>. Similarly, Woodrow Wilson admitted in 1917 that “the only circumstance which seems now to stand in the way of absolutely cordial co-operation with Great Britain is the failure so far to find a satisfactory method of self-government for Ireland”<sup>55</sup>.

Oftentimes, this kinship factor also translates into support in times of crisis for a fellow kin state. British leaders regularly espoused kinship between

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<sup>50</sup> Peter Mandaville, “Reading the state from elsewhere: towards an anthropology of the postnational”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol.28 (2002) 204.

<sup>51</sup> See for example, Gabriel Sheffer (ed), *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*. [London: Croom Helm, 1986].

<sup>52</sup> See Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America*. [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956]; J.L. Kiernan, *Ireland and America versus England*. [Detroit: George W. Pattison, 1964].

<sup>53</sup> Alan J. Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921*. [London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969] 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 256-257.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 258.

the “English-speaking peoples” in the early years of the Cold War to underscore Anglo-American cooperation against the Soviet threat<sup>56</sup>. Kin sentiments also motivated ideologies of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Slavism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. It is notable that such ideologies remain enduring forces in international politics, even as they have taken on more muted forms since the late 1980s<sup>57</sup>. Ethnic affiliation and co-identification have also driven governments to go to war in the name of brotherhood. Militant Pan-Arabism during the Arab-Israeli wars, particularly the Yom Kippur War of 1973, attest to this; so too the support given by Australia and New Zealand to the British war effort during both the First and Second World Wars (particularly during the First World War when tens of thousands of Australian and New Zealand troops were shipped halfway across the world to fight a war which had no immediate impact on national security)<sup>58</sup>. It was also the case during the Balkans war, where Serb and Croat minorities were supplied arms by their kindred states.

Another striking example is Russia’s relations with Serbia<sup>59</sup>. Ties between Serbs and Russians extend back to the early medieval period, built on the premises of shared language (Slavic) and religion (Orthodox Christianity). This close affinity led David MacKenzie to contend that “with no one else can Serbia achieve its goal more easily than in agreement with Russia”<sup>60</sup>. The pre-modern basis of Russo-Serb ties has seen Russia fight several wars alongside Serbia, wars that did not have any direct impact on Russian strategic interests. Alexander II sent nearly 1,000 volunteers to fight in the Serbian Army against the Ottoman

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<sup>56</sup> See Ritchie Owendale, The English-Speaking Alliance: Britain, the United States, the Dominions and the Cold War, 1945-1951. [London: Allen & Unwin, 1985]; John Baylis, Anglo-American Relations Since 1939. [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997].

<sup>57</sup> See Jacob Landau, Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. [London: Hurst and Company, 1995] esp. 194-234.

<sup>58</sup> See for example, Dennis Austin and W.H. Morris-Jones (eds), Australia and Britain. [London: Frank Cass, 1980]; Michael Davie, Anglo-Australian Attitudes. [London: Secker & Warburg, 2000].

<sup>59</sup> For a general survey of Russo-Serb relations, see David MacKenzie, Imperial Dreams, Harsh Realities: Tsarist Foreign Policy, 1815-1917. [Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1994]; see also P/ Kolsto, “The New Russian Diaspora”, Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol.19, No.3 (July 1996) and V. Vujacic, “Historical Legacies, Nationalist Mobilization and Political Outcomes in Russia and Serbia: A Weberian View”, Theory and Society, Vol.25, No.6 (December 1996).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

domination of the Balkans in the mid-1870s<sup>61</sup>. Russia also reluctantly declared war on Turkey in 1877, despite both international opposition to Russian interference in the Balkans and economic instability at home<sup>62</sup>. It was also noted that despite Russia's failure at the Congress of Berlin to uphold the territorial integrity of Slavic populations in the Balkans, "the Serbian people still looked to Russia as a kindred nation whose people were of the same race and religion"<sup>63</sup>. Certainly this comment echoed the sentiments of Serbs at the time, just as the Serbian newspaper *Zastava* noted, "as to our national relations with Russia and our Russian brethren, they can never cool, nor can the Serbs ever be wrenched away from our brother Russians"<sup>64</sup>. Russia would again come to the aid of Serbia in 1914, where "it was the clamour of the Slavophiles that caused Alexander II to interpose to save Belgrade from occupation and the Serbs from virtual annihilation"<sup>65</sup>. Once again, Russian involvement would be undertaken against perceived Russian interests. Rather than allow a massive Slavic defeat in the Balkans, Russia entered the conflict on the side of the Serbs, even though the Serbs instigated the conflict. The fact that Russia subsequently paid a high price for involvement demonstrates just how strong ties were between Russia and Serbia<sup>66</sup>.

As was elucidated earlier, the kinship factor is also as much about exclusion or identifying an "other", as it is about inclusion. Exclusionary dynamics were discernible in Pan-Arabism and Ba'athism, particularly during the 1950s to 1970s. These movements found official expression after World War Two in the Arab League, and in several other attempts at unification<sup>67</sup>. While presented outwardly as an attempt to unify the various states of the Arab world on the basis first of Islam and subsequently nationalism, the sub-text of these

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<sup>61</sup> See David MacKenzie, *The Serbs and Russian Pan-Slavism, 1875-1878*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967] 194-247.

<sup>62</sup> See *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism: Russian Influence in the Internal Affairs of Bulgaria and Serbia, 1879-1886*. [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958] 163.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in MacKenzie, *The Serbs and Russian Pan-Slavism*, 288-289.

<sup>65</sup> Stephen Graham, *Tsar of Freedom: The Life and Reign of Alexander II*. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935] 218.

<sup>66</sup> Russian involvement in the Second World War contributed substantively to the outbreak of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent downfall of the Romanov Empire.

political movements was clearly the common cause of anti-Zionism, manifested most strikingly in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars. Pan-Arabism later took on a less conspicuous but no less political form of cohesion in their use of oil as a major economic and political weapon in international politics. Likewise, pan-Africanism, which was a vibrant political ideology during the anti-colonial period of the 1950s and 1960s on the African continent (mostly due to the political and diplomatic exertions of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and the "Casablanca Group"), focused a common energy against colonialism and racial discrimination<sup>68</sup>. Likewise it can be argued that the cause of blood brotherhood between China and North Vietnam espoused in the 1950s was built more on their mutual revulsion against Western imperialism than cultural or ideological convergence.

## VII. The phenomenon of "kin rivalry"

Considering the favourable impulses toward cooperation generated by the kinship factor between kin states, the question arises as to whether relations between kin states are presupposed to be harmonious. It is argued here however, that while amity is certainly an identifiable trait, this by no means makes it a deterministic or conclusive outcome of kin relatedness. Indeed, relationships defined as kin are also prone to rivalry. Though regularly read into its meaning, kinship in no way implies predetermined and unconditional support at all costs; and if amity is accepted as a code of behaviour in kinship relations, this does not entail that it cannot be contravened, nor should one assume *a priori* that amity everywhere and under all circumstances elicits the same generosity in response. In a study on Malay kinship for example, David Banks noted that "consanguinity is a morally approved framework for the expression of kin sentiments, but blood kinsmen are not thought always to share kin sentiments even if they are close consanguines"<sup>69</sup>. Furthermore in a groundbreaking study on sibling rivalry, socio-biologists have discovered that:

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<sup>67</sup> For example, the Arab Federation, The United Arab Republic, the Arab Union, and the Arab Maghreb Union.

<sup>68</sup> See for example, W.Ofuatye-Kodjoe (ed), *Pan-Africanism: New Directions in Strategy*. [New York: University Press of America, 1986].

<sup>69</sup> David Banks, *Malay Kinship*. [Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1983] 164.

Because many or most social interactions are not between close kin, such an expectation (of rivalry) is of no particular interest; selfishness is unchecked. However, selfish behaviour often exacts a *heavy toll* on the *very closest* of genetic relatives, including offspring and siblings<sup>70</sup> (*emphasis added*).

Quite clearly, kin state relations have the capacity to deteriorate, prompting one to consider not merely “blood brotherhood” but “sibling rivalry” as well. Paradoxically, then the potential of kinship for fostering a sense of unity and mutual understanding is rivalled only by its potential for divisiveness. One striking example revolves around the phenomenon of “divided nations”. States such as Korea, China, and pre-unification Germany have consistently articulated re-unification in terms of kinship, yet, particularly in the case of the former two, conflict as a tool for re-unification has never been discounted<sup>71</sup>.

At other times, kin state tensions take the form of diplomatic disagreements over policy positions. Consider again US-Ireland relations. Even though the US played an active role in supporting the formation of an independent Irish Republic, relations turned contentious not long after Dublin declared independence. One of the most controversial periods of Irish-American relations was the Second World War. Troy Davis notes that:

Most American leaders, and a large number of Americans in general, thought that Ireland’s history and its political values, as well as the ties of kinship and affection that bound so many Irish to the United States, made the smaller country’s adherence to the Allied cause a logical response to the war against German Nazism, Italian fascism and Japanese militarism<sup>72</sup>.

Nevertheless despite heavy American pressure, and much to Washington’s displeasure and frustration, Dublin chose to maintain a policy of “friendly neutrality” throughout the war<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Douglas Mack and Geoffrey Parker, The Evolution of Sibling Rivalry. [London: Oxford University Press, 1997] 2.

<sup>71</sup> See John Metzler, Divided Dynamism: The Diplomacy of Separated Nations. [Lanham: University Press of America, 2001].

<sup>72</sup> Troy Davis, Dublin’s American Policy: Irish-American Diplomatic Relations, 1945-1952. [Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998] 2.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Fisk, In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality, 1939-1945. [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983] 280-281. In effect, Ireland’s foreign

Notwithstanding Washington's own declaration of neutrality in the early years of the conflict, Roosevelt's pro-British policy meant that beneath the official proclamation, Washington had begun exerting pressure on Dublin to rescind neutrality and join Britain in the fight against Germany and Italy. At this, Irish Prime Minister de Valera was unimpressed, and he doggedly maintained Ireland's commitment to neutrality<sup>74</sup>. As the war drew nearer however, Washington rejected de Valera's request for arms to defend Ireland should the war reach Irish shores. At the same time, relations with Britain reached a new level of tension with Churchill's decision in June 1940 to destroy the French naval fleet at Oran to prevent it falling into German hands. In response, de Valera expressed concern for a possible British invasion of Ireland for the similar purpose of pre-empting Germany from establishing a foothold on Britain's Western flank. De Valera had suspected that the US would likely remain silent if London took such a move. Subsequently upon entering the war, American troop landings in Northern Ireland were interpreted as disrespecting of Irish sovereignty and were greeted with protests in Dublin<sup>75</sup>. Nor was Ireland ready to give up its ports for the Allies' Atlantic war efforts<sup>76</sup>. Dublin too, would reject American pressures to sever diplomatic relations with Berlin<sup>77</sup>. Ties between Washington and Dublin remained strained after the war as a result of Ireland's reluctance to participate in NATO<sup>78</sup>.

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policy of neutrality in times of conflict was already the adhered principle of Prime Minister Eamon de Valera in the 1920s. See Ryle Dwyer, Irish Neutrality and the USA, 1939-1947. [Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977] 4-7. That said, it must be acknowledged however that Irish commitment to a policy of neutrality was by no means an automatic decision. This was evident in de Valera's willingness to involve the Irish Republic in possible League of Nations' collective security action in Manchuria in 1931 and Ethiopia in 1935-36 had the League sanctioned such action. See Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Ireland in International Affairs" in Owen Dudley Edwards (ed), Conor Cruise O'Brien Introduces Ireland. [New York: McGraw Hill, 1969].

<sup>74</sup> Ryle Dwyer, Strained Relations: Ireland at Peace and the USA at War, 1939-1945. [Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988] 6-8.

<sup>75</sup> Even though the Dublin government had no control of the North because of partition, de Valera saw this as an opportunity to both denounce partition and re-emphasize his government's neutrality.

<sup>76</sup> Dwyer, Strained Relations, 24-29.

<sup>77</sup> See Carrolle Carter, The Shamrock and the Swastika: German Espionage in Ireland in World War II. [Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1977].

<sup>78</sup> For a detailed study of Irish attitudes toward NATO based on sound primary research, see Sean Cronin, Washington's Irish Policy, 1916-1986: Independence, Partition, Neutrality. [Dublin: Anvil Books, 1987] 162-249.

The permutations in Ireland-US relations illustrate the complexities surrounding the kinship factor that plague relations between kin states. The US and Britain too, English speaking and Judaeo-Christian “brothers-in-arms” over two world wars, have experienced their share of disputes, the most controversial perhaps being the Suez Crisis. At times kin rivalry even results in military conflict. For instance in the case of Laos and Thailand, it has been suggested that:

If natural affinity alone had determined the political orientation of modern Laos, it probably would have led to an association with Thailand, at least for the ethnic Lao population of the Mekong Valley. The two peoples are believers in Theravada Buddhism, speak a similar language, written in a script of Indian derivation, and belong to the Hinduized sphere of civilization<sup>79</sup>.

It is clear from this description that Laos and Thailand share much in common insofar as kin affiliation is concerned<sup>80</sup>. Yet as recent as 1987-1988, these kin states fought a bloody border war against each other<sup>81</sup>. The extent to which the kinship factor deteriorated into animosity and rivalry was tersely summarized by a Thai politician:

It is now 200 years since (the last war with Laos). We should cross over and burn Vientiane once more. There is no need to declare war – just go across and burn it; when it’s done come back. I don’t think friendly relations can happen between the Thai and Lao. The Thai side must remain strong. If we want to be countries like elder and younger brother, the elder brother must be strong, to make the younger brother fear. There is no use being too compliant like this. If you go to war, do it properly, break them completely<sup>82</sup>.

In many cases, kin rivalry occurs when expectations and obligations associated with the mobilisation of kinship go unfulfilled. What remains striking

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<sup>79</sup> Paul Langer and Joseph Zasloff, North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao: Partners in the Struggle for Laos. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970] 16.

<sup>80</sup> See Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, Kith and Kin Politics: The Relationship between Laos and Thailand. [Manila: Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers, 1994].

<sup>81</sup> See Gehan Wijeyewardene, “Thailand and the Thai: Three Versions of Ethnic Identity” in Wijeyewardene (ed), Ethnic Groups Across National Boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia. [Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990] 76-77.

<sup>82</sup> Siam Rath (Bangkok), 23 February 1988, quoted in Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn (eds), Kith and Kin Politics, 2.

about most, if not all, of these conflicts is how the language of kinship is also employed to rationalise conflict between these states, giving credence to the argument that kinship-speak seems to be a way for these states to provide meaning and intelligibility to their relations, even in times of conflict.

What interests this study hence, is why kinship has not formed a viable basis for harmony in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, and yet continues to be evoked despite this. In order to address these concerns, the findings of this chapter need first be summarised.

### **VIII. Theoretical implications**

It appears that the kinship factor has exercised varied influence on politics at several levels. It is most rudimentarily manifested in the phenomenon of nationalism. Numerous theorists have argued that the modern nation-state is built upon the genealogical, cultural and social attachments of its inhabitants, which Smith terms *Ethnies*. The key to nationalist mobilisation is the politicisation of ties of blood, history, ethnicity and culture. Here there is an international dimension as well, for the identification of each other as “kin” based on common expectations of and opposition to colonialism binds anti-colonial projects across borders. This was pronounced in pan-Arab and pan-African nationalism, and to some extent in the Afro-Asian movement as well. In this manner the kinship factor can be said to contribute to the defining of an identity in opposition to alien influences (i.e. the extortionist colonial enterprise).

Beyond nationalism however, the kinship factor also exerts influence in relations between sovereign states and the remnant of their *Ethnies* left outside their territorial boundaries. In this form perceptions and interpretations of kinship inspire challenges to conceptual and territorial boundaries of the nation-state, when new members into international society are not always supportive of the principles of the collectivity into which they strive to enter through nationalist agitation<sup>83</sup>. In such instances, the kinship factor morphs into irredentism, separatism, and “fifth column” politics.

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<sup>83</sup> See Mayall, Nationalism and International Society, 35-69; 111-144.

Finally, kinship can also feature as a factor in relations between sovereign states. Two points have emerged in this regard. First, the influence of the kinship factor can take the form of expectations and obligations arising from the understanding that inhabitants of kin states share common bonds (constructed or otherwise) that should be utilised to organise their “special relationship” in the era of modern statehood. This refers to the logic that while the inhabitants of a certain geographical area who have experienced a long history of socio-cultural interaction and exchange (hence sharing elements of co-identity as kin) can be divided (usually by imperialist intent) into separate terrestrial entities, their identification of each other as kin persists and informs the conduct of relations at an inter-state level. This is particularly so when cultural exchange and interaction endure, and respective populations maintain linkages across borders even after the formation of autonomous territorial states.

The bonds behind such “special relationships” can be further augmented in the face of common threats and challenges. The cooperation between the English-speaking Christian nations during the Second World War remains one of the most cogent examples. Likewise Pan-Arabism continues to be a potent phenomenon when directed against Israel, just as pan-Africanism was built around a continent-wide anti-colonial movement. Much in the same vein, as the study will illustrate, it seems that Indo-Malay kinship has been most potent when emphasised in relation to anti-Chinese sentiment. Similarly Islam, a religion shared by the majority of the populations of Indonesia and Malaysia and which is premised precisely on the language of extra-national brotherhood, offers another potential avenue through which to codify kinship. In recent times, the Islamic dimension to kinship has re-surfaced in the reluctance among Arab states (and Indonesia and Malaysia as well) to support U.S. military action against Iraq.

As terms of reference for relations between kin states, expectations and obligations can take on various forms depending on context and circumstances. Its most extreme case would be military support, sometimes undertaken in situations where a state would accrue no clear mileage from such an act other than fulfilling “kin” obligations. Australian involvement in the First World War clearly illustrated this, as did Russian support of Serbia. Expectations and

obligations can also assume the form of political and diplomatic support such as the case of affirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a kin state, as the pan movements of Arab and African nationalism indicate.

Of interest for current purposes is the relationship between expectations and obligations and the potential for conflict between kin states. Here several observations can be made. In the case of asymmetrical relations (that is, between kin states of different levels of political development or maturity), expectations and obligations usually entails a measure of deference on the part of smaller, less mature states to the primacy of the more established kin. To some extent, one could say that the Chinese expected this of their North Vietnamese “ideological brothers” after Dien Bien Phu<sup>84</sup>; so too the Thais of Laos, the Americans of Ireland, and the Russians of Serbia. Indeed, if power is a determinant in international politics, one could suggest that it can be manifested in conceptions of primacy and deference, insofar as relations between kin states are concerned. Correspondingly given that kin states cross swords in the diplomatic and political arenas as well, it can be argued that rivalry arises out of differences in the perception and interpretation of kinship that result in the frustration of these expectations and obligations. In other words, expectations and obligations go unfulfilled as the anticipated mobilisation and alignment of policy, or deference in the case of asymmetrical relations, fails to materialise. At times, differences are so substantial as to result in armed conflict. Other times, they result in diplomatic sabre-rattling, or to the more muted but no less significant “interference in domestic affairs”, as if being kin somehow “legitimises” intervention in others’ domestic politics.

Expectations and obligations, as terms of reference for kinship, are pronounced in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, and have been tied intimately to notions of sovereignty, primacy, and deference. Seeing that a strong kinship bond was fostered around the shared anti-colonial struggle of two peoples whose respective nationalist histories attempted to paint the Indo-Malay World as a contiguous social-cultural unit, one of the key obligations that defined this

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<sup>84</sup> For this dimension of Sino-Vietnamese relations, see King C. Chen, Vietnam and China, 1938-1954. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969]; William Duiker, China and Vietnam: The

relationship, especially in the immediate post-colonial era, was unyielding support from each for the other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Likewise, given that Indonesia and Malaysia fell into the category of Third World states whose independence was often contested from both within as well as outside of the territorial state in the early years of independence, expectations that both would reaffirm the sovereignty of the other in times of crisis was a definitive term to their relations. Dovetailing into this framework lay the matter of deference and primacy.

Scholars of Indonesian politics have identified Jakarta's "proprietary attitude" of "regional entitlement" that have always dictated Indonesian views of its position in the region<sup>85</sup>. While the fact that Indonesia is *primus inter pares* in Southeast Asia is generally accepted in the field, there is a case to be made that this sense of primacy was particularly pronounced in relation to Malaysia. Indeed, the especial attention paid by Jakarta to Malaysian acknowledgement of, and response to, its political primacy in the Indo-Malay World has become a definitive feature of bilateral relations. For example, as chapters three and four will illustrate, Indonesia took an active interest in Malay nationalism, and this interest in Malayan affairs continued into the post-colonial period as it sought to influence the direction of Malayan foreign policy. Likewise, Malaya was constantly singled out in Indonesian quarters as a state that required "revolutionizing", while Malayan independence, gained in cooperation with the British, was seen in Jakarta circles as "counterfeit"<sup>86</sup>. Even in more recent times, anecdotal evidence suggests that former Indonesian President Suharto was particularly incensed that it was Malaysia that was attempting the usurp Indonesia's rightful role as the manager of regional order and leader of the Third World. These observations will be elaborated upon later. Suffice to say that such an attitude betrayed the sense of primacy that Indonesian, and particularly Javanese, leaders felt towards their Malaysian counterparts. Given the historical ties between the two countries, this primacy clearly translated into expectations of

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Roots of Conflict. [Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1986] 20-34.

<sup>85</sup> See Michael Leifer, Indonesia's Foreign Policy. [London: Allen and Unwin, 1983].

<sup>86</sup> Frederick Bunnell, "Guided Democracy Foreign Policy: 1960-1965", Indonesia, Vol.11 (October 1966) 47.

deference on the part of Jakarta. Bilateral harmony hence, depended on whether Malaysia acknowledged Indonesian primacy. Equally important however, was how Indonesia responded to Malaysian expectations of respect for its sovereignty, or the extent to which Jakarta desired to influence decision-making in Kuala Lumpur. To that effect, events such as Confrontation would have had a severe impact on Malaysian perceptions of the terms of kin affiliation with Indonesia.

Second, historical process and transition are vital when considering the issue of consolidation and fragmentation of kin-state bonds. This is because, as with all social-political concepts, the kinship factor itself is subject to perceptions and interpretations, which in turn are influenced by the passage of time and the evolution of identities. Consider for example, Bull and Watson's contention that Third World states had to meet what they termed "the standard of civilization" before being accepted as members of international society. While this may be true, one should also note that structures of pre-colonial international order were not abandoned wholesale and overnight in order to embrace the concept of "sovereignty of the nation-state"<sup>87</sup>; nor did the European model of international society go unchallenged<sup>88</sup>. In the course of historical transition the domestic life and political cultures of states rooted in different civilisations, in this case Indonesia and Malaysia, had to reconcile their pre-modern norms, rules and institutions with those of modern international society. It is here that one notes how even upon independence, sovereign states whose populations and leaders share affinity are liable to develop expectations and obligations of each other. It is this legacy that underpins the notion that kin state relations should be premised on values other than pure material interests. This co-identification is further enhanced in the face of threats to common identity. When kin states are confronted with challenges to their shared identities, kinship can be constructed and/or emphasised to rationalise politically expedient action of defining a "we" against a "them".

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<sup>87</sup> Nor did they disregard the possibilities that the prevailing Western-centred international society might subsequently be supplanted by other forms of international order. See Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Society. [New York: Columbia University Press, 1977] 233-317.

<sup>88</sup> An example of this Third World "reaction" to the Western-oriented international society they were entering in was the Afro-Asian Conference. Some others include the Non-Aligned Movement, G-77, and the 1974 call for a New International Economic Order.

Yet it is also the case that as these political entities evolve into nation-states, internal and external contexts can have a negative effect on the kinship factor as national discourse and loyalties shift away from co-identification to self-identification on the basis of national identity construction. Such transitions work to affect the perception and interpretations of the terms of kinship among policy-makers of kindred states. As states mature and consolidate their independence, their identities and interests, not to mention the loyalties of their populations, tend also to change accordingly as the character of sovereign statehood takes root. Correspondingly allegiances shift over time, giving primacy to the nation-state while commitment to other forms of identity and loyalties, including the expectations and obligations towards a kin state, wane. In other words the process of identity transformation through state formation and domestic political consolidation can inspire change in a state's international outlook as nationalist projects influence foreign policy propensities. This transformation has a bearing on kin state relations, particularly in the case of asymmetrical relations where the "elder cousin" views the "younger relative" with mixed feelings of suspicion and envy when the latter assumes policy choices independent of kinship considerations, while the younger cousin may look at his older relative with some contempt as it seeks to establish relations on an even keel. This too, can consequently influence how kindred states conceive of the obligations and expectations of each other. For example, it can conceivably result in a re-assessment of cooperation, policy alignment, or deference when one of the kindred states perceives such policies as unnecessary or burdensome. In like manner such transformation can also give rise to contradictory perceptions and interpretations of the terms of kinship, causing misunderstandings. When identities and nationalist prerogatives of kin states clash, this invariably results in competition. How imperatives of kinship are reconciled with nation and state building then, appear fundamental to whether the kinship factor can or cannot form a viable basis upon which relations between kin states can be organised.

The cross-currents to the influence of kinship in international relations discussed above explains why kinship is not necessarily synonymous to amity, and in fact is prone to disharmony as perceptions and interpretations of its

attendant expectations and obligations change over time. A germane scenario to that effect, and one that will be the focus of this study, can be found in the process of national identity transformation, common in the case of post-colonial states, and how this process affects relations with kindred states<sup>89</sup>. As national identities take shape, pressure is inevitably exerted on other loyalties such as kinship. This observation has further theoretical consequence in the sense that evidence of animosity between kin states need not necessarily disprove the existence of the kinship factor, but rather reveals another side of the same coin.

## Conclusion

To sum up thus far:

- There are members of international society that can be classified as kin states, and this measure of kinship stems not only from genealogical factors, but from broader social-cultural affiliations as well, and it is these affiliations, not mere material calculations of “interests”, that impute meaning to their relations;
- In diplomatic parlance these states define their ties as “special relationships”, and they organise their relations based on the fulfilment of expectations and obligations that kinship entails;
- These expectations and obligations however, are neither static nor timeless, for perceptions and interpretations of the kinship factor among kin states evolve alongside national identities;
- Consequently, the historical context set in place by processes of state building and national identity construction has a definite impact on how states perceive and interpret their relations with kin states, particularly when identities of these states begin with emphasis of similar historical start-points, as with all kin states, but subsequently diverge along antagonistic paths as nationalisms take root.

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<sup>89</sup> For a study of how structural change impacts upon the constitution of identity, see P. W. Preston, Political/Cultural Identity: Citizens and Nations in a Global Era. [London: Sage Publications, 1997].

Given these observations, three points should be kept in mind. First, one should be careful not to accept willy-nilly that in relations between kin states policies are made purely on calculated material “interests”. As this chapter has shown, perceptions of kinship have been a factor in relations between states whose populations share affinities, and often it is in these affinities that political leaders search for greater meaning and intelligibility to their relations. Second, neither should one construe that kinship and harmony are correlated. When the expectations and obligations that characterise the perception of kinship are not fulfilled, relations are likely to sour. Finally, to understand the full spectrum of the kinship factor and its influence on bilateral relations one has to realise that the phenomenon is dependent on the historical and political context in which it exists or is invoked. The fact of the matter is that from a historical perspective the kinship factor, despite its obvious shortcomings, does have attraction and import for many (including policy practitioners), and it is this that accounts for its continued (if diminishing) relevance for those seeking to find deeper meaning in the relationship between kin states.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Search for Kinship Precedents in Indo-Malay Historiography

#### Introduction

Kinship in Indonesia-Malaysia relations tends to be located, accurately or otherwise, in the notion of Malay-Muslim blood brotherhood often espoused by political leaders and emphasised to certain extents in scholarship on the Indo-Malay Archipelago. Conceptualising affinity between Indonesia and Malaysia however is a rather more delicate task than at first appears, and academic discussions arguably give rise to more controversies than unanimity of opinion. While there is little doubt that ethno-cultural considerations have an impact on the conduct of politics, the interface between the two will nevertheless have to be carefully drawn out from a complex conceptual maze. This is especially so with regard to the subject matter at hand, for the cultural and ethnic correspondence that some would suggest defines Indo-Malay identity obtain alongside very diverse and complex social-political phenomenon that temper not only the contiguous identity of the Indo-Malay World, but the very existence of Indonesia and Malaysia as unitary nation-states in their own right. Certainly, scholars would be well aware that the “national” identities upon which these modern states are built are in fact agglomerations of diverse ethnic, religious and linguistic groupings, each with its own particularistic character and history<sup>1</sup>. It is bearing these considerations in mind that this chapter sets forth to explore the historiography of kinship in the Indo-Malay World. This chapter lays the premises not only for the grounds upon which the kinship factor between Indonesia and Malaysia can and has been built by its proponents, but also the

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<sup>1</sup> Historians of Southeast Asia have been alert to this very early on. As a result, they have observed that “the greatest research need . . . is the filling of innumerable and vexing gaps in our detailed knowledge . . . of the histories of the area’s constituent parts and sub-parts”. See, Harry Benda, “The Structure of Southeast Asian History: Some Preliminary Observations” in Benda, *Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia: Collected Journal Articles of Harry J. Benda*. [New Haven, C.T.: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1972] 121. With very few exceptions,

conceptual and practical problems one encounters in the process of defining the kinship factor in Indo-Malay history.

## I. Kinship in the pre-colonial international system

Much of the thinking about kinship systems in Indo-Malay historiography arise from the historical record of interaction and inter-marriage that has defined the identity of this region, and that have been transcribed in historical texts such as *Tuhfat al-Nafis* or *Sejarah Melayu dan Bugis* (History of the Malays and Bugis)<sup>2</sup>. In *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, the main theme is the relationship between the Malay rulers of Riau, Johor and Trengganu with the Siak (in Sumatra) and Bugis. The writers of the text also focused on the matter of ethnic origin and relations sewn through a vast network of intermarriages linking Riau-Johor, Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Trengganu on the peninsula, and the east and west coasts of Sumatra and Kalimantan respectively. Similar tales of co-identification resulting from inter-marriages, such as that between Sultan Mansur Shah of Srivijaya and the Princess Radin Galah Chandra Kirana of Majapahit, can be found in the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals)<sup>3</sup>. Intermarriages paved the way for genealogical tracing of the most elementary sources of kinship – common ancestry. Indeed right up until the eve of the Pacific War intermarriages between Malay and Sumatran royal families remained a principal feature of the socio-political landscape in the Indo-Malay World, leading to close alliance between the ruling elites of British Malaya and Sumatra.

Inter-marriage and migration also brought into being large trading states and kingdoms that at their peak of power encompassed within their spheres of influence territories of present day Malaysia and Indonesia, and where power and influence over the Indo-Malay World ebbed and flowed through pre-colonial history. Among the more prominent of these kingdoms was the Srivijaya Empire,

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contemporary works on the international relations of Southeast Asia have not made attempts to study their topic from a historical perspective.

<sup>2</sup> See Virginia Matheson, "*Tuhfat al-Nafis: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Malay History Critically Examined*", PhD dissertation, Monash University, 1973.

<sup>3</sup> See Kwa Chong Guan, "The Historical Roots of Indonesian Irredentism", *Asian Studies*, Vol. VIII, No.1 (April 1970) 44-45.

which lasted approximately from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries. With its capital settled in Palembang in Sumatra, the influence of the Srivijayan Empire is suspected to have spread throughout Sumatra and the west coast of the Malay Peninsula up towards the Isthmus of Kra<sup>4</sup>. At times, its influence appeared to extend to the island of Java as well<sup>5</sup>.

The existence of Srivijaya in the history of archipelagic Southeast Asia intersected with the land-based Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, which existed from approximately 1293 to 1520<sup>6</sup>. At the height of its power, the physical boundaries of the Majapahit kingdom may have been roughly co-extensive with much, though not all, of modern Indonesia. Certain historical records suggest that at some time or other, Majapahit also exerted a measure of influence over principalities on the Malay Peninsula, though in truth the extent of its influence remains an issue of scholarly debate<sup>7</sup>.

The decline of Majapahit coincided with the emergence of another centre of power in the Indo-Malay World, located in Melaka<sup>8</sup>. The Melaka Sultanate was centred along the Southwestern coast of the Malay Peninsula. While there remains disagreement among historians as to the extent to which Melaka can be considered a direct successor to the Srivijayan Empire, what is certain is its strong Sumatran roots<sup>9</sup>. The similarities in political and economic organisation, as well as security outlook, of both kingdoms has been illuminated upon by Rosemary Brissenden:

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<sup>4</sup> The capital of the Srivijayan Empire was subsequently moved from Palembang to Jambi on the Southeastern Coast of Sumatra in the latter part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>5</sup> See O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce: A Study of the Origins of Srivijaya*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967] and *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History*. [London: Lund Humphries, 1970].

<sup>6</sup> See T.G. Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century: A Study in Cultural History*. [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960].

<sup>7</sup> Ailsa Zainu'ddin and Elaine McKay, "Tradition and Leadership in the Other Islands" in McKay (ed), *Studies in Indonesian History*. [Victoria: Pitman, 1976] 255. This view, of course, is not unchallenged. See for example, W.F. Wertheim, "The Sociological Approach" in Soedjatmoko (ed), *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965] 348-350.

<sup>8</sup> For a study of the impact of the Melakan Sultanate in defining the identity of the Malay World, see Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *The Malay Sultanate of Malacca*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992].

<sup>9</sup> This point is emphasized in Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*. [London: MacMillan Press, 1982].

We know that the political and defence tasks, as well as the need to cope with a large international and itinerant sector of the population which formed the basis of its economy had been much the same in Srivijaya as they were in Malacca. Thus it does not seem entirely outrageous to take the organisation of political and economic life in Malacca as a reflection in some senses at least of the structure of trading kingdoms in Indonesia<sup>10</sup>.

With the advent of Portuguese colonialism, the Melaka Sultanate declined in the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century and the indigenous centre of power shifted to the kingdoms of Aceh, Johor and Riau. Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra enjoyed a degree of interaction and integration within the spheres of these early kingdoms to the extent that Srivijaya's traditions continued in an almost unbroken line to Malacca, Johor and Riau<sup>11</sup>.

These kingdoms and empires formed the pivot to a pre-colonial international system that was premised on trade, war, migration, and marriage. It was such interaction that provided a historical basis to the perception that many of inhabitants of the contemporary Indo-Malay World in fact come from the same ancestry, thus justifying the term "*rumpun*" (stock or race) that is sometimes used to refer to the majority of the peoples of Indonesia and Malaysia<sup>12</sup>.

## II. Concepts of community and statehood

While differences obviously existed across the social-political structures of these kingdoms, one thread of similarity can be found in shared understandings of statecraft and concepts of community<sup>13</sup>. As but one example, conceptions of

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<sup>10</sup> Rosemary Brissenden, "Patterns of Trade and Maritime Society Before the Coming of the Europeans" in Elaine McKay (ed), *Studies in Indonesian History*, 87.

<sup>11</sup> See the discussion in Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 14-114.

<sup>12</sup> In Indonesia's case, this characterisation applies mostly to the West Indonesian populations on Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Riau, and Sulawesi.

<sup>13</sup> See Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993]; Abdul Hadi Hasan, *Sejarah Alam Melayu*. [Singapore: MPH Publications, 1968]; David J. Banks, *Malay Kinship*. [Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1983]; Akifumi Iwabuchi, *The People of the Alas Valley: A Study of an Ethnic Group of Northern Sumatra*. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994]. For example, references to Mount

the role and status of the aristocracy in both traditional Malay and Indonesian societies up to the end of the Second World War were by and large similar<sup>14</sup>. The concept of *Kerajaan* stood as the main political institution throughout much of the history of Sumatra and the Peninsula, while in the Javanese inland agrarian kingdoms (*Kraton*), the *Negara* (State) took on similar precedence<sup>15</sup>. Within this structure, “the pre-eminent figure . . . was the Sultan, whose right to the throne was primarily based on his unbroken descent from a glorious ancestor”<sup>16</sup>. So too, one finds in traditional forms of authority and dogma, village structures and decision-making procedures many similarities that resulted from centuries of interchange and integration<sup>17</sup>. An indication of this can be found in the shared ascription to the concepts of *Musyawaharah* and *Muafakat* (Consultation and Consensus) that underpinned decision-making in the traditional social-political structure of the village<sup>18</sup>. Even the *Adat* (customary laws) inherited from pre-Islamic Hindu cultural reference was to great degrees shared between Malay and certain Indonesian communities, to the extent that some have suggested that what

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Meru can be found in both the *Sejarah Melayu* as well as the *Negarakertagama*, dating from the Majapahit era. For a discussion on this conception of statecraft, see Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956]; Lorraine Gesick, (ed), *Centers, Symbols, and Hierarchies: Essays on the Classical States of Southeast Asia*. [New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1983].

<sup>14</sup> For Indonesia, see Rex Mortimer, “Class, Social Change and Indonesian Communism”, *Indonesia*, Vol.15 (1973); Anthony J.S. Reid, *Blood of the People*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979]; Heather Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transformation of the Javanese Priyayi*. [Singapore: Heinemann Books, 1979]; Betram J.O. Schrieke, “Ruler and Realm in Early Java” in Schrieke (ed), *Indonesian Sociological Studies, Vol.2*. [The Hague: W. von Hoeve, 1957]; M.C. Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta Under Sultan Mangkubumi, 1749-1792: A History of the Division of Java*. [London: Oxford University Press, 1974]. For Malaya, see Leonard Andaya, *Kingdom of Johor, 1641-1728*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975]; A.C. Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule*. [Tucson, A.Z.: University of Arizona Press, 1982]; Khoo Kay Kim, *Malay Society: Transformation and Democratisation*. [Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1991]. See also the chapters by Rex Mortimer (Indonesia) and Michael Stenson (Malaya) in J.W. Lewis (ed), *Peasant Rebellion and Communist Revolution in Asia*. [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974].

<sup>15</sup> Distinctions can however be made between the Malay *Kerajaan* and the Javanese *Kraton*, particularly in reference to the role of Islam in statecraft. See Sumarsaid Murtono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*. Revised Edition. [Ithaca: Cornell University Modern Indonesia Project, 1981].

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, “The Nature of the State in Eighteenth Century Perak” in Anthony Reid and Lance Castles (eds), *Pre-Colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia*. [Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1975] 24.

<sup>17</sup> See for example, P.E. de Josselin De Jong, *Minangkabau and Negri Sembilan*. [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952]; M.B. Hooker, *Adat Laws in Modern Malaya*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1972].

<sup>18</sup> It is a matter of fact that these traditional concepts were to be the cornerstone of rapprochement after Indonesia’s confrontation of Malaysia.

is called Malay *Adat* is essentially Indonesian in origin<sup>19</sup>. In the same way shared village culture carried with it a sense of obligation, where “in Malay villages, it is often difficult in practice to separate the principles of kinship and neighbourhood for the two may coincide. . . . Neighbours should be the first to render assistance in times of need”<sup>20</sup>.

It is important to register here that concepts of statehood that defined the character of these pre-colonial kingdoms differed substantially from the terrestrial state in Western scholarship. Traditional states in the Indo-Malay World did not have clearly defined boundaries. They were amorphous in character and based on loyalty to the person of the ruler (known in indigenous terms as *Raja* or *Sultan*)<sup>21</sup>; while the size and influence of kingdoms was determined by the number of people owing allegiance to a ruler at any given time as well as the amount of trade that passed through the kingdom<sup>22</sup>. Jan Christie notes in her study of the Melaka Sultanate for example, that Malay rulers “conceived of their states more in terms of populace and patron-client relationships than in terms of bounded territory”<sup>23</sup>. To this can be added O.W. Wolter’s observation that “the territorial scale of a political system is certainly not the correct measurement for describing and defining it. Instead, we should think of sets of socially-definable loyalties that could be mobilized for common enterprises”<sup>24</sup>. It was primarily trade, not land, which provided the resources by which the elites in the Indo-Malay World increased their following and expanded the realm. Accordingly, trade-centred rivalry was an important feature of pre-modern politics in the region. Marriage

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<sup>19</sup> Judith Nagata, “What is a Malay? Situational selection of ethnic identity in a plural society”, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 1, No.2 (1974), 344.

<sup>20</sup> Judith Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and their Roots*. [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984] 134.

<sup>21</sup> Both Malay and Javanese pre-colonial societies were feudal, and the leaders were said to both derive legitimacy from mystical sources of authority (known as *daulat* in the Malay kingdoms, and *wahyu* in the Javanese *Kraton*). See David J. Steinberg (ed), *In Search of Southeast Asia*. [London: Pall Mall Press, 1971] 73-86.

<sup>22</sup> This description may not have been as relevant for Majapahit, which was essentially a land-based kingdom and hence naturally reliant on territorial borders to demarcate its sphere of influence. But even then, it was difficult to determine exactly where the border stopped as the kingdom’s influence was a gradual extension in concentric fashion outward from the power centre, waning as it widened.

<sup>23</sup> Jan Wisseman Christie, “State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia: A Consideration of the Theories and Data”, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land – en Volkenkunde*, Vol.151, No.2 (1995) 267.

also played an important role in determining the power and influence of these trading kingdoms. Typically, the elites of a particular port would, upon subduing its rival, marry into the ruling families there. In this manner the kingdoms in the Indo-Malay World came to be linked to each other through genealogical kinship and marriage ties as well, bringing into existence kingdoms in Kedah, Malacca, Palembang, Brunei, Sulu, Aceh and Sulawesi from the 10th to the 15th century<sup>25</sup>.

The role of these kingdoms in political myth-making in contemporary Indonesia and Malaysia is worthy of note, as is the sense of affiliation among the Indonesian and Malay peoples deriving from popular histories. This was registered by J.A.C. Mackie, who observed that “pride in the greatness of ancient Malay-Indonesian kingdoms is taught in the classrooms of both nations without much concern about the boundaries created by the colonial powers”<sup>26</sup>. Yet while their legacy has been a welcome tool for political mobilization, it is precisely the amorphous character of these kingdoms that renders their memory impractical for modern state-building. In no way are modern Indonesia and Malaysia coterminous to the kingdoms of the pre-colonial era. This, as the study will endeavour to show, was a problem pan-Malay nationalists paid little attention to in their enthusiasm to conjure a glorious history to justify their anti-colonial project, and that consequently resulted in greater problems in their attempt to frame their relations in terms of kinship.

Common identity was also reinforced in the course of interaction with external forces. The pre-colonial Indo-Malay World was not a hermetically-sealed one, pried open only with the advent of colonialism. It has already been noted that relations had long been established between the various islands within the Indo-Malay Archipelago, laying the grounds for interaction and exchange. Beyond that, external influences also came in the form of Indian, Chinese, Arabic and Japanese trading activity. Historical records indicate the existence of early

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<sup>24</sup> O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*. Second Edition. [Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999] 25.

<sup>25</sup> For example, the *Sejarah Melayu* chronicles the marriage between Sultan Mansur Shah of Melaka and the Princess from Majapahit Radin Galah Chandra Kirana, as well as a genealogy of their family. See C.C. Brown, *Sejarah Melayu*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970] 169-171.

<sup>26</sup> J.A.C. Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute, 1963-1966*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974] 15.

trading networks that not only linked the peninsula and archipelagic worlds together, but to more complex international networks stretching to Africa, India and China as well. Such international trading links and interaction with other cultures and peoples also played an important role in reinforcing the sense of kinship and shared identity among the people of the Indo-Malay Archipelago by augmenting the sense of similarity in relation to foreign cultures, identities and language.

### III. Constructing Relatedness: Language

Two common threads established during this pre-colonial era that had the potential to act as agents for the construction of kin affinity and identity were language and religion<sup>27</sup>.

Malay was originally spoken as a mother tongue only in parts of Sumatra, Riau, the Malay Peninsula, and perhaps parts of the Philippines. However, it received a stimulus when Melaka became the centre for trade in archipelagic Southeast Asia in the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century. Subsequently many of the various ethnic groups in the Indo-Malay Archipelago adopted one essential *lingua franca*, the Malayo-Polynesian language and its cognate derivatives from the Austronesian language family that had spread throughout the peninsula and archipelago with trade<sup>28</sup>. Language then, became the first channel that gave the Indo-Malay World a semblance of superficial unity<sup>29</sup>.

Be that as it may, there is a need also to recognise that this semblance of unity derived from linguistic congruence was itself a product of the creation of a linguistically consistent form of Malay from Malayo-Polynesian and its cognate derivatives by the Dutch and British on the basis of their reading of indigenous texts such as *Sejarah Melayu*, and their understanding of the spoken language in

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<sup>27</sup> See Anthony Reid, "Understanding *Melayu* as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.32, No.3 (October 2001), 309-310.

<sup>28</sup> Nothofer argues that the three main languages of Java (Javanese, Sundanese and Madurese) in fact belonged to Malay and several other languages in a relatively close-knit subgroup. See B. Nothofer, *The Reconstruction of Proto-Malayo-Javanic*. [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975].

<sup>29</sup> For a study on the importance of language in identity building, see J.A. Fishman, *Language and Nationalism*. [Rowley, Massachusetts: 1972].

Riau and Johor, which they viewed as the centre of the “Malay World”. In the words of Henk Maier:

This newly created form of Malay, primarily laid down in the written form of grammars and textbooks, was then provided with the notion of ‘good’ Malay and then with the notion of ‘real Malay’. Thus, a novel form was turned into a norm. It was a Malay that was meant to serve as an effective communication as well as a careful description of the world<sup>30</sup>.

Contestable though the historiography of the unity of the Malay language may be, it was not without political import. It is significant that Malay emerged as the national language of both Malaysia, as *Bahasa Melayu*, and Indonesia, in the form of *Bahasa Indonesia*. The importance of the Malay language as a bonding agent for Indonesia and Malaysia was given greater impetus when it was adopted as the language of the nationalist movement at the 1928 Second Indonesian Youth Congress in Indonesia (better known as the Bandung Declaration). No doubt the decision to choose Malay over Javanese as the national language of Indonesia was a tactical one, where the underlying objective was to quell suspicions of Javanese dominance<sup>31</sup>. After all, compared to the feudalistic roots of Javanese, the Malay language was viewed as a “democratic language”<sup>32</sup>. Consequently, the Malay language provided a channel through which the sense of kinship affinity could be better communicated throughout the Malay-speaking Indo-Malay World<sup>33</sup>.

After independence, the issue of orchestrating a shared spelling system between Malay and Indonesian gained prominence in cultural relations, when efforts were made to bridge differences resulting from different transliterations of

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<sup>30</sup> Henk Maier, “We Are Playing Relatives” in See Cynthia Chou and Will Derks (eds), *Riau in Transition*. [The Hague: *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-En Volkenkunde*, 1997] 679-680.

<sup>31</sup> See George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952]. Takeshi Shiraishi noted that before the First World War, Javanese and Dutch had been used by the educated elite as the principle languages of communication. According to Shiraishi, it was with the formation of the Islamic-based nationalist movement of *Sarekat Islam* in 1912 that Malay was introduced as a mass language and subsequently appropriated by the nationalist elite. See Takeshi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990].

<sup>32</sup> David Steinberg (ed), *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 298-299.

<sup>33</sup> For an exposition of why Malay and not Javanese emerged as the dominant language in the region, see Asmah Haji Omar, *Language and Society in Malaysia*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1993] 1-18.

the Malay script under colonialism. The persistence of language as an avenue of kinship today is exemplified in the work of MABBIM (*Majlis Bahasa Brunei, Indonesia dan Malaysia* or the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia Language Council). Established in 1972 as part of the resurgence of cultural exchange resulting from the termination of *Konfrontasi*, MABBIM has continued to pursue the enhancement of unity between the two languages in order to foster a closer understanding of the historical and cultural similarities that binds their societies<sup>34</sup>.

At another level, the influential role that the Malay language played in the building of identity in the Indo-Malay World was further attested to in its position as a literary and philosophical language of Islam<sup>35</sup>.

#### IV. Religion

As with language, religion, in this case Islam, forms a pillar for the social-cultural construction of relatedness<sup>36</sup>. One justification for this logic lies in the fact that those who claimed to adhere to the Mohammadiyan faith are considered part of the *Ummah* or brotherhood. More specific to the Indo-Malay Archipelago however, was the fact that Islam provided a cultural avenue in which affiliation could be built, where the Indo-Malay Archipelago can be understood as a single religious entity<sup>37</sup>.

Islam is generally acknowledged to have been introduced into the region by Muslim traders from India around the thirteenth century, though Muslim traders from the Middle East had by then already begun converting pockets of local communities. It was with the aid of the Malay language that Islam spread throughout this region, and in so doing consolidated the Muslim worldview through the medium of Islamic philosophical literature expressed in Malay

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<sup>34</sup> MABBIM originally encompassed only Indonesia and Malaysia and was known as MBIM. It subsequently expanded to include the Sultanate of Brunei when the latter gained independence from Britain in 1984.

<sup>35</sup> Syed M. Naguib Al-Attas, *Islam dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu*. [Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1972] 21.

<sup>36</sup> One could, of course, postulate that Islam in the Indo-Malay World in fact built on the pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist traditions which had already offered a modicum of cohesion, albeit not as extensive as Islamic influence.

language. In that sense, the fact that an archipelago-wide *lingua franca* already existed facilitated the spread of Islam throughout the Indo-Malay World.

There have been some distinctive characteristics about the Islamization of the Indo-Malay Archipelago that distinguished it from other regions such as the Middle East and South Asia. One such distinction was the nature of Islam's arrival in the region - Islam came not by force, but through trade. Historical records suggest that trading communities along the coastal areas of the Indo-Malay Archipelago were the sites of the first conversions, with Aceh in North Sumatra and Melaka along the Southwestern coast of the Malay Peninsula seen as the closest geographical point of Southeast Asia to the original locale of Islamic penetration. Because it was not a conquering force, Islamic theology was brought mainly by religious teachers and advisors; and because it was a movement spread through trade and not war, the introduction of Islam in effect created an indigenous Muslim network across the archipelago.

Whilst the introduction of Islam into the region has been attributed to Indian-Muslim traders, Malay scholars have traced the spread of the religion to the Melaka Sultanate<sup>38</sup>. The expansion of Melaka's sphere of influence, they suggest, occurred simultaneously with the court's conversion to Islam<sup>39</sup>. This led simultaneously to the Islamization of vassal states of the Sultanate. While the specific role of Melaka in transmitting this new religion throughout the archipelago remains debatable, there is a consensus that trade was a key channel through which Islam was spread<sup>40</sup>. In time, Islamic schools were established throughout the Indo-Malay World, and the instruction of Islamic theology became an activity that invited cross-strait interaction and exchanges between Muslim scholars and teachers, particularly between Sumatra, Java and the peninsula.

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<sup>37</sup> See Mahayudin Haji Yahaya, *Islam di Alam Melayu*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1998]; Peter Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World*. [Singapore: Horizon Books, 2001].

<sup>38</sup> See Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 51-55. Melaka was also considered "the centre of Moslem learning in the Indonesian area". See C.K. Nicholson, "The Introduction of Islam into Sumatra and Java - A Study in Cultural Change", Ph.D dissertation, Syracuse University, 1965, 51.

<sup>39</sup> See Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *The Malay Sultanate*, 167-179.

<sup>40</sup> Noticeably, the latest and arguably most comprehensive study of the Islamization of the Indo-Malay World by Peter Riddell does not mention Melaka at all. See Peter Riddell, *Islam*.

Needless to say, these channels remain active today<sup>41</sup>. The period between the 1920s and 1950s, notable for the emergence of modernist and political Islam in the region, witnessed the bulk of Malay religious students being sent to Indonesian (mostly Sumatran but Javanese as well) *pesantren* and *madrasah*<sup>42</sup>.

Notwithstanding the general impact that Islam has had on the social and political environment in the Indo-Malay Archipelago, one should note that its influence was neither uniform in its acceptance nor adaptation. To be certain, there was great variety in the way Islam was integrated into everyday political and social life everywhere in the Indo-Malay World<sup>43</sup>. Much of this variation has its roots in the porous and shifting local cultures of the region that adapted Islamic philosophy to traditional practices<sup>44</sup>. Differences emerged as to the precise status and practice of Islam in these societies. In Java, Western anthropologists have noted two distinct streams of Islam based on the adherence to Islamic strictures and practice of Muslim lifestyles – the more nominal *Abangan*, which incorporated elements of Buddhism, Hinduism and animism, and the orthodox *Santri*<sup>45</sup>. No such dichotomy has been identified in Malaysia, though some would suggest that Islam is generally more strictly adhered to in the northern Malay states. The difference in interpretation and acceptance of Islam in Indonesia was explained by Geertz to be a result of Islam's movement into what he called "one of Asia's greatest political, aesthetic, religious and social creations, the Hindu-

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<sup>41</sup> For an academic exploration of the social and political roles and functions of these Islamic schools in both Indonesia and Malaysia, see Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944-46*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972] and Safie bin Ibrahim, *The Islamic Party of Malaysia: Its Formative Stages and Ideology*. [Kelantan: Nawawi bin Ismail, 1981].

<sup>42</sup> Such links are traced in Howard Federspiel, "Muslim Intellectuals in Southeast Asia", *Studia Islamika*, Vol.6, No.1 (1999).

<sup>43</sup> This is discussed in detail in A.H. Johns, "Islam in Southeast Asia: Reflections and New Directions", *Indonesia*, 19, April 1975. See also Anthony J.S. Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.26, No.2, (1967) and *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680. Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis*. [New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1993] 132-201.

<sup>44</sup> See Alijah Gordon (ed), *The Propagation of Islam in the Indonesian-Malay Archipelago*. [Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2001].

<sup>45</sup> This classic division of Indonesian Muslims was posited by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz. See Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*. [Glencoe, 1964]. Geertz's work has since been refined by Mark Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*. [Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989]; this can be compared to the Islam of the Malays as discussed in Murni Djamil, "The Origin of the Islamic Reform Movement in Minangkabau: Life and Thought of Abdul Karim Amrullah", *Studia Islamika*, Vol.5, No.3 (1998).

Buddhist Javanese state”<sup>46</sup>. Koentjaraningrat makes the further distinction between *Agami Jawi* and *Agama Islam Santri*, as if Java possessed a religious identity of its own<sup>47</sup>. There are other scholars however, who argue that the *Abangan-Santri* divide has become a rather tenuous characterisation of Islam on Java. These scholars in fact have noticed a shift towards greater Islamic consciousness among the Indonesian population in general<sup>48</sup>. Further to that, differences in how Islam was administered by the British in Malaya, where they refrained from direct involvement in religious matters, and the Dutch in the East Indies, who deliberately sought to influence the development of Islam, contributed to the convolutions beneath the façade of religious unity<sup>49</sup>.

Historically, strong precedence for the conception of kinship along religious lines can be found in indigenous historical texts such as the *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, where the relationship between Kedah in the peninsula and Aceh in Northern Sumatra is discussed from the perspective of Islam (and in opposition to Siam). More recently too, as later chapters will illuminate, the Islamic factor provided a pivotal link for the nationalisms of Malaysia and Indonesia, even as both subsequently emerged as secular nation-states<sup>50</sup>. Yet while it can certainly be said that at an abstract level, Islam can prove a viable channel of kinship for the Indo-Malay Archipelago by virtue of its broad appeal and acceptance in the region, taking the above observations into consideration, one must also be sensitive to the nuanced differences in the practice of Islam throughout the Indo-Malay Archipelago before making conclusions as to its effectiveness as a bonding agent toward common identity.

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<sup>46</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968] 11.

<sup>47</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*. [Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985] 317. In drawing these comparisons, Koentjaraningrat and Geertz draw attention to Javanese distinctiveness.

<sup>48</sup> This case is argued in Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi untuk Aksi*. [Bandung: Mizan, 1991] and Howard Federspiel, *Muslim Intellectuals and National Development in Indonesia*. [Commack: Nova Science Press, 1992].

<sup>49</sup> Unlike the British, who essentially refrained from direct involvement in religious issues in Malaya, the Dutch actively interfered in Islamic affairs in the East Indies in an attempt to turn Indonesia away from what Hurgonje called the “narrow confines of the Islamic system”. See Harry Benda, “Christiaan Snouck Hurgonje and the Foundations of Dutch Islamic Policy in Indonesia”, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.30 (1958).

<sup>50</sup> See “*Nasionalisme Melayu dan Islam*”, *Melayu Islam & Reformasi*, <http://www.geocities.com/melayuislam/165.htm>.

## V. Rivalry and discord in the Indo-Malay World

Avenues of affinity did not eliminate schisms in the pre-colonial Indo-Malay Archipelago. Indeed, the theme of rivalry left as indelible a mark on the politics of the region as did perceptions of affinity.

That rivalry was a distinct feature of the pre-colonial kinship-based regional system stems from the fact that the history of the region was not a unilineal progress from kingdom to kingdom, empire to empire. Kingdoms and empires co-existed at various points, and as such possessed different impressions of the contiguity of the Indo-Malay Archipelago that they sought to control<sup>51</sup>. From this one could certainly argue that a source of this historical tension seemed to stem from the impetus of geopolitics. The crossing of paths of the Srivijaya and Majapahit kingdoms, two historical centres of power in maritime Southeast Asia, appears to have resulted in the sort of power struggle that has defined international relations through the centuries. A scholar has described the struggle as such:

Their (Malay coastal states) activities in guarding the sea in pursuit of their economic interests and their military activities to safeguard these interests led to conflicts between the Javanese, based in Java, and Malays based in Srivijaya. Struggles for rights of passage at sea frequently occurred, which in turn led to political and cultural rivalry<sup>52</sup>.

After the demise of the Melaka entrepot, fragmented rivalries emerged as Aceh, Johor, Riau, and the Bugis tussled with each other for prominence in the Indo-Malay World. Thus considerations of kinship in the Indo-Malay World need also take into account centuries of rivalry and wars between the various kingdoms and principalities within it.

A recurring theme that has imposed itself on the historiography of the Indo-Malay Archipelago has been conflict borne of the apprehension of peoples

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<sup>51</sup> See J.C. Van Leur, Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History. [The Hague: W van. Hoeve, 1955]; C.D. Cowan, "Continuity and Change in the International History of Maritime South East Asia", Journal of Southeast Asian History, Vol.IX, No.1 (March 1968).

<sup>52</sup> Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, The Malay Sultanate, 263-264.

in the region for Javanese domination<sup>53</sup>. This was best exemplified by the struggles between the Srivijaya and Melaka kingdoms against their Java-based nemeses<sup>54</sup>. These struggles were of such severity that the downfall of Srivijaya has been traced to the invasion of Majapahit under the Javanese king Kertanegara in 1275<sup>55</sup>. Indeed the sub-topic of Java-Sumatra wars has been one of interest to a handful of historians of the region<sup>56</sup>. This apprehension outside Java for Javanese domination has been documented in Malay records such as *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, and *Sejarah Melayu*, where the central theme has been the relationship between the Minangkabau and Malays, often portrayed as underdogs against the hegemonic tendencies of the Javanese<sup>57</sup>. For example in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, a great part of the text revolved around fierce rivalry between the courts of Melaka and Majapahit, expressed through the exploits of the Malay hero, Hang Tuah, against the Javanese<sup>58</sup>. It has also been recorded how Javanese were often portrayed as a self-aggrandizing people proud of their “refined” culture, whereas the Malay language was depicted as the crude and crass language of Java (compared to the more “refined” and “cultured” Javanese

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<sup>53</sup> See for example, Leslie Palmer, *Indonesia and the Dutch*. [London: Oxford University Press, 1962]. This theme has also been taken up and applied by Herbert Feith who, in his discussion of post-independence politics in Indonesia, noted that the differences between the cultures of Java and the rest of Indonesia were “sharp enough to presage serious difficulties for the process of maintaining consensus of the ends and proper procedures of government and politics”. See Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962].

<sup>54</sup> See Bernard H.M. Vlekke, *Nusantara: A History of Indonesia*. [The Hague: W. van Hoeve Ltd, 1959] 41-45.

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion on the wars between Srivijaya and Majapahit, see Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 26-31. See also O.W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*, 64-76.

<sup>56</sup> This has been particularly so of Western scholars, who have been less averse to focusing on the disharmony in the Malay World. The works of Vlekke, Wolters, Van Leur, Cowan, and Palmer, amongst others, exemplify this vein of scholarship.

<sup>57</sup> Many Malaysians relate that in relations with larger neighbours (presumably Indonesia), the wit of the mousedeer is necessary to overcome the odds imposed against Malaysia because of its size. See Philip Frick McKean, “The Mouse-Deer in Malayo-Indonesian Folklore: Alternative Analyses and the Significance of a Trickster Figure in South-East Asia”, *Asian Folklore Studies*, No.30 (1971).

<sup>58</sup> Kassim Ahmad, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1975].

language)<sup>59</sup>. The presence of Javanese passages and reference to Javanese that can be found in the *Sejarah Melayu* further suggests Javanese cultural influence<sup>60</sup>.

Many other instances can be found to illustrate how the Majapahit court in Java sought to exercise hegemony over the Malay principalities. As but one example, it has been written how in 1378, the ruler of Majapahit, in response to a move by the Jambi local rulers (in Sumatra) to establish independent relations with the Ming Court, waylaid and murdered the Chinese envoys sent to the archipelago<sup>61</sup>. There is also the famous story of the Javanese-Minangkabau bullfight found in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, where through their characteristic wit the Minangkabau managed to successfully repel a Javanese attempt to conquer their land. While the case can be made that many of the stories and events are Malay folklore, what stands out is the acute concern for excessive Javanese influence within the Indo-Malay World. Describing in later years this recurrent sentiment in the context of pan-Malay nationalism and the revival of past kingdoms, Kwa observed:

To the Javanese with his strong ethnocentric perspective of history . . . Majapahit is the first historic “Indonesian unitary state”, a symbol of Indonesian political grandeur and cultural renaissance. But to other Indonesians all this stinks of a political and cultural imperialism, of a Javanese domination of the nusantara . . . (which) in old Javanese proper, refers to the outer islands, foreign countries, as viewed from Java<sup>62</sup>.

Extrapolating from this, it will be demonstrated in the following chapter how these historical misgivings haunted the pan-nationalist movements that agitated for *Indonesia Raya* and *Melayu Raya*.

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<sup>59</sup> See Mohd. Taib bin Osman, “Trends in Modern Malay Literature” in Wang Gungwu (ed), *Malaysia: A Survey*. [Singapore: Donald Moore Books, 1964] 212-213; see also Russel Jones (ed), *Hikayat Raja Pasai*. [Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987].

<sup>60</sup> See S.O. Robson, “Java in Malay Literature” in V.J.H. Houben, H.M.J. Maier and W. von der Molen (eds), *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea*. [Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azie en Oceanie, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1992] 37.

<sup>61</sup> O.W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*. 62.

## VI. Colonialism

The above discussion has contextualised the basis of the kinship factor as a function of historical intersection and the emergence of language and religion as bonding agents. These factors took on greater significance with the imposition of imperialist intent, and it was under the shadow of colonialism, and its large-scale introduction of alien (most notably Chinese) communities as a consequence of the expansion of the colonial economic enterprise, that the search for common identity began in earnest in the Indo-Malay World. Ironically, this search for common identity would be framed by the logic of a distinctly colonial ideology – nationalism.

Colonialism was to have a paradoxical impact on the search for common identity. At one level the imposition of colonial administration divided the Indo-Malay Archipelago and brought into being the terrestrial entities of Indonesia and Malaysia. Yet it was also colonialism that generated abstract notions of Indo-Malay identity. Indeed the most striking, if accidental, contribution of colonialism was the introduction of the erstwhile alien concept of nationalism, and with it notions of race and ethnicity.

To certain degrees, Indonesia and Malaysia exist today as independent states whose territorial configurations resulted from the imperialist exercise of cartography and diplomacy<sup>63</sup>. However convincing the sense of pre-colonial relatedness was as a result of the influences and interactions discussed earlier, the advent of colonialism cemented the erstwhile fluid terrestrial boundaries of the Indo-Malay Archipelago. While the process of colonialism is too complicated to be dealt with at any length here, the Anglo-Dutch Treaty cannot be passed

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<sup>62</sup> Kwa, "The Historical Roots", 50.

<sup>63</sup> The question of whether the making of Third World states was more a result of external processes (de-colonization from the metropole) or internal agency (anti-colonial nationalism) remains contested. Central to this debate between the metropolitan narrative and narratives of national liberation, as T.N. Harper notes, is "not merely a question of perspective, but one of power". He further adds that "colonial histories share the underlying tension of constructing a history that acknowledges the realities of European domination, without constricting the possibilities of giving real agency to indigenous societies". See T.N. Harper, "Power and the People: The End of Empire in History" in K.S. Jomo (ed), *Rethinking Malaysia*. [Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Social Science Association, 1999] 206.

unmentioned. Signed in London in 1824, the treaty was both a reflection of European politics and a culmination of colonial politics and competition over spheres of influence in the Indo-Malay Archipelago between Britain and Holland<sup>64</sup>. By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Dutch had more or less established control over Java, and were expanding their influence throughout the vast Indonesian Archipelago. Britain, on the other hand, had only just arrived in the region<sup>65</sup>. This meant that the Netherlands was the preponderant power insofar as Western influence and control of archipelagic Southeast Asia was concerned. That notwithstanding, Britain's increasing trade and economic activity in Southeast Asia, coupled with a concern for the possibility of French expansion into the archipelago, compelled London to re-assess their interests in the region<sup>66</sup>. This eventually led to the founding of a free-port in Singapore, which lay at the foot of the Malay Peninsula, in 1819. The founding of Singapore upset the delicate commercial balance that existed between the British and the Dutch. The presence of this British-controlled free port meant that trade flow from the Indian Ocean and South China Sea was gradually being diverted away from the Dutch port of Battavia in Java to Singapore, and this caused the Dutch much anxiety.

The result of this was the signing of the Anglo-Dutch treaty in 1824 that arbitrarily demarcated British and Dutch spheres of influence. Yet the treaty did not merely lay the basis for the contemporary boundaries of Indonesia and Malaysia. By artificially fracturing the Indo-Malay Archipelago it transformed the course of history<sup>67</sup>. The terms of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty saw Melaka and other bases ceded by the Dutch to the British, thus consolidating British control over the Peninsula and the Melaka Straits. In return, Britain surrendered control

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<sup>64</sup> For an account of Anglo-Dutch rivalry, see Nicholas Tarling, Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World, 1780-1824. [Brisbane: University of Sydney Press, 1962].

<sup>65</sup> Briefly, the origins of Dutch colonialism can be traced back to the appearance of the first Dutch ships at Banten in west Java towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. In contrast, active British interest in archipelagic Southeast Asia did not materialize until the 1770s, when Britain began taking an active interest in political affairs in Borneo, and subsequently in 1786, when they took possession of Penang.

<sup>66</sup> For a study of British considerations towards the position of Malay amidst the developments in Southeast Asia in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, see L.A. Mills, "British Malaya, 1824-1867", Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol.33, No.3 (1960), C.D. Cowans, Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961] and C.M. Turnbull, The Straits Settlements, 1826-1867. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1972].

<sup>67</sup> See O.W. Wolters, History, Culture, and Region, 33.

of her East Indies possession at Bencoolen to the Dutch, and in so doing cemented Dutch influence over the entire East Indies Archipelago. Remarkably then, through this act of colonial diplomacy the territorial forms of modern Malaysia and Indonesia came into being. The legacy of this “accidental intervention” has been summarised as such:

At the most obvious level, the division of the Malay world down the Melaka Straits laid the basis for the contemporary boundary between Indonesia and Malaysia. But there were other even more far-reaching ramifications, as centuries of history were set aside without a qualm. . . . Ties between individuals and communities remained close but the division into “Dutch” and “British” spheres meant that the easy movement of Melayu leadership back and forth between the Peninsula and the east coast of Sumatra was now a thing of the past. What were effectively political divisions also affected academic scholarship as a new generation of British ‘orientalists’ concentrated on collecting and compiling Malay texts associated with the Peninsula, leaving the study of Malay culture in Sumatra and southwest and southeast Borneo to their Dutch counterparts. But the latter, with some notable exceptions, were not drawn to the study of coastal Malays. In Sumatra their descriptions of ‘Minangkabau’ or ‘Aceh’ tended to accentuate differences rather than similarities with Melayu traditions<sup>68</sup>.

## VII. *Semenanjung Melayu: The Bridging of Identities*

From an anthropological perspective, the strongest case for this perception that colonialism fragmented a contiguous entity and identity stems from the link between the island of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, which in effect sets the context for this idea of kinship in Indonesia-Malaysia relations<sup>69</sup>. Indeed,

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<sup>68</sup> Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 125-126.

<sup>69</sup> The close interaction between Sumatran and Peninsula cultures and histories is studied in greater detail in Jane Drakard, *A Malay Frontier: Unity and Duality in a Sumatran Kingdom*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1990] 1-62.

Sumatra had long been considered an integral part of *Semenanjung Melayu* (Malay Peninsula), conceived as a cultural, not political, entity<sup>70</sup>.

Genealogical factors have long influenced Peninsula-Sumatra ties, and the great majority of the Malays in the peninsula are ethnographically almost indistinguishable from those of North-eastern Sumatra for the fact that most Malays are descendents of Minangkabau and Acehnese migrants. These ties have roots traceable to the early coastal kingdoms that ruled the archipelagic waters of the region<sup>71</sup>. Consequently, ties of blood obtained alongside strong ethnic and cultural links to define the belt that ran across the Melaka Straits and which emphasised kinship as an organizing principle for relations between the polities along the West coast of the Malay Peninsula and the Eastern principalities of Sumatra. These ties were strengthened by the vast religious and trading links that were sewn across the archipelago, and augmented by the centripetal forces of large kingdoms such as Srivijaya and Melaka. This far-flung Malay political culture was reinforced by the profession of Islam, a widely circulating Malay-language literature, subscription to a similar *Adat*, loyalty to the *Kerajaan*, and frequent inter-marriage across the seas<sup>72</sup>. In parts of the peninsula (particularly in Negri Sembilan), Malays are still proud of their origins in the Sumatran district of Minangkabau, which is regarded locally as “the cradle of the Malay race”<sup>73</sup>. In key Malay historical classics the word Malay is clearly linked to Sumatra as well<sup>74</sup>. And of course, a fundamental feature of Peninsula-Sumatra kinship was built around a shared aversion for Javanese dominance. This was particularly so during the pre-Islamic era, but, as the study will show, has also carried on into more contemporary times.

Until the advent of the Indonesian revolution of 1945-1949, relations between the sultanates of the peninsula and of Sumatra were extremely close.

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<sup>70</sup> Indeed, it was “differences of culture, origin, development, religion etc” with Sumatra and also Java that inspired East Indonesia to coalesce into an Indonesian commonwealth in December 1946. See “The South Moluccan Case in the United Nations Machinery”, FO 371/123547, PRO.

<sup>71</sup> For example, Malay and Sanskrit inscriptions found in the Palembang region in Sumatra suggest that present-day Malaysia was part of the vast trading state of Srivijaya, which existed between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries and whose heart was situated in Sumatra.

<sup>72</sup> O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region*, 32-33; See also Edwin Loeb, *Sumatra: Its History and People*. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972] 7-12

<sup>73</sup> This too, is a matter of contention, and some scholars have in fact identified Riau as the source of Malay identity. See Chou and Derks (eds), *Riau in Transition*.

The early Indonesian central government was well aware of this proximity between the Malays in the peninsula and their cousins in Sumatra, and former Vice-President Mohammad Hatta had noted to Tunku Abdul Rahman that Indonesians “were becoming very afraid of the gravitational attraction of the Federation of Malaya upon Sumatran Malays. The Sumatrans even now were beginning to dislike being called Indonesians”<sup>75</sup>. Such concerns were justified in light of comments such as these made by the Sultan of Deli after the regional rebellion of 1957-58: “We Sumatrans would do better to leave the Republic altogether and join Malaya. Most of the Sultans are relatives of mine, and one really has so much more in common (compared to the Javanese)”<sup>76</sup>. It was not surprising thence, that during the early stages of relations Jakarta was careful not to have Sumatrans in their Kuala Lumpur mission<sup>77</sup>.

Yet it is also the case that relations between Sumatra and peninsular Malaya in part set the context for the consideration of kinship affiliation between the broader entities of Indonesia and Malaysia. No doubt enthusiasm for the portrayal of kinship between Indonesia and Malaysia should not lose trace of the fact that from an ethnic perspective, the links are really between Malays and Sumatrans. But as one shall see shortly, it was precisely around this link that the inhabitants of the Indo-Malay World constructed a sense of common identity. Even the Javanese, who loathe being classified as ethnic Malay, stop short of denying kinship links with Malays owing to other factors such as myths of descent, historical memories and elements of common culture. On that note, one finds even in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, the Malay text known for its anti-Java undertone, evidence that Malays of the proud kingdom Melaka were considered “bastardised Malays, mixed with Javanese from Majapahit”<sup>78</sup>. Furthermore, the fact that Sumatrans had of their free choice been an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia since 1945, and Sumatran nationalists were crucial to the independence struggle, lends further justification to the link between the Malay

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<sup>74</sup> Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 47.

<sup>75</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Commonwealth Relations Office, London, No.103, 12 April 1962, CO 1030/1013, PRO.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in James Mossman, *Rebels in Paradise – Indonesia’s Civil War*. [London: Jonathan Cape, 1961] 75.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Zainal Sulong, Kuala Lumpur, 14 August 2001.

Peninsula and Indonesia. Beyond that lies the fact that quite obviously, immigrants who originated from Indonesia did not come only from Sumatra. Broadly speaking, a substantial percentage of the Malay population, particularly in the Western states of Perak, Selangor, Johore, and Negri Sembilan, are descended from Indonesians who had migrated from other parts of the archipelago. For example, beyond the link between some West coast states like Negri Sembilan to central Sumatra, there have been similarly close kin relations based on ethnicity and descent between the Malays in Pahang and Johore and the Bugis and Boyanese from the Celebes and the Riau islands of Indonesia. Javanese as well have migrated in large numbers to the various states of the Malay Peninsula as a result of British colonial policy, and in so doing took on “Malay” identities insofar as colonial census was concerned. Indeed, it was estimated by British colonial sources in 1960 that a third of the Malay population in Malaya was of Indonesian descent<sup>79</sup>. Again, it was this complex web of migration that spun the kin-based network linking the population of the peninsula with their places and cultures of origin across the Indonesian Archipelago and facilitated the perception and interpretation of kinship based not merely on bloodlines and descent, but on the social and cultural constructions of relatedness set in motion by this historical process of trade and migration, as well as the adhesive influence of language and religion.

Does that mean however, that “Indonesians” are racial and ethnic kin of Malays? Indeed, this question has occupied much of early Indonesian and Malay nationalist discourse; and it takes on greater significance when one considers the emergence and impact of pan-Malay nationalism on Indo-Malay political history. The key to understanding this important question of identity and its relation to politicised kinship can be found, once again, in colonial legacy.

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<sup>78</sup> Kassim Ahmad (ed), *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, 175.

<sup>79</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 164/104/5, 28 November 1961, DO 169/74, PRO.

## VIII. Kinship as colonial sociological enterprise

While colonialism brought into being the terrestrial entities of Indonesia and Malaya, its influence at the intellectual level was equally profound<sup>80</sup>. One feature of European scholarship during the colonial era was that it effected a fundamental change in the discursive domain of politics by insisting upon the identification of community in an enumerable sense<sup>81</sup>. Whereas colonial administration identified this Indo-Malay World by drawing borders, colonial historiography did the same by categorising its inhabitants<sup>82</sup>. It was western scholars who laid down in their writings a template for the history of the Indo-Malay World. The assumptions underlying this template postulated a region that possessed a fixed territorial and ethnographic character, rather than the amorphous intermix of kingdoms and principalities that greeted it upon its arrival. Summarizing this phenomenon, Farish Noor observed:

As the process of colonisation progressed, the Malay world was opened up, studied, categorised and finally quarantined within the coloniser's order of knowledge. Raffles, Brooke, Hugronje, Swettenham, Clifford and other colonial administrators took to the task of regulating and compartmentalising the Malay world within their own ethnocentric worldview which necessarily placed the native as well as his culture, beliefs and symbols on an inferior, subjugated register<sup>83</sup>.

Hence, it was colonial scholar-administrators who identified the expansive archipelago as the "Malay Archipelago" or "Malay World". Pre-war Western historians suggested that the Dutch East Indies comprised "the major part of the

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<sup>80</sup> See for example, Bernard Cohn, Colonialism and its Form of Knowledge. [New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996].

<sup>81</sup> For a theoretical discussion, see Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives. [London: Pluto Press, 1993].

<sup>82</sup> A study of British classification and categorisation of pre-colonial concepts and institutions, for instance, can be found in Cheah Boon Kheng, "Feudalism in Pre-Colonial Malaya: the Past as a Colonial Discourse", Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Vol.25, No.2 (September 1994).

<sup>83</sup> Farish Noor, "The One-Dimensional Malay: The Homogenisation of Malay Identity in the Revisionist Writing of History in Malaysia", paper presented at the Third Annual Malaysian Studies Conference, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, 7-8 August 2001. See also Anthony Reid, "Understanding *Melayu*", 302-304.

Malay Archipelago”, which to them included the peninsula<sup>84</sup>; others wrote of the Dutch East Indies being part of the “Malay World”<sup>85</sup>.

In so doing, colonial anthropologists and ethnographers fashioned conceptual instruments that exaggerated affinity and subsequently created dilemmas for nationalist leaders who later appropriated their ideas in the name of pan-nationalism<sup>86</sup>. Colonialism was a black and white affair and colonial scholars, imbued with a belief in the enlightenment tradition of scientific classification and romanticised visions of racial and language-based nations, presented the case that the inhabitants of the “Malay World”, insofar as they shared the same basic “proto” and “deutero” Malay traits and features, were all essentially Malay-speaking families of the Malay-Polynesian race<sup>87</sup>. One such scholar argued: “both race and Archipelago are singular in their kind”<sup>88</sup>. A prominent historian of Indonesia further advocated that “in racial terms Indonesia’s population is basically of Malay stock”<sup>89</sup>. British historians wrote of how the Dutch East Indies and the Malay Peninsula were, for all intents and purposes, both part of the “Malay Archipelago” as well<sup>90</sup>. This was exemplified in the work of the prominent British colonial scholar, R.O. Winstedt, who wrote of the Malay identity: “of recent years the Malay is sometimes called an Indonesian. . . . Less confusing is the connotation of the term Malay, which denotes more particularly the civilized Malays of Sumatra and the Malay peninsula and in a broader sense almost all the inhabitants of the Malay archipelago”<sup>91</sup>. Raffles himself intimated that “I cannot but consider the Malayu nation as one people, speaking one language, though spread over a wide space,

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<sup>84</sup> Amry Vandenbosch, *The Dutch East Indies*. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941] 1. See also Schrieke B. (ed), *The Effect of Western Influence on Native Civilisation in the Malay Archipelago*. [Batavia: G. Kolff & Co, 1929].

<sup>85</sup> See Bernard Vlekke, *Nusantara: A History of the East Indian Archipelago*. [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1944].

<sup>86</sup> This contrasted with the case in India, where colonial thought constructed the sociological view that India was a mere collection of discrete communities. See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993] 220-239.

<sup>87</sup> See Reid, “Understanding *Melayu*”, 302.

<sup>88</sup> E.S. De Klerck, *History of the Netherlands East Indies. Vol.1*. [Rotterdam: W.L. & J. Brusse, 1938] 99.

<sup>89</sup> John Legge, *Indonesia*. [Englewoods Cliff, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964] 4.

<sup>90</sup> See Alfred Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*. [London: MacMillan & Co, 1894] 1-3.

<sup>91</sup> R.O. Winstedt, *The Malays – A Cultural History*. [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947] 3-4.

and preserving their character and customs, in all the maritime states lying between the Sulu Seas and Southern Oceans”<sup>92</sup>. Not surprisingly, indigenous works soon echoed these categorisations. Milner has observed for instance how in indigenous Malay writings Java was described as a “branch of the Malay race”<sup>93</sup>. Illustrating this strong imprint of colonial scholarship on indigenous perceptions of self in Malaya, Milner further noted that Malay writing of history necessarily placed “the entire investigation in the context of the expansion of Europe. The truth of its empirical context seems ultimately to be endorsed by the power of a confident imperialism”<sup>94</sup>. This interest given to race reflected intellectual trends in Europe where racial interpretations of all aspects of human behaviour were multiplying and racial myths became standard explanation for the establishment of nations, where “the nation was or should be . . . really a family held together by ties of blood”<sup>95</sup>. Hence alongside language and religion, race emerged as a category in colonial intellectual discourse to classify the inhabitants of the Indo-Malay World.

In certain respects, this use of racial yardsticks did gain credence with an indigenous audience already familiar with the fact that many among them came from the same “stock” for reasons explicated earlier<sup>96</sup>. Yet one should also consider that prior to the advent of colonialism Malays did not see a need to explicitly identify themselves as a single people or a distinctive “race”. Such categorisation was clearly of European inspiration, and it was with these impressions of the contiguity of the “Malay Archipelago” that orientalist apologists portrayed colonialism as essentially an alien influence that dismembered two identities whose fates were indelibly intertwined:

Drifted, perhaps, is not quite the word – were forced apart, rather, for the Peninsular and Indonesian areas, each caught up in an earlier extensive Far Eastern version of the *Drang nach Osten* of the Western

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<sup>92</sup> Thomas Raffles, “On the Malayan Nation, with a Translation of its Maritime Institutions”, *Asiatic Researches*, Vol.12, (1818), 103, quoted in Reid, “Understanding *Melayu*”, 303.

<sup>93</sup> Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Colonial Politics in Malaya*. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995] 68.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>95</sup> Boyd Shafer, *Faces of Nationalism*. [New York: Routledge, 1972] 154. For a summary on European scholarship on race during that period, see Thomas Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America*. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997] 32-175.

<sup>96</sup> The term “*Melayu*” appears in the *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*.

powers, inevitably followed the lead and consequently the divergence of their colonial patrons, the British and the Dutch.

Thus, two areas which formed an ethnic and cultural whole were artificially separated more or less by historical accident, for if the British or Dutch had never come to the East they might never have been divided; or if either of the two Western powers had held influence over both areas, these might well have grown together in strength and unity in the process of forming the inevitable opposition to colonial rule and in the pursuit of ultimate independence<sup>97</sup>.

Others have noted further that:

The countries that go to make up Malaysia are, in fact, only part of a larger Malayo-Indonesian world, which was partitioned in very recent times . . . by the forces of colonialism. The only claims that Malaysia has to being any kind of distinctive historical entity is that her territories were subject, to varying degrees, to British and not to Dutch or Spanish colonial control. It is British colonial rule during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that constitutes the one unique element that divides the existing Malaysian territories from the remainder of the Malayo-Indonesia world<sup>98</sup>.

For the first time in its history then, the territories of modern Indonesia and Malaysia were given a specific geopolitical and anthropological identity. The terrestrial area was called the “Malay Archipelago”; and it was largely inhabited by people who were known as “Malay”. The anthropological and historiographical basis to these Western claims remains a hotly debated topic in Southeast Asian studies that stands beyond the scope of this study. What matters more for purposes here is the manner in which these Western perceptions in effect provided frames of reference for the construction of pan-Malay identity by local thinkers schooled in Western thought<sup>99</sup>. It is eventually the ideas of these

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<sup>97</sup> J.C. Bottoms, “Some Malay Historical Sources: A Bibliographical Note” in Soedjatmoko, Mohammad Ali, G.J. Resink and George McTurnan Kahin (eds), An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965] 157.

<sup>98</sup> John Bastin and Robin Winks, Malaysia: Selected Historic Readings. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966] xiii.

<sup>99</sup> See Firdaus Abdullah, Indonesia Raya di Alam Melayu: Setiakawan Serumpun di Zaman Perjuangan. [Jakarta: KITLV, 1995].

indigenous architects of pan-Malay identity and those of their detractors, encapsulated in the notion of “Malayness”, that set the stage for the politicisation of kinship between Indonesia and Malaysia.

## IX. Constructing pan-Malay identity

The manner in which colonial ideas were internalised by indigenous historians, scholars, and nationalists was manifested in their renditions of history<sup>100</sup>. Robert Young has described this influence of colonial thought in the following manner: “anti-colonialism was a diasporic production, a revolutionary mixture of the indigenous and the cosmopolitan, a complex constellation of situated local knowledges combined with racial, universal political principles”<sup>101</sup>. This dynamic characterised much of early indigenous political thought.

In Indonesian political parlance for example, the sense of a unbroken territorial entity that existed to encompass all the various other factors of affiliation such as race, religion and language, and that encompassed modern day Indonesia and Malaysia, emerged in the form of the concept *Nusantara*, and has been expressed most poignantly in early Indonesian nationalist writings of Muhammad Yamin, Ruslan Abdulgani, and A.H. Nasution<sup>102</sup>. Correspondingly Yamin and Nasution interpreted anti-colonialism as a movement towards the realisation of *Indonesia Raya*, which to them was a modern territorial expression of the *Nusantara*<sup>103</sup>. Yamin drew precedence for *Indonesia Raya* from the

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<sup>100</sup> It is not the purpose here to “debunk” indigenous conceptions of history. Instead, regardless of historical accuracy, these indigenous conceptions provide critical insight to the mindsets and perceptions of the political elite in Indonesia and Malaysia. For a cogent criticism of indigenous interpretations of history, see Kwa, “The Historical Roots”.

<sup>101</sup> Robert Young, *Postcolonialism*. [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001] 2.

<sup>102</sup> Indonesian conceptions are covered in detail in Osman Haliby, *Documenta Historica: Sedjarah Documenter dari Pertumbuhan dan Perjuangan Negara Republic Indonesia*. [Djakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1953]; *Seminar Sedjarah: Laporan lengkap Atjara I dan II tentang Konsepsi Filsafat Sedjarah Nasional dan Periodisasi Sedjarah Indonesia*. [Jogjakarta: Universitas Gadjah Mada, 1958]; Bambang Oetomo, “Some remarks on Modern Indonesian Historiography” in D.G.E. Hall (ed), *Historians of Southeast Asia*. [London: Oxford University Press, 1961]; Roeslan Abdulgani, *Heroes Day and the Indonesian Revolution*. [Jakarta: Prapantja Publishing House, 1964]; Nugroho Notosusanto, “A Current Concept of Indonesian History: The relationship between nationalism and historiography, address delivered at the Goethe Institut, Jakarta, 23 March 1970; A.K. Pringgodigdo, *Sedjarah Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia*. [Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1970] 164-167.

<sup>103</sup> See Muhammad Yamin, *6000 Tahun Sang Merah-Putih*. [Jakarta: Penerbit Siguntang, 1954]; A.H. Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia*. [Bandung: Disrajah-AD dan Penerbit

Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, and it was the *Negarakertagama*, court transcripts of Majapahit, that played an important role in influencing his sense of geopolitics<sup>104</sup>. According to the document, discovered by Dutch archaeologists in 1919, the influence of the Majapahit Empire had encompassed a land so vast that it included not only the entire East Indies Archipelago, but also the Malay Peninsula and Borneo as well<sup>105</sup>. The utility of such historical visions, however mythological, was not lost to Sukarno, who applied them liberally in his political orations aimed at transforming the ancient *Nusantara* into the modern state of Indonesia<sup>106</sup>. While the exact expanse of Majapahit continues to be debated today, for Yamin the notion of a timeless territorial entity covering the peninsula and archipelago would certainly appear corroborated by trends in colonial scholarship on the terrestrial boundaries of the “Malay Archipelago” at the turn of the century discussed earlier.

The centrifugal tendencies of *Nusantara* also had a secondary racial logic, however flawed, behind it. Within its boundaries *Nusantara* was populated by peoples with similar “Malay” and “proto-Malay” racial traits<sup>107</sup>. The racial characteristic defined within this territory was emphasised by Nasution, who referred to the idea of “*Naluri Rumpun Melayu*” (Malay family or stock instinct) in explaining this affiliation between the peoples of *Nusantara*<sup>108</sup>. Clearly for Yamin and Nasution, Indonesians and Malays were of the same “racial stock”<sup>109</sup>.

While pan-Malayism originated from Indonesia, it had its proponents among peninsular Malays as well. Chief among them was Ibrahim Yaacob. Yaacob drew analogies between *Nusantara* and his own conception of *Dunia*

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Angkasa, 1977]. See also Mohd Dahlan Mansoer, *Pengantar Sejarah Nusantara Awal*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1979].

<sup>104</sup> It is likely that Yamin’s conceptions were influenced by works such as N.J. Krom, *Hindoe-Javaansche geschiedenis, 2de druk*. [’s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1931] that corroborated his ideology, as suggested in Kwa, “The Historical Roots”, 45-48.

<sup>105</sup> See Supomo, “The Image of Majapahit in late Javanese and Indonesian Writing” in A.J.S. Reid and David Marr, *Perceptions of the Past*. [Singapore: Heinemann Books, 1979] 180.

<sup>106</sup> For example, Sukarno, *Indonesia Menggugat: Pidato pembelaan Bung Karno dimuka hakim kolonial*. [Jakarta, 1956] 21-22.

<sup>107</sup> See Cynthia Chou, “Orang Suku Laut Identity” in Hitchcock and King (eds), *Images of Malay-Indonesian Identity*, 148.

<sup>108</sup> A.H. Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia*, 52.

<sup>109</sup> The case for this is presented in R.M. Koentjaraningrat, *Introduction to the Peoples and Cultures of Indonesia and Malaysia*. [Menlo Park: Cummings Publishing Co, 1975]. In point of

*Melayu* (Malay World). Historically, *Dunia Melayu* has been associated with a wide range of expressions and meaning. This concept, found in traditional indigenous literary works dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, has been popularised by historians of Malaysia studying the pre-modern era of the history of the Indo-Malay Archipelago<sup>110</sup>. In essence, proponents of the *Dunia Melayu* concept desired to articulate a Malay World based on language and religion, populated by “Malays” defined as an ethnic group that loosely incorporated the vast majority of Indonesians as well. What is of interest from this train of thought is how these Malay ideologues sought to include Indonesians in the ethnic category of “Malay”.

In response to colonial attempts to create indigenous identity, Peninsular Malay writers conceptualised “Malayness” and Malay community in a manner that has various meanings; racial, linguistic, religious, and political<sup>111</sup>. Without getting into the nuances of definitions of the terms race and ethnicity, it can be established that from a racial perspective, “Malayness” contains the same essential meanings as that which Indonesian writers have envisaged, namely that most of the indigenous people of the peninsula share similar physical traits with their counterparts throughout the archipelago<sup>112</sup>. As an ethnic concept however, “Malayness” in Malay socio-political discourse carries much deeper connotations that did not necessarily correspond with those of their Indonesian counterparts. As Ibrahim Yaacob, a champion of pan-Malayism from the peninsula, expressed:

There is no other *Bangsa* in this world which has extended culture on a vast scale for the whole race at the same time and pace as the *Bangsa Melayu*. The *Bangsa Melayu* has absorbed three cultures one after

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fact, from a purely racial perspective, the Maori of New Zealand and certain quarters of the Madagascan population would also be considered “Malay”.

<sup>110</sup> See Shaharil Talib, “The Asiatic Archipelago: History Beyond Boundaries” in *Proceedings of the International Symposium South-east Asia: Global Area Studies for the 21st Century*. [Kyoto: Kyoto International Community House, 1996]. Leonard and Barbara Andaya’s study of Malaysian history also provides two maps indicating that to their understanding, the “Malay World” included the areas covering the Indonesian Archipelago. It certainly included Java, according to the maps. See Leonard Andaya and Barbara Watson Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, xviii-xix.

<sup>111</sup> See Lee Kam Hing, “Indonesian and Malaysian History from Dutch Sources: Reconstructing the Straits of Malacca’s Past”, *Sejarah*, No.4 (1996) 26,

<sup>112</sup> For a discussion of the difference between race and ethnicity, see Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*. [Thousand Oaks, C.A.:

another, which has fulfilled the character and soul in the descent of the *Bangsa Melayu*, that is, Hindu culture for thousands of years and for a thousand years the soul and blood of the *Bangsa Melayu* flowed with Buddhist culture. From the eleventh century A.D, Islamic culture has replaced these two cultures and flourished in splendour and glory with the light of God that is pure in the soul of the *Bangsa Melayu* as a whole<sup>113</sup>.

*Bangsa Melayu* then, refers to the notion of “Malay” as a culturally constructed concept<sup>114</sup>. This led Milner to contend, “the problematic character of *Bangsa* (Malay identity) is its impermanence”<sup>115</sup>. This impermanence is embodied in the discourse on Malay identity, and exemplified in the concept *Masuk Melayu* (to become a Malay). The prominent Malay cultural activist Zainal Abidin Ahmad has argued that to be considered a Malay, a person had essentially to originate from the Indo-Malay Archipelago, adhere to Malay *adat*, speak the Malay language, and profess Islam as their religion<sup>116</sup>. Among these traits it has often been emphasised Malay identity is most closely associated to Islam; to be Malay is, for all intents and purposes, to be Muslim<sup>117</sup>.

Given this variety in definitions it is clear that ethno-cultural boundaries of “Malayness” are elastic<sup>118</sup>. For example, some scholars have noted that “despite the persistence of enmity among the Bugis, Malays and Minangkabaus, the distinction between their ruling classes became increasingly blurred. Migrant groups gradually adopted Malay, and Malay titles were used rather than Bugis

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Pine Forge Press, 1998] 25-34. Suffice to say that here, race is taken to imply physical traits, while ethnicity includes elements of culture and shared history.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Kamaruddin Jaafar, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam*. [Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Anda, 1980] 32. Also cited in Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu*, 40-41.

<sup>114</sup> This theme comes across very strongly in the indigenous literature. The radical Malay nationalist ideologue Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy tried to present a well-thought argument for the primordial existence of the Malay race throughout archipelagic Southeast Asia, including the Malay Peninsula and Southern Thailand. See Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu*. [Jakarta, 1963]. See also Amat Johari Moain, *Sejarah Nasionalisma Maphilindo*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1960] and Abdul Hadi Hasan, *Sejarah Alam Melayu*.

<sup>115</sup> Milner, *Invention of Colonial Politics*, 99.

<sup>116</sup> See Adnan Nawang, “Zainal Abidin Ahmad”, *Massa*, 29 August 1998.

<sup>117</sup> For a study on how Malays perceive of the close association between their identity, language and religion, see Asmah Omar, *Language and Society*, 1-18; See also William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*. [Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1994] 67-68.

<sup>118</sup> See Charles Hirschman, “The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.46, No.3 (1985).

and Minangkabau honorifics”<sup>119</sup>. Defined in this manner, the Malay *Bangsa* can conceivably consist of Javanese or Boyanese, Minangkabau, Bugis or Rawa. More than anything, it is this that allows the conceptualisation of affinity among the people within an abstract “Malay World”, permitting the conceptual extension of the Malay identity to encompass other ethnic groups that share elements of similar histories and cultures which correspond to the Malays, including the inhabitants of present-day Indonesia<sup>120</sup>. Correspondingly, it was on the basis of such a definition of *Bangsa Melayu* that Ibrahim Yaacob proceeded to include two and a half million people in Malaya and 65 million in Indonesia as Malay and residents of the *Dunia Melayu*<sup>121</sup>. Another scholar has articulated the nuance in the following manner:

On close examination, it will be found that the modern Malays are made up of peoples of diverse racial origins among which cultural, social and economic distinctions are becoming more evident, to such an extent, indeed, as to invalidate the statement that they belong to a community that is culturally homogeneous. This is even more apparent if by the term Malay one has to include not only the Malays in Malaysia, but also those of Malaysia and Indonesia<sup>122</sup>.

The fluidity and ephemerality of Malay identity, which continues to this day to be a subject of great debate, is itself represented in historical folklore such as *the Hikayat Hang Tuah*, where in response to suggestions by his hosts at Indrapura that he was “*Melayu Sungguh*” (authentic Malay), Hang Tuah noted: “I may not be as pure as you think I am; I am the servant of a hybrid community and am living in a mixed context”<sup>123</sup>. Reflecting on this, Maier has observed:

Reading *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is like being constantly given the suggestion that this is what Malayness is all about: it is the desire to create a feeling of communality and kinship between concrete human beings instead of the blind obedience to a set of abstract

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<sup>119</sup> Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 99.

<sup>120</sup> This point is emphasized in Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *Pensejarahan Melayu: Kajian Tentang Tradisi Sejarah Melayu Nusantara*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992] 1-48; see also the essays compiled in Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (Ministry of Education, Malaysia), *Pertemuan Dunia Melayu '82*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1987].

<sup>121</sup> Ibrahim Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Air*. [Kuantan: Percetakan Timur, 1975] 12.

<sup>122</sup> Wan A. Hamid, “Religion and Culture” in Wang Gungwu (ed), *Malaysia*, 181.

<sup>123</sup> Ahmad, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, 189.

conventions, considerations of geography, or the belief in a stable personal identity. Flexibility and the willingness to play, in other words, is what counts in being a Malay, in acting out Malayness<sup>124</sup>.

It appears that in Malay sociological parlance then, the definition of “Malayness” is fluid, and if anything relies primarily on ethno-cultural construction<sup>125</sup>. “Malayness” has various overlapping spheres: it defines a linguistic group, is an ethnographic term, a cultural concept, and returning to what was established earlier, a loose territorial entity in the form of the “Malay Archipelago”. It is this train of thought that permits the proponents of the *Dunia Melayu* to believe that by virtue of their language and religion, most (if not all) of the people of the Indo-Malay Archipelago are, in essence, “Malay”<sup>126</sup>. In this sense, it is not difficult to see how the cultural definition of “Malayness” allows many Indonesians to slip through the definitional net. Indeed, while the post-colonial leaders of Malaya may have opposed the ideology of Ibrahim Yaacob and harboured their own reservations towards Indonesians, it is nevertheless a fact that ethno-cultural links behind pan-Malay identity were elusive enough for them to have encouraged Indonesians to migrate to Malaysia in the 1960s and 1970s to maintain “Malay” political primacy over the Chinese and Indian populations<sup>127</sup>.

An important, if unwritten, dimension to this broad definition of “Malayness” in Indonesian and Malay nationalist discourse is its functional and exclusive nature. In this domain where kin identity is created, activated, and sustained one finds functionality in two forms. First, it is already evident that the drive to establish a pan-Malay political entity, *Indonesia Raya* or *Melayu Raya*, was viewed by the pan-nationalists as the logical extension of pan-Malay identity. Second however, was the fact that identities were by then also coalescing among the inhabitants of the Indo-Malay World against alien Europeans and Chinese who were flooding into the archipelago to sustain various commercial ventures, giving greater impetus to Indo-Malay kinship. “Malayness” hence, was also

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<sup>124</sup> Maier, “We Are Playing Relatives”, 675.

<sup>125</sup> This point was emphasised in an interview with Taufik Abdullah, Jakarta, 22 January 2002.

<sup>126</sup> There is also the issue of the populations of East Indonesia, which would not be considered as Malay, but who nonetheless remain outside the scope of early thinkers of Malay identity.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with an Indonesian source, Jakarta, 21 January 2002.

defined against particularly the alien Chinese communities in both the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya.

#### **X. Kinship and the perceptual gap**

While it no doubt had proponents on either side of the Melaka Straits, conceptions of pan-identity suffered from fundamental definitional problems. Several points need to be appreciated to that effect. First, it is important to note that the proponents of pan-Malayism among Indonesian thinkers, notably Muhammad Yamin and Abdul Haris Nasution, were not Javanese; they were Sumatran, and of Minangkabau descent. Hence the fact that they had no difficulty reconciling Malay and Indonesian identities should not be taken as representative of the political proclivities of their non-Sumatran colleagues.

Moreover, while Robert Curtis' observation that "most of the important ethnic groups in the area, the Malays, Atjehnese (Acehnese), Javanese, Sundanese, Minangkabao, Buginese and Makassarese belong to the so-called Deutero-Malay racial group and have obvious physiological and cultural traits in common" is generally correct, what needs also to be emphasised is the differences and sense of distinction that existed across the vast ethno-cultural web of Indonesia<sup>128</sup>. Here, it should be established that notwithstanding the exertions of Yamin and Nasution, there was a clear distinction in Indonesian anthropological thought between "*Rumpun Melayu*" (the same Malay racial stock) and "*Suku Melayu*" (Malays as part of a larger community). Put differently, the distinction is one between race and ethnicity. To Indonesian minds, kinship identity measured in terms of ethnicity is an issue of locality - Malays as an ethnic group resided around the Melaka Straits and Riau, and made up only a small percentage of the overall Indonesian population. Hence in suggesting that a modern state could be borne out of pan-Malay identity the way Yamin and Nasution did implied a distinctly ethnic basis to Indo-Malay solidarity, though they themselves did not explicitly champion that interpretation. Given the ethno-cultural

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<sup>128</sup> Robert Curtis, "Malaysia and Indonesia", 6-7.

differences in colonial Indonesia this betrayed a lack of sophistication borne of a fundamental misinterpretation of history.

This tension between race and ethnicity in Indonesian nationalism was reflected in the intellectual contest between ethno “pan-Malayism”, as Yamin’s “*Nusantara* nationalism” implied, and a civic nationalism that circumvented the complexities surrounding explicit compartmentalisation of the inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies into racial and ethnic groups. To that regard, the 1928 Bandung Declaration requires mention. It was at Bandung that the decision was made to build nationalism on a civic and republican logic premised not on racial and ethnic identity, but on the staunch anti-Dutch sentiment shared by the people throughout the archipelago. This in turn was registered in the Bandung mantra of “One Language, One Flag, One Nation”. Cognisant of these tensions, the respected nationalist Mohammad Hatta, himself of Minangkabau (Sumatran) origin, staunchly opposed attempts by some among his colleagues to conceptualise national identity along ethnic lines. Hatta challenged Yamin’s conception of *Indonesia Raya* on the basis of *Tumpah-dara Indonesia* or “the Indonesian fatherland”, which he feared was disturbingly similar to the German nationalist idea of *Kultur und Boden* propounded by the Nazi party<sup>129</sup>. To his mind, his fellow Sumatran’s attempt at inventing Indonesian authenticity was perilously close to being interpreted as betrayed Javanese hegemony based on the revival of the Majapahit kingdom, and hence was nothing short of a veiled attempt at Javanese imperialism.

In retrospect, it seemed that some architects of identity in Indonesia were in fact aware of this problem of defining national identity along racial and ethnic lines, and it was with the Bandung Declaration that they registered a refusal to use the Javanese language and ethnicity as the core of Indonesian language and identity<sup>130</sup>. Hence it is evident from the Bandung Declaration that Yamin and Nasution’s attempt to place race and ethnicity at the forefront of nationalism was

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<sup>129</sup> An exposition of the Yamin-Hatta debate is provided by Herbert Feith and Lance Castles (eds), *Indonesian Political Thinking, 1945-1965*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970], chapters by Yamin, “*Unity of our country and our people*” and Hatta, “*Let us not encourage the spirit of expansionism*”. see also Angus McIntyre, “The ‘Greater Indonesia’ Idea”, 81.

<sup>130</sup> A move that was striking considering the general trend of nationalist movements in the Third World at the time.

rejected, as racial or ethnic terms of reference were viewed in Indonesian nationalist circles as anathema to the nationalist cause.

Clearly from ethnographic perspectives, distinctions existed between Indonesian and Malaysian conceptions of “Malayness”. As argued earlier, in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Indonesian thinking Malay was accepted as a racial definition for the large majority of the population of Indonesia. Yet as an ethnic marker “Malayness” was limited to the inhabitants of the Riau islands, peninsular Malaysia, and portions of the North-eastern Sumatra<sup>131</sup>. Even the notion of Malay primacy implicit within the concept of the *Dunia Melayu* is debatable owing to the fact that most Malays are purportedly not in the strictest sense *Orang Asli* (natives) in the peninsula<sup>132</sup>. One scholar for example has highlighted that according to Chinese chronicles (which he presumably perused), Malay emigrants from Sumatra began to settle on the coast of the peninsula only in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries<sup>133</sup>.

The cultural characterisation of all Indonesians as ethnic Malays is particularly objectionable to many Javanese who by and large do not conceive of themselves as ethnically or culturally “Malay”<sup>134</sup>. As discussed earlier, to them their culture, a key component of ethnicity, is very distinct from, if not altogether superior to, that of the Malay<sup>135</sup>. Further to that, from an Indonesian perspective, a racial definition to Malayness also permits the possibility of “Malays” professing another religion other than Islam (this, indeed, is the case with Batak Protestants, Balinese Hindu, and Javanese Buddhists for example). Yet the thought of this is anathema in peninsular Malay discourse, where Malayness is

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<sup>131</sup> Some peninsula Malay scholars have also attempted to highlight this fact. See for example, Ariffin Omar, *Revolusi Indonesia dan Bangsa Melayu*. [Pulau Pinang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1999]. See also Michael van Langenberg, “Class and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia’s Decolonization Process: A Study of East Sumatra”, *Indonesia*, Vol.23, April 1982.

<sup>132</sup> Because the Malays could not be considered *Orang Asli* in the strictest sense, the Malay political elite would subsequently construct the term “*Bumiputra*” (Sons of the Soil) in order to impute to the community an indigenous identity that would eventually translate to political and economic privileges.

<sup>133</sup> Charles Robequain, *Malaysia, Indonesia Borneo, and the Philippines*. [London: Longmans, Queen and Co, 1954] 118.

<sup>134</sup> Unless of course, they are second or third generation Malays descended from Javanese immigrants.

<sup>135</sup> For more on Javanese culture, see Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*; Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press,

synonymous to Islam<sup>136</sup>. In essence then, a curious difference exists between Indonesia's pride in ethno-cultural diversity, expressed in their national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), and peninsular Malays' tendency to focus on similarities framed in ethno-cultural terms<sup>137</sup>. Likewise, because many Indonesian political traditions are in fact drawn from the legacy of Majapahit (owing to Javanese political dominance), it should not be surprising that the Javanese outlook and worldview might differ from that of the ethnic Malay, whose claim is to the legacy of Srivijaya. Such distinction, as was suggested earlier, has resulted in the traditional tension between Java and the ethnic Malay World, echoing the historical contestations between Srivijaya and Majapahit. Not surprisingly, such differences would also have an impact on what kinship meant for each state vis-à-vis the other.

Another reason accounted for Indonesia's reluctance to frame national identity in ethnic terms the way the Malays in the peninsula did. As was suggested earlier, and as Chapter Three will show in greater detail, the very existence of Indonesia as a unitary and sovereign nation-state was grounded not on ethnographic logic, but on a nationalist tradition that deliberately avoided emphasising ethnic affiliation. Indonesian identity had no ethnic rationality. Much unlike other justifications of nationhood, Indonesia has never had, or rather has never chosen, an ethnic core. Instead, the Indonesian identity was built upon revolutionary struggle against a common oppressor. It is on these terms that one finds some Indonesians, particularly those who originate from Eastern Indonesia, resentful of kinship discourse in bilateral relations framed in ethnic terms the way peninsular Malays do<sup>138</sup>.

Peninsular Malays, on the other hand, appear more comfortable with the ethnic logic to nationhood. Contrary to the Indonesian experience, race and

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1990]; Mudjahirin Thahir, *Wacana Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan Jawa Pesisiran*. [Semarang: Bendera, 1999].

<sup>136</sup> Syed Husin Ali, *Rakyat Melayu: Nasib dan Masa Depan*. [Jakarta: Penerbit Inti Sarana Aksana, 1985] 8.

<sup>137</sup> That said, peninsular Malays on the other hand also expend much effort in emphasising Malay exclusivity in relation to other racial and ethnic groups such as the Chinese or Indians.

<sup>138</sup> The author was informed that at a particular Indonesia-Malaysia Youth Dialogue session, a group of Indonesians from the Moluccas openly and vehemently expressed their objection as to the use of ethnic measures of affinity during the session. Interview with Rizal Sukma, Jakarta, 15 January 2002.

ethnicity in Malaysia formed the cornerstone of its nation-building project. “Malayness” in Malaysia is and has always been a political/constitutional identity where being Malay permits one to lay claim to rights and privileges given to *bumiputra* (lit: Sons of the Soil)<sup>139</sup>. It was on this basis that peninsula proponents of pan-Malayism such as Ibrahim Yaacob and Burhanuddin al-Helmy mistakenly rationalised the incorporation of Indonesian identity into that of the Malay.

In later years, these fundamental differences between Indonesian and Malay understandings of race and ethnicity would surface in bilateral meetings such as the UNESCO-funded project on Malay culture in 1971 and the Indonesia-Malaysia youth meetings of the early 1990s. Both these projects were undertaken to locate commonalities upon which to build harmonious relations between the two kin states. In both instances, it was precisely the issue of the definition of “Malayness” that caused them to flounder. As Taufik Abdullah shared, in both instances the point of departure was over “Malay insistence on the ethno-cultural definition of Malay identity” and “Indonesian opposition to this definition”<sup>140</sup>. Underlying this was a fundamental difference of opinion between Indonesian discourse on the social anthropology of the Indo-Malay World, which avoided ethno-racial expressions of identity as political reference points, and peninsula Malay thinking, which sought to construct and politicise a brittle veneer of ethno-cultural commonality<sup>141</sup>.

It appears from this exploration of the search for kinship precedents in Indo-Malay historiography that attempts to trace avenues of affinity would lead one through a conceptual and historical minefield, where pressures for intellectual coherence and clarity are confronted with the need to reveal the full extent of the depth of complexities, not to mention scholarly divisions and disagreements, that underlie this notion of Indo-Malay kinship. At the heart of this tension lies the concept of Malayness, and the vexing question of how to conceptualise Indo-Malay identity. In peninsular Malay discourse, the “Malay” identity was a

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<sup>139</sup> Syed Husin Ali, *Rakyat Melayu*, 7-8.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Taufik Abdullah, Jakarta, 22 January 2002.

<sup>141</sup> Compare and contrast for instance, the Malay definition of “Malayness” discussed here with the essays in Claire Holt (ed), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972] and J.J. Fox (ed), *Indonesia: The Making of a Culture*. [Canberra: Australian National

complex maze incorporating issues of race, religion, culture, and ethnicity. To Indonesian minds however, Malay identity was a much simpler concept – though Indonesians may be racially “Malay” (insofar as racial markers remain relevant), as an ethnic group Malays are a mere minority residing in parts of Sumatra.

Anthropological debate over the contested nature of Indo-Malay identity, as this study has shown, throws up complexities and discrepancies that have to be appreciated. The construction and counter-construction of identity discussed here however, are not merely matters of polemics. They provide crucial cultural and historical backdrop, and would have a definite impact on the conceptual space available for the subsequent construction of affinity among political leaders.

### **Concluding remarks**

The objectives set forth in this chapter have been to survey the basis to popular conceptions of kinship, and perceptions held among political elite as to how affinity can be constructed for political goals. With these objectives in mind, it is suggested here that given the fact that kinship can be a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon, there appears to be broad grounds upon which Indonesia and Malaysia can be classified as kin states. Language and religion were critical to this establishment of affinity. Trade and migration also figured prominently in the construction of the kinship system that defined the borderless character of the pre-colonial Indo-Malay Archipelago. Indeed, anthropological debate aside, it became increasingly fashionable by the early Twentieth Century to construct kinship between the inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya precisely along the problematic lines of race and ethnicity. Reflecting the earlier discussion on Smith’s theories of nationalism, in order for pan-nationalists to construct a nation that included the inhabitants of the peninsula and archipelago, the language of “Malay” kinship was used. This notion of kinship and common identity constructed by indigenous thinkers and ideologues stemmed from the appropriation of ideas and categories of race and ethnicity articulated in Western social-political thought. European models and concepts of nation,

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University, Research School of Pacific Studies, 1980], both of which emphasise the theme of

citizenship and nationalism, and the captivating romantic ideologies of movements such as Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanic nationalism that stemmed from them, inspired advocates of pan-Malayism to use these ideas to define how people in the Indo-Malay Archipelago related to their neighbours who spoke Malay, or shared the Islamic religion<sup>142</sup>. The struggle of the peoples of the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya to throw off the yoke of colonialism then, became the struggle of the “Malay people”. Implicating such sentiment was the following comment made by Tun Dr. Ismail, former Malaysian Home Minister:

One of the greatest events in the life of our young nation had been the conclusion of a Treaty of Friendship with Indonesia – the first of its kind entered into by the Federation of Malaya – reflecting our desire to *restore those ties of race and culture with Indonesia; ties which were interrupted by the accidents of history*<sup>143</sup>.

Framed in anti-colonial terms, the politics of affinity did have resonance with the vast majority of the respective populations. Hence while colonialism drew Indonesia and Malaysia apart territorially, it seemed to have inadvertently brought them together in terms of the anti-colonial ideology that emerged from the Western ideas and ideologies, and that challenged conceptually the 1824 partition.

One can argue that the utility of such loose conceptions of Malay identity persist today where, for reasons of political expediency, Javanese or Indonesian leadership disregard anthropological basis to accrue mileage from identifying themselves as Malay. To some extent this has been relatively easily facilitated by the fact that Javanese share linguistic and religious affinity with their Malay neighbours and are racially similar. Moreover, Indonesians migrating to the peninsula regularly accept, and are readily given, status as ethnic Malay<sup>144</sup>. This state of affairs facilitates the willy-nilly extension of the Malay identity to Indonesians, resulting in the perception held in certain quarters that there is a

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variation and diversity within the ethno-cultural entity of Indonesia.

<sup>142</sup> See J.A. Fishman, *Language and Nationalism*. [Rowley, Massachusetts: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc, 1972]. For a study of the European origins of nationalism and its impact on the Third World, see Elie Kedourie (ed), *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*. [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971].

<sup>143</sup> See speech by Tun Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman at the 81<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting of the 14<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 5 October 1959.

<sup>144</sup> In recent times, as Chapter Six will show, this has accounted for the easy integration of illegal Indonesian immigrants into Malay society, posing problems for bilateral relations.

common racial and ethnic bond between the inhabitants of the peninsula and the archipelago, Javanese included. It can also be argued, as this study will show, that another important dimension to the consideration of the kinship factor is the emerging consciousness among Indonesians and Malays of the need to reinforce their identities against the encroachment of foreign, in particular Chinese, influence. Kinship certainly provided an avenue around which to build anti-Chinese solidarity.

Ultimately, despite all the vicissitudes associated with the notion of kinship discussed in this chapter, the fact that the pan-nationalists at the forefront of Indo-Malay nationalism, and the general populations of Indonesia and Malaysia, persistently looked to the kinship factor for meaning and intelligibility when formulating policies or reflecting on their relations, on the back of their own construction of affinity, is indicative of its significance in the early years of the anti-colonial struggle in the Indo-Malay World. With this in mind, the study now ventures to consider the ideological and institutional shape of contending discourses that defined the place of pan-Malay ideology in the kinship politics of the Indo-Malay World.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A Tale of Two Nationalisms

#### Introduction

A striking paradox in the emergence of nationalism in the Indo-Malay World was the fact that it did not begin with the objective of forming sovereign states out of coterminous colonial territories. Rather, anti-colonial consciousness inspired the imagination and construction of a pan-Malay nation centred on the contested concept of “Malayness” and manifested in the “imagined” communities of *Indonesia Raya* and *Melayu Raya*. Pan-Malayism emerged as the predominant political ideology in the pre-war anti-colonial movement, where “the dream of *Melaya-Raya* or *Indonesia-Raya* was not merely a nostalgic return to the past: it recognised the traumatic manner in which the Indo-Malay world had been torn apart by treaties and pacts agreed upon by foreign powers that had descended upon the Malay people and their homeland”<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, the ideologies and events behind the formulation of this pan-identity would become as significant to an understanding of the politicisation of kinship in Indonesia-Malaysia relations as the reasons and ramifications behind its demise.

#### I. Converging nationalist motivations: The emergence of modernist Islam

The genesis of politicised kinship can be traced back to the Malay and Indonesian student movements at Al-Azhar University in Cairo in the early twentieth century<sup>2</sup>. These movements were influenced profoundly by ideas of reformist Islam as a tool for regenerating what they perceived to be a Malay-Muslim identity that had deteriorated in the face of Western colonialism. Writing his classic study of Indonesian nationalism, George Kahin noted that in the

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<sup>1</sup> Farish Noor, “Fine Young Calibans: Broken Dreams of Melaya-Raya”, *Malaysiakini.com*, 13 January 2002.

politics of the Indo-Malay World, “the Mohammedan religion was not just a common bond; it was indeed, a sort of in-group symbol as against an alien intruder and oppressor of a different religion”<sup>3</sup>. Through journals such as *Seruan Azhar*, *Al-Imam* and *Al-Manar*, students regularly published the works of Arab scholars glorifying the Islamic reformation and disseminated them not only to the student community in Cairo, but in Indonesia and Malaya as well<sup>4</sup>.

Beyond serving as mouthpieces for Islamic awakening, these journals also harboured a nationalist agenda. One such publication described its motivation in the following manner: “(it) is for our homeland, because we recognize Indonesia and the Peninsula as one community, one people, with one *Adat*, one way of life, and what is more, virtually one religion”<sup>5</sup>. To underscore camaraderie, students from the Indo-Malayan archipelago formed an organisation called *Djama'ah al-Chairiah al-Talabijja al-Azhariah al-Djawiah* or Welfare Association of Jawa Students, with “*Jawa*” representing all Muslims indigenous to Southeast Asia<sup>6</sup>. Roff further observed that the cover of one such journal, *Seruan Azhar*, was embellished with a drawing of a globe with Southeast Asia in the centre and the territories of Dutch Indonesia and British Malaya shaded in black. Alongside them was printed: “The united world of our beloved people”, and in the introduction: “All our people . . . whether in Java, or in Sumatra, or in Borneo, or the Malay Peninsula, must unite and share a common purpose and agreement to strive for advancement, seek the best ways of doing this, and on no account allow ourselves to split into separate parties”<sup>7</sup>.

The awakening wrought by reformist Islam in both Indonesian and Malayan circles framed social-political discourse in terms of the *Kaum Tua* (Conservatives)-*Kaum Muda* (Progressives) dispute. What is relevant for purposes here about this philosophical dispute is the fact that the *Kaum Muda* Young Turks, whose worldview echoed the modernist interpretation of Islam

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<sup>2</sup> See William Roff, “Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920s”, *Indonesia*, No.9 (April 1970).

<sup>3</sup> George Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952] 38.

<sup>4</sup> See Azyumardi Azra, “The Transmission of al-Manar’s Reformism to the Malay-Indonesian World: The Cases of al-Imam and al-Munir”, *Studia Islamika*, Vol.6, No.3 (1999).

<sup>5</sup> Roff, “Indonesian and Malay Students”, 73.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

emanating from the Middle East, posed a fundamental challenge to what can be viewed as the status quo of that era by presenting Islamic ideology as a basis upon which to formulate a full-fledged nationalist agenda. The experience in Cairo at the height of Islamic reformation and Middle-Eastern nationalism would politicise these Indo-Malay students to the degree that many of them would return to the peninsula and the archipelago to lead nationalist movements<sup>8</sup>. Upon returning to their respective countries, these nascent Indo-Malay nationalists, imbued with modernist Islam, continued to maintain ties with each other through regular correspondence<sup>9</sup>. In the Malay Peninsula, the political platform and rhetoric of *Kaum Muda* elements quickly focused upon the pursuit of independence within the context of a greater Indonesia<sup>10</sup>. In Indonesia as well, returning students from Cairo, Mecca, as well as Lahore, Qadian and Aligarh, brought with them the reformist agenda which inspired the transformation of traditional Islam throughout much of the archipelago. As for the response of the general population, it was noted that “the Muslim community, threatened commercially by Chinese competition and religiously by heightened activities of Christian missionaries in Central Java in the first decade of the twentieth century, eagerly embraced the new message”<sup>11</sup>. In 1912, reformist Islam was given organizational expression with the formation of *Muhammadiyah*; and it soon became “the dominant force in Indonesian Islam; in fact, it became the largest and most viable Indonesian association, overshadowing other religious as well as political organizations”<sup>12</sup>. Not surprisingly, Dutch alarm at the influence of reformist Islam led the colonial government to ban reformist publications in Java and Sumatra<sup>13</sup>. In Malaya too, the British administration and Malay sultans expressed concern about the impact of the Cairo experience on Malay students<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>8</sup> Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 46.

<sup>9</sup> William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967] 64-67.

<sup>10</sup> Emphasizing the close links they had with anti-colonial and anti-establishment Indonesians elements, the *Kaum Muda* movement in Malaya provided refuge for prominent Indonesian communists such as Alimin, Musso, and Tan Melaka, all of whom had escaped across the Melaka Straits after abortive communist uprisings in Java and Sumatra in 1926-27.

<sup>11</sup> Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*. [The Hague: W. van Hoeve Ltd, 1958] 47.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 47-48.

<sup>13</sup> Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra, 1927-1933*. [Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Monograph Series, 1971] 147; See also Anthony Reid,

## II. Socialist and nationalist interpretations of *Melayu Raya-Indonesia Raya*

It was not only in reformist Islamic philosophy that anti-colonial movements in the Indo-Malay World found solidarity, for the emergence of socialist ideology also generated ideological propinquity<sup>15</sup>. This socialist-nationalist movement shared a reciprocal relationship with Islamic forces on the basis of anti-colonial agitation. Many of the Malay students returning from the Middle East linked up with Malay-educated and politically conscious students in the peninsula from peasant backgrounds, themselves already being influenced by the teachings of Indonesian reformists, nationalists and socialists<sup>16</sup>. The socialists tapped into secular and libertarian ideals of Western concepts of nations and nationalism, and unlike the modernist Muslim-nationalists, perceived the construction of pan-unity on the basis of a civic and egalitarian anti-colonial nationalism. This was certainly so in the case of the Malay socialists from the peninsula, with most of them originating from the SITC (Sultan Idris Training College), a hotbed of socialist and nationalist ideas in the pre-war years<sup>17</sup>. Not surprisingly, the college was particularly susceptible to Indonesian nationalist influence<sup>18</sup>. Many of the students from SITC had maintained contacts with Indonesian nationalists (including the communists), while several even joined Sukarno's PNI (*Partai Nasional Indonesia*) upon its formation in 1927<sup>19</sup>. Ibrahim Yaacob, one of the prominent socialist leaders of the *Kaum Muda* movement, articulated the movement's ideology in the following manner:

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"Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (February 1967), 267-283.

<sup>14</sup> Crosby to Curzon, 14 October 1920, CO 537/900, PRO. See also Mohammad Redzuan Othman, "Call of the Azhar: The Malay Students Sojourn in Cairo before World War II", *Sejarah*, No. 3, 1994-1995.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed study into the various faces of this socialist movement in Malaya, see Khoo Kay Kim, "The Malay Left, 1945-1948: A Preliminary Discourse", *Sarjana*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (December 1981).

<sup>16</sup> See Khoo Kay Kim, "Malay Society, 1874-1920s", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. V, No. 2 (September 1974).

<sup>17</sup> Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 142-157.

<sup>18</sup> Awang Had Salleh, *Malay Secular Education and Teacher Training in British Malaya*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1979] 43.

<sup>19</sup> John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS*. [Singapore: Heinemann International Books (Asia) Ltd, 1980] 32.

The aspiration of the *Bangsa Orang Melayu* (the nation of the Malay people) is to struggle for the independence of the land and the *Bangsa Melayu* (Malay nation) who will unite again in one great country according to the interest and desire of the people as a whole. The aim of *Melayu Raya* is the same as *Indonesia Raya* which is the aspiration of the Malay nationalist movement, that is to revive again the heritage of Srivijaya, which is a common unity of the *Bangsa*<sup>20</sup>.

The subtext to this ideology of pan-unity however, stemmed from a concern for the burgeoning alien Chinese population on the peninsula. To the Malay socialists, it was better to be assimilated into a society broadly allied in race, ethnicity, and religion than to be overwhelmed on their own soil by the Chinese. The objectives of co-identification with Indonesia put forth by Ibrahim Yaacob would later take on greater organisational coherence in the form of the KMM or *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (The Young Malays Union).

Formed in 1938, the KMM was the first explicitly political organisation in Peninsular Malaya, and it set forth as its political objective the fostering of a polity based on one race, one language, and one nation with Indonesia. The KMM was a meeting ground for reformist Islamic elements and the socialists from the SITC, who were becoming increasingly exposed to Indonesian literary and political works written in the Malay language<sup>21</sup>. Membership also consisted of a fair number of Indonesians as well<sup>22</sup>. Later, with the outbreak of the Indonesian revolution in 1945, many from the KMM would participate actively in the Indonesian revolution, which to them was also a Malay nationalist struggle. Scholars have emphasized how Malay radicals from the peninsula provided arms to freedom fighters in Sumatra and Java, though the extent of support provided remains difficult to determine<sup>23</sup>. Beyond that, it has also been highlighted that prominent Malay nationalists from the KMM such as Ibrahim Yaacob, Manaf (leader of the *Giyu Gun*, a volunteer army formed by the Japanese), Abdullah Hussain, Othman Abdullah, Baharom Basar, Abdullah Sanggora, Zulkifli Ownie,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibrahim Yaacob, *Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu*. [Jakarta: N.V. Alma'ariff, 1951] 65.

<sup>21</sup> Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 172-173.

<sup>22</sup> See John Funston, *Malay Politics*, 31-32.

<sup>23</sup> Firdaus Abdullah, *The Origins and Early Development of the Radical Malay Opposition Movement in Malaysian Politics*. [Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications, 1985] 90.

Karim Rashid and Dahari Ali and “hundreds of others” directly participated in the Indonesian revolution either on a military or political level<sup>24</sup>. Agitation for postwar unification with the Indonesian nation would subsequently take on more institutionalised forms such as KRIS (*Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung*), formed in July 1945, and PKMM (*Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*) in October 1945, both successors to the KMM. Many among the Malay leaders also proceeded subsequently to take up membership in the PNI. The formation of these political organisations allowed the radical movement to propagandise their political objectives throughout the peninsula in tandem with elements in Indonesia who were sympathetic to the Malay cause of pan-unification.

Although a detailed comparative study of congruence between Indonesian and Malayan anti-colonial nationalisms remains to be undertaken, it is widely accepted that the anti-colonialism Indonesia developed and matured much faster than in Malaya. Nevertheless, pre-war Indonesian anti-colonial rhetoric also found in the discourse of kinship a frame of reference to contextualise relations with their enthusiastic but less accomplished Malay cousins. As previously discussed, some framed the Indo-Malay discourse of political kinship in terms of the peninsula’s geographical inclusion in the Indonesian nationalist vision to translate the historical polity of Majapahit into a modern nation-state<sup>25</sup>. Sukarno, for example, asserted such a historical basis to Indonesia’s ongoing nationalist struggle, and his vision was shared by Malayan counterparts such as Ibrahim Yaacob and Burhanuddin Al-Helmy. Other Indonesian leaders such as A.H. Nasution and Muhammad Yamin, a nationalist ideologue close to Sukarno and of Sumatran origin, were equally enthusiastic in proclaiming a historical basis to the incorporation of the peninsula into the territorial bounds of Indonesia<sup>26</sup>. During the Japanese occupation of 1942-1945, the incorporation of both Sumatra and Malaya into the 25<sup>th</sup> Army military administration of the Japanese occupation

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<sup>24</sup> See Ibid, 90-100. The participation of Malay nationalists in the Indonesian revolution is also mentioned in the autobiographies and writings of some of these nationalists. See for example, Keris Mas, *Memoir*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1980] 18; Ishak Haji Mohammad, “Kata Pendahuluan” in Ibrahim Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Air*. [Kuantan: Percetakan Timur, 1975] 8; Ibrahim Yaacob, *Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu*, 63.

<sup>25</sup> See Muhammad Yamin, *6000 Tahun Sang Merah-Putih*. [Jakarta: Penerbit Siguntang, 1954].

force between 1942 and 1944 lent further credence to thinking about the incorporation of the peninsula into a greater Indonesian territorial state<sup>27</sup>.

### III. Japanese occupation

The dismantling of colonial administration during the Japanese interregnum and Japanese sympathy towards anti-colonial movements opened a window of opportunity for Malay pan-nationalists to ensure the issue of political union and absorption of the peninsula into an independent Indonesia remained foremost on the minds of their Indonesian counterparts as the latter plotted the political future of the Dutch East Indies. On 28 May 1945 in Jogjakarta, the BPKI (*Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* or Committee for the Investigation of Preparatory Efforts for Indonesian Independence) met in Jakarta to deliberate the terms and conditions to be presented to the Japanese Military Administration for Indonesian independence<sup>28</sup>. Among the items tabled was the absorption of the Malay peninsula and Borneo into an independent Indonesia. At that historic meeting, representatives voted 39 to 25 in favour of the incorporation of the Malay Peninsula into an independent Indonesia<sup>29</sup>.

Another landmark event worthy of attention was a meeting between Malay and Indonesian nationalist leaders which took place at Taiping, Perak (Malaya) on 12 August 1945 to lay the grounds for the potential incorporation of the peninsula into independent Indonesia<sup>30</sup>. That meeting, and the events that

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<sup>26</sup> See Muhammad Yamin, *A Legal and Historical Review of Indonesia's Sovereignty over the Ages*. [Manila: Indonesian Embassy, 1959]. Yamin was one of the staunchest supporters of Malaysia's incorporation into *Indonesia Raya*.

<sup>27</sup> Willard Elsbree, "Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movements, 1940-1945". PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1953, 112.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes from this groundbreaking meeting have been circulated as *Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Indonesia, Territory of the Indonesian State*. [Jakarta: *Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*, 31 May 1945].

<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that the results were consequently rejected by the Japanese military administration on account that Malaya was considered by the Japanese as "not ready" for independence. See Yogi Akashi, "Japanese Military Administration in Malaya – Its Formation and Evolution in Reference to Sultans, the Islamic Religion and the Moslem-Malays, 1941-1945", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (April 1969).

<sup>30</sup> An Indonesian delegation consisting of Sukarno, Hatta and Dr. Rajiman Wediodiningrat had flown to Dalat in Southern Vietnam to meet with General Terauchi, Commander-In-Chief of Japanese Armed Forces in Southeast Asia, to discuss the future of Indonesia. On their way back to Java they were met by Ibrahim Yaacob and Burhanuddin Al-Helmy in Taiping.

transpired immediately after, was a telling prelude to Malayan and Indonesian independence. Quoting from Ibrahim Yaacob's memoirs, Radin Soenarno wrote:

After lunch the delegation left for the Taiping Airport and it was there, in one of the reception rooms, that Sukarno and Hatta held a brief discussion with Ibrahim and Dr. Burhanuddin who gave them the assurance that Malaya's aim was independence united with Indonesia. Sukarno told them that the Declaration of Independence was to be made the following week. To this Ibrahim answered that he was preparing an Eight-Man Delegation to Jakarta to represent Malaya in the Declaration Ceremony and also to take part in the forming of the Republic of Indonesia with Malaya as a part. It was in this short conference that Sukarno, flanked by Hatta, shook hands with Ibrahim Yaacob and said, "Let us form one single Motherland for all the sons of Indonesia". . . . This event in Taiping marked the peak of the political success of the left-wing movements of the Malays<sup>31</sup>.

The significance of the Taiping meeting however (and for that matter the BPKI vote as well), has to be viewed in the broader context of political developments in the region. It was three days after Taiping that Japan surrendered. Two days later, on 17 August, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta proclaimed the independence of Indonesia. Conspicuously absent from the proclamation was any mention of Malaya. This sudden detour was certainly portentous. At one level, it perhaps indicated that any successful political merger of Malaya and Indonesia could only be realised under the umbrella of Japanese occupation, for it was only during the latter that Malaya and Indonesia were ever united under one central authority, colonial or indigenous. On their part, while the Japanese military administration stopped short of actively encouraging political unification, the fact that they supported both the radical Malay nationalists and the Indonesian national movement while at the same time

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<sup>31</sup> Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism, 1869-1941", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol.10, No.2 (1969), 20-21. According to Cheah Boon Kheng however, there were several contradictory opinions of the events at Taiping depending on whether one took the Malayan, Indonesian or Japanese perspectives. See Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Japanese Occupation of Malaya, 1941-1945: Ibrahim Yaacob and the struggle for Indonesia Raya" *Indonesia*, Vo.28 (1979), 112-114. Robert Curtis also presents another opinion of this episode where he argues that the request for incorporation into Indonesia was "no doubt regretfully, turned down". See Robert Curtis, "Malaysia and Indonesia", *New Left Review*, No.28, Nov-Dec 1964, 12.

crippling the influence of the Malay traditional elite in the peninsula (whom they viewed as British sympathisers) did indicate a possible tacit backing of the idea<sup>32</sup>. In any case, the end of the Pacific War and the Japanese surrender severely curtailed chances for unification. Yet the fact that it was highly likely Malaya would have eventually been integrated into *Indonesia Raya* had Japanese occupation lasted a while longer, or if Japan had not capitulated so soon after Taiping, should not be lost when one considers, for example, how in his memoirs Ibrahim Yaacob alluded to the real possibility that Sukarno was preparing to include Malaya in his scheduled independence proclamation<sup>33</sup>.

Notwithstanding the undoubted significance of the Taiping meeting from the Malayan perspective as revealed in Ibrahim Yaacob's memoirs, the importance accorded it by mainstream Indonesian nationalism, characterized by Sukarno's PNI-led republican movement, was conspicuously less apparent. Evidently, all existing published accounts of this groundbreaking Taiping meeting cite Malayan sources. There has been no mention of the Taiping meeting in any of Sukarno or Mohammad Hatta's memoirs or autobiographies<sup>34</sup>. Hatta's memoirs instead focused on a meeting with representatives from the Sumatran Independence Preparatory Committee on 13 August consisting of Teuku Mohammad Hassan, Dr. Amir Syarifuddin and a Mr. Abas<sup>35</sup>. While the fact that the Taiping meeting did indeed transpire is not being challenged here, this omission of any reference to it in Indonesian sources is nevertheless telling both of the accuracy of Ibrahim Yaacob's account of Sukarno's commitment to

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<sup>32</sup> There are contending accounts as to the degree to which the Japanese military government rejected the concept of *Melayu Raya* and *Indonesia Raya*. Bernhard Daim argues that the Japanese were laconic in their rejection of the concept. See Bernhard Daim, Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969] 109; Others, however, register Japanese sympathy toward it. See Mitsuo Nakamura, "General Imamura and the Early Period of the Japanese Occupation", Indonesia, Vol.10 (October 1970), 5. Needless to say, this was a Japanese account.

<sup>33</sup> See Ibrahim Yaacob, Sekitar Malaya Merdeka. [Jakarta: Kesatuan Malaya Merdeka, 1957] 28-34.

<sup>34</sup> The Taiping meeting was mentioned fleetingly in a footnote in J.D. Legge's biography of Sukarno. Nevertheless, Legge was of the opinion that "it is a significant commentary on the depth of Sukarno's 'Greater Indonesia' ideas that despite that expression of interest he gave no more thought to such an association (with Malaya). After his return to Jakarta his preoccupation was solely with a proclamation relating to an Indonesia narrowly conceived in terms of the former Dutch colony". See J.D. Legge, Sukarno: A Political Biography. [London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1972] 193-194, ff 4.

unification as well as the importance his Indonesian counterparts attributed to this meeting and what it represented in the larger context of Indonesian nationalism. What was certain by 15 August 1945 was that by then it was the pace of events over those few days, and not the ideologies of either the Malay radicals or Indonesian nationalists, that dictated the historical trajectory in the Indo-Malay Archipelago. Sukarno's snatch at independence upon Japanese surrender was necessary in order first and foremost to prevent the re-imposition of colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies, and his *volte face* on Malaya was necessary in order to dispel suspicions of collaboration and expansionism<sup>36</sup>. Together with opposition from several prominent revolutionaries such as Vice-President Hatta, hopes for *Melayu Raya* or *Indonesia Raya* were truncated with the turning tide of the war.

One should note here that the pan-Malay cause had also found support from the Indonesian communist movement, who considered unification an inseparable objective of Indonesian anti-colonialism. Among them was the Minangkabau (Sumatra) communist nationalist Tan Melaka and his followers. Insofar as Malaya was concerned, Tan Melaka was of the view that Indonesia had an obligation to dictate Malayan affairs. This attitude was reflected clearly in his writings:

Just as village people do not allow snakes to run wild in their gardens, so the Indonesian people are not content merely to sit on their hands in the face of the conspiracies and destruction wrought by British imperialism in Malaya. Solidarity between the Indonesian peoples of Malaya and Indonesia is a crucial matter . . . . Its importance will surpass even what is implied in the statement by Malay-Indonesian political organizations that they join together and stake their life in fighting for independent Indonesia<sup>37</sup>.

These convictions were echoed during the Fourth Congress of PP (*Persatuan Perjuangan* or Struggle Union), an organization established to

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<sup>35</sup> See Mohammad Hatta, *Indonesian Patriot: Memoirs*, edited by C.L.M. Penders. [Singapore: Gunung Agung, 1981] 222-223.

<sup>36</sup> This is discussed thoroughly in Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944-46*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971] 1-66. See also William Frederick, *Visions and Heat: The Making of the Indonesian Revolution*. [Athens, O.H.: Ohio University Press, 1989] 182-267.

<sup>37</sup> Tan Melaka, *From Jail to Jail – Vol.3*. Translated and introduced by Helen Jarvis. [Athens, O.H.: Ohio University Southeast Asia Series, 1991] 106.

consolidate the efforts of radical youth movements (popularly known as *Pemuda*), at Madiun on 16-17 March 1946. Mirroring the BPKI decision, it was at Madiun that the PP called for independence to be declared not only over the Dutch East Indies, but including Malaya, North Borneo, Timor and Papua as well<sup>38</sup>. Unlike the mainstream nationalists though, whose interest in pan-unification was comparatively passive to begin with, and was subsequently superseded by the Indonesian revolution, Indonesian radicals continued to espouse Indonesia-Malaya kinship against colonialism as part of their revolution, providing ideological support for their Malayan cousins in their struggle against the British colonial government and the traditional Malay elite. Indonesian influence would only ebb as the revolution wore on and contingencies mounted, and as the nationalist politics of Malaya started itself to shift away from pan-unification.

#### IV. Consolidating the Indonesian nation

The drama of anti-colonial agitation is often defined and perpetuated by a multiplicity of actors. Correspondingly, forces of change come into conflict not only with foreign rule, but also traditional elites who, as beneficiaries of colonial administration, resisted socio-political and economic change threatened by anti-colonialism.

The traditional elite in Indonesia and Malaya largely originated from two camps. Most were members of the aristocracy and/or the Western educated elite, whose loyalties were to the colonial government. In Malaya, conservative forces were uncomfortable with and highly suspicious of the anti-colonial sentiments of modernist Islam as well as socialist and nationalist ideologies, and shared the British colonial administration's concern for the potential challenge of pan-nationalism to the status quo<sup>39</sup>. In Indonesia's case, anti-colonialism was countered by aristocrats and officials who favoured the progress that Dutch education and lifestyles represented. Among these colonial sympathisers,

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<sup>38</sup> *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 18 March 1946; *Soeara Rakyat*, 19 March 1946; *Merdeka*, 19-20 March 1946, quoted in *ibid*, 279, footnote 1.

<sup>39</sup> See document no.11, 25 May 1946, CO 537/1529, PRO.

agitation for change never went beyond minor reforms<sup>40</sup>. While the contest between the conservatives and nationalists hung in the balance during the pre-war period (largely because of the colonial government's harsh policies towards the latter), nationalist politics took a swift and severe turn to the detriment of the former by the onset of the Indonesian revolution in September 1945.

Any study of the Indonesian revolution will necessarily have to distinguish between its political and social dimensions. As a political movement, the revolution was marked by competing political ideologies vying for political and ideological space within the nascent Indonesian republic. Apart from the mainstream nationalists such as Sukarno and Hatta, other ideologies such as political Islam, communism and federalism sought to exert their influence on the evolution of Indonesian politics<sup>41</sup>. Taking place within the broader context of this political struggle however, was a bloody social revolution that destroyed Indonesia's traditional feudal society<sup>42</sup>. The revolution was without doubt a watershed event in the context of Indonesian history, and while its origins were clearly domestic, it would have an undoubted impact on the shaping of the Indonesian worldview. In particular, the experience of revolution would have substantive repercussions for the evolution of Indonesia-Malaysia relations in the post-colonial era in the way it transformed the perception of kinship at a national level in the eyes of the respective political leaderships and set both national identities on a collision course.

Considering the spontaneity and opportunism that characterised the Indonesian revolution, it was clear its impetus came not from the political elite. Instead, this agitation toward popular sovereignty, characterised by the sweeping aside of the anachronistic old order, was distinctly a massed based, mostly *Pemuda* phenomenon:

In reality a political, social and economic revolution is in progress.

The government supports the revolution which is arising from the

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<sup>40</sup> See George Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 68-69; M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1300*. [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993] 170-176.

<sup>41</sup> As a sample of the vast literature on the revolution, see Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*; Anthony Reid, *The Indonesian National Revolution*. [London: Oxford University Press, 1979]; Audrey Kahin (Ed), *Regional Dynamics of the Indonesian Revolution*. [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985].

<sup>42</sup> Curtis, "Indonesia and Malaysia", 12.

people, and this is only proper in terms of democratic beliefs. The government is simply a body which carries out the will of the people, and the government can only exist with the people's support<sup>43</sup>.

The hardship and depravity during the war, coupled with the inadvertent support of the Japanese for nationalist forces, gave impetus to mass mobilization on a scale never before experienced in Indonesian history<sup>44</sup>. The role of the *Pemuda* was especially crucial as a driving force behind the social revolution<sup>45</sup>; it was they who led a movement for the destruction of long-established social structures: "Every old fashioned attitude with a feudal smell must be done away with. Every structure and action which is not in accordance with the people's demands at this time must be changed"<sup>46</sup>. In particular, traditional centres of authority that had been co-opted into both the Dutch and Japanese colonial administrations and that entertained "hopes of succour from the returning Dutch" stood out as prime targets of these ideologically diverse reactionaries<sup>47</sup>. This tension between the old order and the emerging spirit of egalitarianism has been succinctly summarized in the following observation on East Sumatra:

The respect and consideration which the Malay rulers formerly enjoyed has gradually declined, and people have come to regard most rulers here as having power in consequence of the political contracts (indeed it is these that give authority, not the love and affection of their people), and as nouveaux-riches, but not as good leaders . . . .

There is criticism now and it is malicious. It is directed not only at the behaviour and values of the *Kerajaan* (royal government), but it goes further and dwells upon history, making comparisons with rajas under

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<sup>43</sup> *Soeloeh Merdaka*, 4 February 1946, quoted in Anthony Reid, *Blood of the People*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979] 223. According to Reid, an English translation appears in Appendix C to WIS 17, 9 February 1946, WO 172/9893, PRO.

<sup>44</sup> The specifics of Japanese policy in Indonesia are discussed in Mohammad Abdul Aziz, *Japan's Colonialism and Indonesia*. [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955]; George Kanahale, "The Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Prelude to Independence". PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1967; Anthony Reid and Akira Oki (eds), *The Japanese Experience in Indonesia: Selected Memoirs of 1942-1945*. [Athens O.H.: Ohio University Monographs in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series No.72, 1986]; Shigeru Sato, War, *Nationalism and Peasants: Java under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945*. [New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1994].

<sup>45</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, chaps 4 and 5. While Anderson's study concentrated on the *Pemuda* of Java, the phenomenon which he uncovered was also present elsewhere in the Archipelago.

<sup>46</sup> Reid, *Blood of the People*, 223.

the *Korte Verklaring* and with the rulers in Java. Formerly this criticism did not exist, people were satisfied with the aura which used to hang around the sultans<sup>48</sup>.

Economic and political malaise under Dutch colonialism and the grave depredation and suffering of Japanese occupation meant that a reactionary mood was already percolating among a large proportion of Indonesians. The sudden departure of the Japanese provided the catalyst that precipitated the inevitable backlash against established centres of power. In the quest to build an egalitarian society and national identity, traditional forms of authority such as sultans and the aristocratic and administrative elite (*Priyayi* and *Pangreh Praja*) were labelled agents of the repressive old colonial orders, and removed forcibly from their positions; in some instances traditional structures were demolished arbitrarily. From the perspective of the reactionaries, the social revolution was also necessary in order to disprove Dutch accusations that the new Republic was an illegitimate Japanese creation “promised” as it were to the traditional ruling elite in return for their allegiance during the occupation years.

On the revolution itself, it is notable that it was in Sumatra, the island which as was earlier determined was closest in ethnic, geographical and cultural proximity to the Malays of the peninsula, that the structural foundations of the old order were most dramatically ruptured. The Sumatra sultans and traditional elite had long been cautious of the nationalists and were at best measured in their support of the objective of independence, most being content with the colonial status quo. Anthony Reid noted for example, how the Malay sultans of Eastern Sumatra “gained much from their association with Dutch colonialism, and most of their Malay subjects appeared content to bask in their reflected glory”<sup>49</sup>; some within the old *Kerajaan*-based order even viewed Indonesian nationalism as a threat<sup>50</sup>. Not surprisingly, their scepticism was interpreted by some among the more radical nationalist elements as treason against the republic, and their loyalty

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<sup>47</sup> Ideologically diverse in the sense that elements of the *Pemuda* movement could be found in all ideological camps, including both the Leninist and Trotskyite camps of Indonesian communism.

<sup>48</sup> Geheime MvO, Ezerman, 1993, 18-19 quoted in Reid, *Blood of the People*, 52-53. The *Korte Verklaring* referred to the Declaration of Allegiance to the Netherlands Indies Government signed by indigenous Indonesian rulers.

<sup>49</sup> Reid, *Blood of the People*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 59-73.

to the old order would prove costly. For instance in Banten, the police and local residency were targets of a reactionary nationalist backlash. In Eastern Sumatra, it was the social structure of the Malays, long viewed as the privileged indigenous ethnic group, that fell victim to revolutionary zeal. There, the sultans and rajas, symbols of Malay identity and tradition not only in Sumatra but in Malaya as well, crumbled in the wake of bloody revolutionary violence that began in March 1946<sup>51</sup>. Likewise in North Sumatra there was much ill feeling among the population toward elements that had been incorporated into the old colonial administrative apparatus, resulting in the upheaval of December 1945 and January 1946<sup>52</sup>. As a result of this backlash, the Sultans of Langkat, Serdang, Asahan and Indragiri were either killed or incarcerated. Several scholars have provided vivid descriptions of this wholesale destruction of the traditional social-political configuration. One noted for example that “early in 1946 a social revolution broke out around Medan among the brutalized Javanese coolie population and radical youth. A number of Medan intellectuals tried to moderate, guide or exploit this jacquerie, but it rapidly moved beyond their control. The sultanate families were decimated. Many were butchered, others tortured”<sup>53</sup>.

The social revolution in Indonesia was in fact a manifestation of the long-brewing struggle between the old and new orders (*Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda*) that by the end of the war had come to characterize politics within the Indo-Malay world. To that effect, it is interesting to register how militant *Pemuda* movements in Sumatra “never saw itself as an ‘anti-government’ movement except in relation to the *kerajaan*, because the republican government had no capacity to oppose it as in Java”<sup>54</sup>. Even among the Sumatran sultans, rajas and aristocrats who were more receptive to anti-colonial ideology, they favoured federalists who were more sympathetic towards the *kerajaan*<sup>55</sup>. The moderates in the central government themselves were predisposed to Sumatra’s integration into the republic without

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<sup>51</sup> In Eastern Sumatra in particular, the ruling elite came from six Malay sultanates – Langkat, Serdang, Deli, Asahan, Kotapinang and Siak. See Michael Van Langenberg, “East Sumatra: Accommodating an Indonesian Nation Within a Sumatran Residency” in Kahin (ed), *Regional Dynamics*, 123-135.

<sup>52</sup> See Anthony Reid, *Blood of the People*, 218-251.

<sup>53</sup> Curtis, “Indonesia and Malaysia”, 12-13.

<sup>54</sup> Reid, *Blood of the People*, 226.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 222-225.

violence and bloodshed. To achieve this, they established KNI *Daerah* (Regional Indonesian National Committees) in Sumatra to discuss Sumatra's absorption into the Indonesian republic. The *Pemuda* however, did not share the republican government's conciliatory spirit, and its leaders "did not think much beyond abolishing the rajas"<sup>56</sup>. So strong was popular support for the *Pemuda* movement against the old order that the republican movement was unable to curb the slide into violence<sup>57</sup>. The inability of the central government to react was further exacerbated by the fact that unlike in Java, it lacked a substantial leadership and institutional presence in Sumatra that could harness the full potential of its social-political forces constructively for the nationalist cause. This leadership vacuum led Sumatrans to seek out their own models of revolution, and inspiration was eventually found in the regicidal legacy of the French revolution<sup>58</sup>. It was only when traditional authority was made to yield to the imperatives of popular sovereignty (either by surrender or bloodshed) that the tide of social revolution in Sumatra receded, making way for the nation-building project brought forth through republican nationalism<sup>59</sup>.

Even though the Indonesian social revolution effectively ended by the late 1940s, its legacy would continue to resonate beyond Indonesia's territorial borders. As Robert Curtis observed, "a jacquerie of this sort was something new and ominous in South East Asian history. It revealed to the feudal aristocracy the real weakness of their position, without effective outside backing, in the face of a mass-based social upheaval"<sup>60</sup>. The implications of this jacquerie would have greatest resonance for Malaya, where the traditional elite and aristocracy were just beginning to position themselves at the forefront of a Malay nationalist movement. Indeed, the point of departure for what was emerging in Malaya from what had emerged in Indonesia was that for the former, the conservative political structure was to be a rallying point, not victim, of nationalism. While many in Malaya sympathised with the Indonesian national struggle, the widespread violence in general, and hostility targeted at the Malay old order in particular,

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 234.

<sup>57</sup> "Netherlands East Indies: General Situation, 1947", A4355 7/1/7/9, NAA.

<sup>58</sup> See Mohammad Said, "What was the 'Social Revolution' of 1946", *Indonesia*, Vol.15 (1973).

<sup>59</sup> Reid, *Blood of the People*, 253-263.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Curtis, "Indonesia and Malaysia", 13.

generated much unease among the traditional leadership classes in Malaya<sup>61</sup>. Sensitivity toward the disruptive nature of the Indonesian example would be further sharpened when radical Malay political forces re-emerged to challenge the old order in Malaya, driven by the same social and ideological imperatives behind the destruction of the Indonesian old order.

## V. Malay reactions to the revolution

Despite the exertions of proponents of unification with Indonesia, Malayan nationalism by and large lagged behind that of their Indonesian kin<sup>62</sup>. Though Indonesian nationalism was very much centred in Java in the pre-war years, by the end of the war it had spread throughout the entire archipelago. Further, while there still remained a lingering concern within the Indonesian nationalist movement for Javanese domination, there nevertheless evolved a sufficiently strong, broad-based commitment to a staunch anti-colonial, national and egalitarian political ideology that emphasised national unity and territorial integrity to sustain the movement. In stark contrast, nationalism in the Malay Peninsula remained a relatively quiescent force even after the war, and never experienced the consensus toward anti-colonialism resembling that of Indonesia's civic nationalism. Aside from the radical nationalist elements led by Burhanuddin (Ibrahim Yacob had escaped to Indonesia before the British return), who remained in the minority, the vast majority of social and political leadership in Malaya (with the possible exception of the predominantly ethnic Chinese communist movement) were restrained in their response to the re-imposition of British rule. Part of the reason for this seemed to lie in the nature of the colonial experience itself.

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<sup>61</sup> Curtis noted that "if there was one area where the feudal rulers suffered a total annihilation rather than eclipse and obscurity, it was in the specifically Malay Sultanates of East Sumatra – precisely the group most closely attached by family ties to the Malayan ruling class". Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>62</sup> Radin Soenarno describes this disparity at the eve of the Pacific War as such: "It (Malay nationalism) had not entered into the political arena, but was still in the process of preparing to do so. By then the Indonesian nationalist movement had become already a formidable challenger to the Dutch colonial government". See Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism", 27. That is not to say, however, that Malayan history did not witness the kind of anti-colonial rebellions that featured so prominently and regularly in the histories of Third World nationalism. The Perak and

While colonialism under the Dutch was a particularly harsh experience for Indonesia, British rule was comparatively benign as the latter took efforts to ensure that the greater part of the Malay social-political structure, namely the sultans, *kerajaan*, and aristocratic feudal class, remained intact<sup>63</sup>. In retrospect, while Dutch colonialism effectively alienated the Indonesian masses through such harsh and exploitative policies as the Cultural System, British colonial initiatives, which included the introduction of popular economic policies, pre-empted the emergence of strong anti-British sentiments. In adopting prudent policies that kept various ethnic groups at a distance, and courting the traditional Malay leadership by preserving their ceremonial status and position in Malay society, the British managed to create a political environment of relative equanimity and also to foment a general nonchalance toward, if not acceptance of, colonialism among the vast majority of the Malayan population<sup>64</sup>. The full effect of Malay feudalism's embrace of colonialism on their perceptions of nationalism became clear in the manner in which the traditional Malay elite were wary of and guarded in their response to the Indonesia-inspired socialist Malay politics of the KMM<sup>65</sup>. If not unabashed anglophiles, many among the aristocratic class were at least admirers of things British, and their outlook certainly resembled the West more than Indonesia. The fact that the traditional elite's version of nationalism was articulated as "*Hidup Melayu*" (Survival of the Malays) and "Malaya for the Malays" within (as opposed to against) the context of loyalty to the British inspired an opinion that "another common feature of all the (political)

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Negri Sembilan Wars of the 1870s, the Pahang Rebellion of the 1890s, the Kelantan Uprising of 1915 and the Trengganu Uprising of 1928 are but some examples of such resistance.

<sup>63</sup> For example in Malaya, British interests were represented by the Resident who acted in an "advisory capacity" to the *kerajaan*. See Rupert Emerson, Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1964]; Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism".

<sup>64</sup> Feudalism was in fact enhanced by the regalia that the British introduced to traditional Malay court practices.

<sup>65</sup> This came across quite clearly in the early perceptions of traditional Malay leaders such as Onn bin Jaafar and Tunku Abdul Rahman. For example, Dato Onn, who became the first President of *Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu* (United Malays National Organization or UMNO), formed in 1946 to give organizational coherence to the traditional Malay political movement, was concerned for the radical Islamic bent in the activities of these reformists. See Anwar Abdullah, Dato Onn. [Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Nusantara, 1971] 171-173.

associations was the definite note of loyalty to the British Government and Rulers<sup>66</sup>.

Unlike the Malay radical movement, whose nationalist ethos was being built around Islamic reformist journals as well as the *Kaum Muda* movement and echoed the egalitarian, nationalist character of their Indonesian counterparts, the brand of Malay politics espoused by traditional elements continued to revolve around parochial state identities; and it was also becoming increasingly ethnic in its disposition. The political pre-occupations of the traditional elite were geared more toward the protection of the Malay *Bangsa* or race from the increasing number of the minority populations such as the Chinese, Indian and *Peranakan* (indigenous Chinese) than from the excesses of British colonialism<sup>67</sup>. As a result, the *kerajaan* never challenged the status quo in the manner that the radical nationalists were doing<sup>68</sup>. As for the Malay masses themselves, the slight degree of social dislocation brought about by British colonialism ensured that they remained less politicised than their Indonesian kin, and less susceptible to the social revolution that engulfed every strata of Indonesian society in the wake of the national revolution.

## VI. Contested identities

Despite the peripheral impact of radical anti-colonialism in the unfolding of Malayan history, it did contribute to the discourse and development of Malay nationalism. Hence careful consideration of the ideology behind this movement is critical in order to appreciate the various facets of Malay leadership perceptions of Indonesia, for it is in the ideological cleavage of pre-independence Malay

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<sup>66</sup> Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism", 16. The associations that Soernarno was referring to were political associations established and run throughout the Peninsular by the traditional state structure

<sup>67</sup> William Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 197-211; Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993] 20-26.

<sup>68</sup> That said, there were concerns expressed by members of the traditional elite at the inability of the aristocracy to empathise with the common people. For discussion on relations between the traditional elite and the aristocracy, See James de V. Allen, *The Malayan Union*. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967]; Anthony Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948*. [Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 1979]; Tim Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1999].

politics between the radical nationalists and traditional elite that one finds the discourse on kinship with Indonesia most fascinating<sup>69</sup>.

As suggested earlier, a motivation for the divergent perspectives and outcomes of anti-colonialism must surely lie in the colonial experience itself. By portraying theirs as a common struggle against foreign imperialism, the pan-nationalists in effect papered over substantial differences that existed as a result of fundamental differences between the Dutch and British colonial projects. Simply put, the excesses of Dutch colonialism created a local mindset that differed substantially from that of the peninsular Malays, who in many ways had their pre-colonial way of life preserved, and who did not undergo nearly the kind of dislocation their Indonesian counterparts did. This fact certainly contributed to the kinds of responses colonialism elicited from the colonized populations, and for the fact that there was no “Malay revolution” in the peninsula. Reflecting upon these different colonial experiences, Soenarno noted that on the eve of the Pacific War, the idea of political unity with Indonesia “was still strange to most Malays in Malaya”, and this continued to hold true after the occupation<sup>70</sup>. It was not so much that such views were unacceptable, but that the abstraction of such notions to a Malay society still wedged between traditional world of the sultans, aristocracy, and the *kerajaan* prevented its translation into a mass movement<sup>71</sup>. As Soenarno went on to suggest, mass politics “went too far against the established Malay tradition of respect and loyalty towards the instituted government”<sup>72</sup>.

For the Malay elites, the civic and egalitarian ideology behind the Indonesian revolution was antithetical to their political objectives, while the very

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<sup>69</sup> This point has been suggested in Rustam Sani, “*Tradisi Intelektual Melayu dan Pembentukan Bangsa Malaysia: Berberapa Persoalan Sosial*” in Ahmat Adam, Kassim Ahmad and Rustam Sani, *Intelektualisme Melayu: Satu Polemik*. Kertas Kadangkala Bil.5. [Bangi: Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, 1989] 73-105; C.W. Watson, “The Construction of the Post-Colonial Subject in Malaysia” in Stein Tonnesson and Hans Antlov (eds), *Asian Forms of the Nation*. [Richmond: Curzon, 1996] 306-322. Alternative interpretations are found in Kassim Ahmad, *Characterization in Hikayat Hang Tuah*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1955] and Donald Nonini, *British Colonial Rule and the Resistance of the Malay Peasantry, 1900-1957*. Monograph Series 38. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992].

<sup>70</sup> Soenarno, “Malay Nationalism”, 9.

<sup>71</sup> There is hence some resonance between the traditional elite’s view of radical nationalism in Malaya and the views of their counterparts in Sumatra to Indonesian nationalism. As far as the Javanese were concerned, this “traditional world” had long been destroyed by Dutch colonialism.

<sup>72</sup> Soenarno, “Malay Nationalism”, 22.

social-political institutions that the Indonesian masses were so bent on dismantling were elevated to the status of unifying symbols of Malay nationalism<sup>73</sup>. While the issue of post-colonial boundaries served as the point of reference for Indonesian nationalism, in Malaya it revolved around consociation, competition and consensus between the dominant Malay community and ethnic minorities over the manner to which the former could impose its presence upon, while at the same time accommodate, the interests of the latter<sup>74</sup>. Insofar as the traditionalists were concerned, nationalism was a Malay, as opposed to a “Malayan”, phenomenon, and the challenge was the creation of an identity as a nation rather than an entity as a state. The cornerstone to the post-colonial political structure was likewise envisaged to be Malay ethnic dominance. This was represented by the centrality of Malay symbols such as the sultanate and *kerajaan*, Islam, Malay language and Malay primacy in Malayan society<sup>75</sup>. The critical importance of the sultanate and *kerajaan* in Malay culture has been described as such:

The Malay states had long been in existence . . . they had developed their own socio-cultural, economic and political norms. Loyalty and patriotism within these states had become ingrained characteristics of the public life of their people. Many of the Rulers by 1946 were descended from long lines of ancestry which imposed upon them a duty to be true to the traditions set by their forebears; above all they had always to uphold the safety, integrity and sovereignty of their states. Granted that they were largely feudal aristocrats; but there is not a shadow of doubt that the Malay rulers of 1946 understood deeply that in their persons rested the ultimate responsibility for the survival and well-being of their states. . . . the existence of well-established nationalist concepts of loyalty and patriotism within the nine states was thrown into bold relief when the Malays in general and from different

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<sup>73</sup> See Mohd Aris Othman, “The Sultanate as the Basis for Malay Political and Cultural Identity from a Historical Perspective”, *Sari*, Vol.1, No.2 (July 1983).

<sup>74</sup> Karl von Vorys, *Democracy Without Consensus: Communalism and Political Stability in Malaysia*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1976] 15.

<sup>75</sup> For an incisive discussion on the Malay political identity, see Clive Kessler, “Archaism and Modernity: Contemporary Malay Political Culture” in Joel Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (eds), *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*. [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992].

strata of their society rallied and united to oppose the British proposals and defend the sovereignty of their rulers and states<sup>76</sup>.

Anthony Milner further articulated: “loyalty and service to the race were described in precisely the same terms as had been used for centuries to convey devotion to a sultan”<sup>77</sup>; while Cheah Boon Kheng noted that “royal power is crucial to an understanding of the Malay political mind”<sup>78</sup>. Invented or otherwise, the centrality of Malay identity remains synonymous to the modern Malaysian state, and its ebb and flow continues to dictate the course of Malaysian politics. Within this cultural framework the immediate post-war period witnessed the increasing dominance of traditional and mainstream elements and the simultaneous diminution in influence of the radical Malay movement in the evolving nationalist discourse.

While the issue of Malay supremacy was central to the Malay political psyche, it was the Malayan Union scheme, proposed by the British in October 1946 as a potential political framework for the subsequent transfer of sovereignty, that provided the catalyst for the consolidation and institutionalisation of Malay defence of their political rights and privileges as “sons of the soil”<sup>79</sup>. Two implications of the Malayan Union stood out insofar as the status of the Malays were concerned. First, under the scheme the status and sovereignty of the sultan was to be circumscribed, and authority on all matters, including religion, were to be subjected to British control<sup>80</sup>. Second, the Malayan Union scheme also sought to enact flexible citizenship laws to allow easier access to citizenship for

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<sup>76</sup> James Ongkili, Nation-Building in Malaysia, 1946-1974. [Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985] 46-47.

<sup>77</sup> A.C. Milner, “Inventing Politics: The Case of Malaysia”, Past and Present, Vol.132 (1991), 109.

<sup>78</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, “The Erosion of Ideological Hegemony and Royal Power and the Rise of Postwar Malay Nationalism, 1945-46”, Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Vol.XIX, No.1 March 1988, 3.

<sup>79</sup> Detailed analysis of the Malayan Union scheme have been provided by Anthony J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics; Albert Lau, The Malayan Union Controversy, 1942-1948. [Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990]; Noordin Sopiee, From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region, 1945-1965. [Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya, 1974]. Stockwell provides a study of the British policy and its shortcomings, Lau discusses the theme of balance between the rights and demands of the various ethnic groups, while Sopiee presents the Malay side of the argument.

<sup>80</sup> Great Britain, Malayan Union and Singapore: Summary of Proposed Constitutional Arrangements. London, 1946, para 7.

minorities<sup>81</sup>. Because the terms of the Malayan Union undermined the position of the sultans, the traditional foci of Malay loyalty and identity, and at the same time threatened Malay primacy, it was perceived as an immediate threat to Malay identity and became the impetus for the formation of UMNO (United Malay National Organisation)<sup>82</sup>. What was most significant about the impact of the Malayan Union scheme on the overall constellation of Malayan politics was the fact that it galvanised the traditional elite. Once comfortable with their position of privilege and protection under British colonialism, the Malayan Union proposal quickened among this traditional elite the realization that the era of colonialism was coming to its conclusion<sup>83</sup>.

Many from traditional centres of power were also wary of the pan-nationalists and their socialist ideals. The former had made no secret of their support for the Indonesian model of civic and egalitarian nationalism, and had identified with and latched onto it as a premise to politicise kinship with their revolutionary Indonesian counterparts<sup>84</sup>. Yet insofar as pan-national objectives of the Malay radicals were concerned, to the traditional Malay elite the concepts of *Melayu Raya-Indonesia Raya* were not based on equality of status for Malaya and Indonesia. Rather, it was viewed as the subservience of Malay interests to that of a proclaimed egalitarian Indonesia-inspired nationalism, which they felt was a

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<sup>81</sup> This consideration was made specifically in response to ethnic Chinese pressure for recognition of their war-time resistance against the Japanese, an effort Britain felt obliged to recognize and reward.

<sup>82</sup> For a detailed study on the response of the Malay community to the Malayan Union proposals, see Anthony Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics*.

<sup>83</sup> Two caveats are in order here. First, the support of the mainstream nationalists for the sultans and the concept of *Kerajaan* in the wake of the Malayan Union scheme did not necessarily imply predetermined loyalty. Indeed, it must be kept in mind that UMNO's objectives were primarily the protection of the Malay race and identity, and their status and interests within it, and the survival of the sultanate mattered only insofar as it was an integral aspect of Malay society. This was emphasised in "*Suatu Mengenai asas Kenegaraan Melayu*", *Utusan Melayu*, 16 November 1983. Second, one needs also to take stock of the fissures within UMNO itself. Here, one recognises that UMNO was itself divided between the conservative and aristocratic "old school" elements that assumed leadership of the party in the course of negotiations for independence, and the so-called "ultras" who, having thrown their weight behind UMNO, still sympathised with the philosophy of the radical Malay movement in the manner to which they were critical of the conservative leadership who in their view were not articulating the political and economic interests of the majority of the Malay population. One particular trait they shared with members of the radical Malay movement was their sentiments toward Indonesia. For example, it was known that some such as Jaafar Albar, Syed Nasir, Ghafar Baba and Abdul Aziz Ishak were less critical of Indonesia than the old-school aristocrats of UMNO.

<sup>84</sup> See Leo Suryadinata, "Indonesian Nationalism and the Pre-war Youth Movement", A Re-examination", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.IX, No.1 (March 1978).

cover for Javanese hegemony<sup>85</sup>. On this matter Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, once noted “if they (Indonesia) stuck to the present system of centralised rule by the Javanese, there could be no future peace or stability and this presented considerable dangers for Malaysia”<sup>86</sup>. In view of the repercussions of the Indonesian revolution on traditional structures of authority, this section of the Malay elite understood unification with Indonesia to mean the inevitable marginalization of the Malay community in the peninsula and a loss of the privileged status accorded them by the British. The situation was aggravated by the fact that in championing the Indonesian conception of egalitarian nationalism, their radical opponents had directly challenged Malay tradition and protocol.

The underlying difference between radical and traditional politics within the domestic arena in Malaya lay in how they envisaged the emancipation of Malay society was to be achieved. It has already been discussed how the radical group conceptualised emancipation through absorption into *Indonesia Raya*. The nationalist ideology (insofar as they had one) of the English-educated middle and upper class that constituted the traditional elite however, was grounded on different premises. Of this, Anthony Milner wrote:

Concepts of ‘the nation’ . . . were in fact enunciated only in the most limited and hesitant way . . . . What preoccupied the ideologues was the contest between several social ideals, particularly that between the monarchical vision and two other concepts of community, the first based upon the community of Allah and the other upon Malay ethnicity<sup>87</sup>.

For them, the preservation (albeit with some adjustments) and not eradication of the traditional Malay state structure remained the priority. This put them diametrically opposed not only to the Malay radicals, but the spirit of Indonesian nationalism as well. This point was not lost to the Indonesian nationalists, who would have greater sympathy for the cause of the Malay radicals now grouped into the MNP (Malayan Nationalist Party, consisting mainly of members from the

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<sup>85</sup> A prominent Malaysian historian highlighted to the author that conservative Malay leaders such as Onn Jaafar saw the Indonesian struggle and a Javanese, not Indonesian, struggle. Interview with Cheah Boon Kheng, Penang, 17 September 2002.

<sup>86</sup> Document H 2/1-264, FCO 24/243, PRO.

defunct KMM movement, formed on 17 October 1945) and to whom the baton of agitation for Malayan independence under the auspices of *Indonesia Raya* was passed<sup>88</sup>. These different conceptions over the character of post-colonial Malaya would later play an important role in inspiring Indonesian accusations against the mainstream Malay political elite of complicity with British neo-colonialism.

In the thinking of the conservative quarters in Malaya then, the Indonesian experience had no place in Malay nationalism, and after the war the traditional Malay elite would distance themselves from the violence of the Indonesian national revolution even as the radical Malay nationalists embraced and sought inspiration from it. In truth, the suspicion among the Malay traditional elite that Dutch colonialism was merely supplanted through revolution by Javanese cultural and political imperialism appeared to be corroborated by the post-revolution politics that was taking shape in Indonesia in the 1950s, where a disconcerting increase in Javanese dominance of the Indonesian political process was taking place. Consequent professions of impartiality by the central government cut no ground with regional discontentment, and separatist elements sprouted throughout the archipelago. The grievances of the many anti-republic regional movements have been summarized as follows:

- The Central Government is Javanese-dominated. It appoints Javanese even to the key positions in the provinces;
- It is divided, impotent, and corrupt;
- It milks the provinces of revenues and makes altogether incommensurate returns by way of grants;
- It has not itself provided the provinces with any coherent development plan, nor has it permitted the provinces to formulate and execute their own;

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<sup>87</sup> Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995] 282.

<sup>88</sup> It should be noteworthy that the first president of the MNP, Moktar U'd-din was Javanese, and the MNP had some 60 000 members who were reportedly Indonesian.

- It obscures the lines of authority between Djakarta and the provinces and procrastinates on fulfilling promises of local “autonomy”, meaning increased local self-government;
- It has failed to reorganize the hastily contrived provincial system to make adjustment for the real facts of geography, culture, and politics<sup>89</sup>.

It was also becoming evident to the Malayan political elite that not all the ills of the new Republic of Indonesia were attributable to the cumulative effects of three centuries of colonialism, but that some were directly attributable to the disruptive forces unleashed in the name of revolution<sup>90</sup>. Chief among their concerns was the possibility of a spill-over of Indonesia’s revolutionary fervour into their comparatively tranquil political domain. This was a particularly disturbing prospect given the fates of their kith and kin from the Sumatran aristocracy and *kerajaan* caught against the tide of Indonesian nationalist fervour. Insofar as the traditional elite in Malaya were concerned, their opponents from the MNP were tainted with the brush of Indonesian radicalism.

Two incidents in the early 1950s sharpened Malayan sensitivities. The first pertained to the Indonesian government’s pursuit of the perpetrator of the Westerling Rebellion into Malaya. In January 1950, Captain “Turk” Westerling, an officer in the Dutch Armed Forces, attempted a violent takeover of Bandung in the hope of triggering an Indonesia-wide uprising against the new Indonesian republican government. Though the rebellion was swiftly quashed by the Indonesian military, Westerling escaped. Because Westerling was thought to have operated out of Singapore and Penang, the Indonesian government subjected British and local authorities in Singapore and Malaya to a barrage of accusations of connivance in the rebellion<sup>91</sup>. A second incident surrounded what has come to be known as the Hertogh affair. This incident revolved around the fight for custody over Maria Hertogh, a Dutch Catholic girl who was placed by her mother under the care of a Malay nursemaid during the Japanese occupation. When the

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<sup>89</sup> See WAH-2-57, “Challenges to Central Government in Indonesia”, American Universities Field Staff Report, Southeast Asia Series, Vol.V, No.2, 28 February 1957.

<sup>90</sup> WAH-5-56, “Indonesia and the New Malayan States”, American Universities Field Staff Report, Southeast Asia Series, Vol.IV, No.2, 20 February 1956.

<sup>91</sup> “*Angkatan Perang Ratu Adil, 1950*”, A4357/265, NAA.

battle for custody between the foster and biological mothers was resolved in favour of the latter after prolonged litigation, Singapore and Malayan Malays of Indonesian background were suspected to have been actively involved in instigating the racial riots in Singapore and Malaya that followed the unpopular court decision<sup>92</sup>. Indeed, British intelligence reported the detention of some 700 pro-MNP Indonesians and people “of Indonesian race” in Malaya under emergency regulations<sup>93</sup>. Both these incidents alerted the conservative elements within the Malayan leadership to the spectre of unwelcome violence threatened by the interest of over-enthusiastic politicised Indonesians in Malayan affairs.

The concern among Malaya’s conservative elite and the sultans for the influence that Indonesia could have on elements of the radical Malay political movement was also shared by the British<sup>94</sup>. Poulgrain summarized British sentiments in the following manner:

The imposed colonial boundary along the Malacca Straits did not alter the traverse of local culture or the exchange of people and ideas, nor was it an impediment to the flow of revolutionary idealism from Indonesia to Malaya. In ethnic terms, many of the people who live on either side of the Malacca Straits are Malay. The proximity of Malaya and Sumatra created a historical conduit, not only longitudinal – up and down the famous Malacca Straits – but also transverse. Had Indonesian colonialism, harboured for centuries, crossed the narrow watery division between archipelago and peninsula and taken hold, then Britain’s tenuous postwar position in Malay would have been jeopardized<sup>95</sup>.

In response to the establishment of the API (*Angkatan Pemuda Insaf*) youth movement under the auspices of the MNP to encourage the Malay community to support the MNP’s call for immediate independence within an Indonesian federation, British intelligence reports warned: “One need only remember the close kinship between Malays of Malaya and the Malayan peoples of the rest of

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<sup>92</sup> WAH-5-56, “Indonesia and the New Malay States”.

<sup>93</sup> Telegram 159 from Commissioner General (Southeast Asia), Singapore to British Embassy, Jakarta, 13 August 1951, FO 371/92486, PRO.

<sup>94</sup> See CO 537/1529, No.11, 25 May 1946, quoted in Anthony Stockwell, *Malaya: Part I of the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948*. [London: HMSO, 1995] 236-239.

Indonesia. What the latter can do, can be done equally well by the Malays of this Peninsula”<sup>96</sup>. Ultimately, it was their close alliance with the British colonial administration that saw the conservatives prevail in this contest of identities with the radical Malay nationalists. In the search for “ideological consensus”, left-wing parties and ideologies that espoused pan-nationalism were quickly labelled subversive and deviant, and eliminated by colonial repression and, after independence in 1957, by coercive instruments of control deployed to justify the preservation of internal security and stability.

The situation was exacerbated by the persistence of the issue of political unification with Indonesia, which continued to be a key political objective of radical Malay movements into the early 1950s. While UMNO and the British colonial administration were focused on ironing out the terms of independence, elements from the MNP were expressing through their party manifesto their unremitting desire to draw Malaya closer to Indonesia. Three points in the manifesto stood out to that effect:

- To unite the Malay nation (*bangsa Melayu*) and to inculcate national feelings in the hearts of the Malay people (*orang-orang Melayu*) with the ultimate aim of making Malaya unite with the big family, namely, the Republic of Greater Indonesia (*Republik Indonesia Raya*);
- To foster friendly relations with other domiciled races in this country to create a united and prosperous Malaya as a component member of *Republik Indonesia Raya*;
- To support the Indonesian nationalist movement for the achievement of independence<sup>97</sup>.

As with its predecessors, the MNP’s brand of Malayan nationalism that sought to win independence via unity with Indonesia stemmed from the need of the Malays to compensate for the fact that they were fast becoming a minority in their own homeland in the wake of the encroachment into their politics and economics by

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<sup>95</sup> Greg Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, 1945-1965*. [Bathurst: Crawford House Publishing, 1998] 31-32.

<sup>96</sup> CO 537/1581, Nos. 14, 15 & 16, 31 May to 22 June 1946, quoted in *ibid*, 245-246.

<sup>97</sup> UMNO file SG. 96/146, Akrib Negara Malaysia.

Chinese and Indian minorities. In return, Indonesian youths sympathetic to the cause of the MNP subsequently moved to form the *Perikatan Pemuda Malaya – diluar Tanah Air* (Overseas Malayan National Youth Movement) in Jakarta to propagate the MNP cause of Malayan independence. When the MNP was later banned in 1953, it resurfaced in Indonesia as the *Kesatuan Malaya Merdeka* (Independence of Malaya Movement).

## VII. Popular pressures

Notwithstanding the obvious concern among the vast majority of the political leadership in Malaya for the impact the Indonesian revolution and its legacy for the future of Malaya, the question of how to relate to Indonesia in light of their historical links as well as more recent experiences remained an understandably complex issue. The primary reason for this lay in the observation that the concern Malay leaders had about identifying themselves closely with Indonesia at the political level was still clouded by the fact that even these aristocrats and conservative elites in the peninsula (let alone the Malay population in general, who continued to have family ties across the Melaka Straits) were to some extent constrained by the historical legacy of kinship the Malay population shared with their Indonesian cousins. Nowhere was this dichotomy starker than in the impact of the Indonesian revolution on Malay popular opinion. For example, it has been noted that at grassroots level, many peninsular Malays had in the wake of Indonesia's struggle against colonialism erected photographs and portraits of Indonesian heroes such as Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, and named streets after Indonesian heroes of the past and present<sup>98</sup>.

The intensity of popular support for Indonesia was not lost to the Malay elite. During his battle against the Malayan Union project Onn bin Jaafar explicitly appealed to Indonesian migrants to "safeguard the positions of the Malays"<sup>99</sup>. After independence, Tunku himself was aware that "a large

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<sup>98</sup> Indeed, the renowned Malay poet Usman Awang once noted that "Sukarno was our leader as much as Indonesia's. I never missed listening to his speeches".

<sup>99</sup> Critchley to Tange, 29 November 1957, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 1, NAA.

proportion of the Malays had other loyalties – to Indonesia”<sup>100</sup>. It has also been noted earlier that many Malays from the peninsula actively participated in the Indonesian revolution. Throughout the 1950s, 17 August independence celebrations at the Indonesian Embassy in Malaya were a matter of festivity for Malays, and the event was celebrated in a “village atmosphere” akin to traditional festivals in Malay-Indonesian culture<sup>101</sup>. Even Malayan authorities have conceded the fact that to most Malays, Sukarno and Hatta were not merely champions of Indonesia, but of the Malays in the peninsula as well<sup>102</sup>. Such popular sentiments forced the Malay elite to temper public expressions of their reservations toward Indonesia, and this was reflected in the public statements of even the most wary of Malay leaders. UMNO founder-president Onn bin Jaafar once mentioned the possibility of Malaya integrating itself into the United States of Indonesia along with British Borneo<sup>103</sup>. Onn had apparently expressed the opinion that a pan-Malay union consisting of Malaya, Indonesia and Borneo should be a political objective of the leaders of the Malay World<sup>104</sup>. Later, even the incredulous Tunku Abdul Rahman expressed similar sentiments when he opined that Malaya “want(s) to unite with Indonesia, but as an independent country”<sup>105</sup>.

### Concluding remarks

The ease to which kinship appeared to be socially and culturally constructed in anti-colonial discourse in the Indo-Malay World creates a difficult puzzle which this and the previous chapter has attempted to illuminate. If, in fact, similar language and religion are pre-requisites for nationalism, why indeed did two separate states emerge out of what appears to be one *Ethnie*? In attempting to

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<sup>100</sup> Critchley to Tange, 22 November 1957, *ibid*.

<sup>101</sup> “The Malay Dream Remains as Elusive as Ever”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 April 1985.

<sup>102</sup> Department of Information, Malaysia, *Let the World Judge: Speeches of the Malaysian Chief Delegate to the Security Council, Dato Dr. Ismail bin Abdul Rahman, on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September 1964*. [Kuala Lumpur: Department of Information, Malaysia, 1964] 4.

<sup>103</sup> *Malaya Tribune*, 11 August 1948.

<sup>104</sup> This was related in Said Zahari, *Dark Clouds at Dawn: A Political Memoir*. [Kuala Lumpur: Insan, 2001] 161.

<sup>105</sup> *Utusan Melayu*, 2 June 1955.

disentangle the convolutions of kinship politics in nationalist discourse during this complex period of the region's history, it emerges that the unfolding of the kinship factor was indelibly linked to both the highly contested discursive terrain of identity, and in particular "Malay" identity, as well as with the emergence of distinct brands of nationalism in response not only to these contested notions of identity, but also political expediency as a result of the sudden termination of the Pacific War.

By the end of the war, two nationalist assemblages had evolved in colonial Malaya, with distinct ideologies and positions on affiliation with Indonesia. Where nationalist discourse in Malaya was once the sole prerogative of the socialist radicals of the KMM before the war, the post-war Malayan Union saw to it that a galvanised traditional elite would emerge to stake their political claims, rejecting the notion of political union with Indonesia in the process. Uppermost on the minds of this elite, particularly those in the upper echelon of UMNO, the inheritors of the colonial state, was the impact of the Indonesian revolution itself. Whatever empathy the Malay political elite of UMNO felt toward the Indonesian nationalist struggle was blighted by the debacle of the social revolution in Sumatra, which witnessed the decimation of traditional Malay structures that were still widely respected in the Peninsula. Consequently, the perceptions and interpretations of kinship on the part of these mainstream Malay political leaders were informed by the victimization of their cousins in Sumatra in the wake of Indonesian nationalism. The matter of the nascent Indonesian central government's inability or reluctance to stem the tide of the social revolution left a mark on the minds of the mainstream Malayan nationalists, who ironically had by then embarked on their own nationalism defined by the preservation of traditional political structures and symbols. In time, the negative perception of Indonesia as a Javanese-dominated state which made little attempt to accommodate the Sumatran *kerajaan* in the newly-formed republic would be further exacerbated by the left-leaning posture of the Sukarno administration and its proscription of the influential Sumatran-based Islamic party Masyumi, which enjoyed close ties with Malayan leaders.

The matter of social origins and political socialization of the respective nationalist leaders would serve to further aggravate already-pronounced differences. On the peninsula, anti-colonial activity was by and large instigated and led by Indonesia-inspired radical nationalists, most of whom were from humble backgrounds. In contrast, it was a cohort of pro-British, Western-educated traditional elite who stood at the forefront of mainstream Malay nationalism<sup>106</sup>. In many ways, the English educated Malay bureaucratic elite were socially and culturally alienated from the masses. Aristocratic elites, by virtue of their feudal nature, were even more so. This contrasted with the Indonesian experience, where lower and middle class Dutch-educated elite from Java and Sumatra such as Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta, Sutan Sjahrir, Agus Salim, Muhammad Yamin and others formed the backbone of the anti-colonial movement and identified with the social, political and economic alienation of the masses, and subsequently rose to prominence through the trials and tribulations of detention and subsequently revolution<sup>107</sup>. Because of their alienation, the Malay conservative elite still had to come to terms with a society that, though respectful of traditional structures of authority, regarded the Indonesian nationalists as “Malay heroes”.

From the Indonesian perspective, the aristocratic and conservative advocates of mainstream Malayan nationalism were trapped in their world of feudalism and moderation, and hence were illegitimate representatives of the national struggle<sup>108</sup>. Clearly, the egalitarian Indonesian nationalism that was emanating from Java and driving the re-stratification of society, destruction of tradition, and eradication of the feudal and aristocratic class, was the very antithesis of the Malay-based nationalism many on the peninsula hoped to pursue. It was evident from the consequences suffered by the traditional Sumatran elite, who agitated for the protection of their privileged status, that the new Indonesian

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<sup>106</sup> For a detailed study of the political acquiescence of the traditional elite in Malaya, see Tim Harper, *End of Empire*; Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu*.

<sup>107</sup> See Firdaus Abdullah, *The Origins and Early Development*, 12-13.

<sup>108</sup> For Indonesian perspectives of this, see Roeslan Abdulgani, *Indonesia dan Percaturan Politik Internasional*. [Surabaya: Yayasan Keluarga Bhakti, 1993] 198-199.

state would not entertain such political demands<sup>109</sup>. Not surprisingly, the alacrity with which political conservatism was dispensed with as a result of their clash of conceptions with the revolutionaries over the social-political basis of the new state (or rather, the position of Sumatra and other outer island territories within the Javanese-dominated Indonesian state and societal structures) was viewed as a disturbing development and tempered traditional Malay elite support for Indonesian de-colonisation<sup>110</sup>. Representing the apprehensions of the ruling elite, the following thoughts of Tunku Abdul Rahman reveal the sober sense of vulnerability they felt in the wake of the appeal of Indonesian nationalism for the Malay population:

The Ruler who had enjoyed sovereignty and prestige under the British rule were equally concerned. After independence they had seen how many thrones in India, Pakistan and Indonesia had toppled. What would be their fate if the British left? Would the people accept them? They felt that they would be at the mercy of the Malay extremists. The general pre-*Merdeka* feeling was that this country would go the way of our neighbours, from prosperity to poverty, from happiness to sadness and from peace to violence. Even Datuk Onn, the founder of UMNO and a great Malay leader, had shared the views of the Rulers and others against complete independence<sup>111</sup>.

Tunku's musings spoke much of the contradictions confronting the traditional Malay elite as they viewed developments in Indonesia. First, it was clear that unlike the Indonesian nationalists' opinion of Dutch colonialism, the Malay elite were of the view that colonialism under the British was a time of

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<sup>109</sup> See Reid, *Blood of the People*, chap 3; Michael van Langenberg, "Class and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia's Decolonization Process: A Study of East Sumatra", *Indonesia*, Vol.33 (April 1982). Of course, in the eyes of these traditional elite outside of Java, the new Indonesian state was in fact a Javanese-conceived entity, and constructed to sustain Javanese dominance.

<sup>110</sup> See Robert Curtis, "Malaysia and Indonesia", 12-14; Ariffin Omar, *Revolusi Indonesia dan Bangsa Melayu: Runtuhnya Kerajaan-Kerajaan Melayu Sumatera Timur Pada Tahun 1946*. [Pulau Pinang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1999]. For an alternative view of how traditional Indonesian royalty "transformed" its own shape and character, see Peter Carey, "Yogyakarta: From Sultanate to Revolutionary Capital of Indonesia – The Politics of Cultural Survival", *Indonesia Chronicle*, No.39, March 1986.

<sup>111</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, *Political Awakening*. [Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publication, 1986] 207-208. Tunku himself was closely related to the Sultan of Langkat.

“sovereignty”, “prestige”, “happiness”, “prosperity” and “peace”<sup>112</sup>. Moreover, many among the Malay elite were also of the opinion that total independence, which Indonesians were spilling blood for, was antithetical to the security of Malaya in view of the problem of communalism and communism, which required British assistance to subdue. Finally, many mainstream nationalists shared at the time an opinion that the kind of unification their opponents in the radical MNP proposed with Indonesia would have relegated Malays to the peripheries of *Indonesia Raya*. In view of this, it was portentous that Sutan Sjahrir, Sumatran Prime Minister of Indonesia from November 1945 to February 1947 and one of the more moderate among Indonesian revolutionaries, had exhorted Onn bin Jaafar to “remain in friendship with the British and to build up his own show”<sup>113</sup>.

This final point however, revealed a fundamental cleavage in perceptions of kin-based pan-identity between its Malay and Indonesian proponents that not many have recognized. To Ibrahim Yaacob, Burhanuddin, and their compatriots, unification with Indonesia was based on a subscription to what they perceived in their minds to be the preponderance of Malay identity in the region<sup>114</sup>. Hence, unity within *Indonesia Raya* was assumed to be based on equal status for all Malay-dominant populations, which to them centred on Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Correspondingly, a brand of nationalism could be constructed across these territories along ethnic lines of *Bangsa Melayu* (The Malay nation)<sup>115</sup>. In effect, the Malay radical nationalists’ train of thought echoed Muhammad Yamin’s vision of an “Austronesian Confederation” of Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines<sup>116</sup>. For them, co-identification with Indonesia was to

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<sup>112</sup> These terms were used in various classified documents by the traditional Malay leadership to describe their colonial experience in comparison to Indonesia.

<sup>113</sup> CO 537/2177, 23 January 1948, in Stockwell, *Malaya*, 374.

<sup>114</sup> The contradictions that confront the Malay socialists on this front are addressed in Muhammad Ikmal Said, “Ethnic Perspectives of the Left in Malaya” in Joel Kahn and Loh Kok Wah (eds), *Fragmented Vision*, 277-278.

<sup>115</sup> See Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu*. [Bukit Mertajam: Pustaka Semenanjung, 1954]; See also Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu*, 191-199. Ariffin asserts that “although Burhanuddin claimed that his concepts of *Bangsa* and *Kebangsaan Melayu* were not racial, they were nevertheless exclusive”.

<sup>116</sup> Yamin had argued for the formation of such a confederation of the “Three M’s” – Melaka, Mataram (an ancient Javanese kingdom), and Malolos (Philippines), nations which he viewed as originating from a common stock and possessing identical culture. See Arnold Brackman, *Southeast Asia’s Second Front*. [London: Pall Mall, 1966] 318.

be premised on the dominance of *Bangsa Melayu* or a “Malay nation”, of which Indonesia was a part.

From the point of view of its subscribers in Indonesia however, the basis for *Indonesia Raya* was found neither in racial-ethnic affinity nor the preponderance of Malay identity, even though this did lie at the surface of their pan ideology. According to their interpretation of the ethno-historical record, the Malay Peninsula was part of the great Javanese Majapahit Empire, and political unification with Malaya in contemporary times was co-terminus with its reconstruction<sup>117</sup>. Illustrative of this was Yamin’s contention that:

To separate Malaya from the rest of Indonesia amounts to deliberately weakening from the outset the position of the People’s State of Indonesia in her international relations. On the other hand, to unite Malaya to Indonesia will mean strengthening our position and completing our entity to accord with our national aspiration and consistent with the interest of geopolitics of air, land and sea<sup>118</sup>.

Knowingly or otherwise, on the part of these Indonesians, underwriting their conception of pan-identity was a notion of Javanese dominance<sup>119</sup>; and because *Indonesia Raya* was a geopolitical rather than racial or ethnic construction, this allowed them to discard the visions of pan-nationalism more easily when the complexities of the post-war political environment truncated any possible usurpation of British Malaya on this pretext<sup>120</sup>. In a telling indication of the different terms of reference the term *Melayu Raya*, popularised by Malay radicals, was hardly used among the Indonesian nationalists to describe what they saw more aptly as *Indonesia Raya*, a greater Indonesian nation whose boundaries spanned the extents of the ancient kingdom of Majapahit as they saw it.

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<sup>117</sup> This comes across clearly in the speeches of Sukarno cited earlier, as well as in the works of the Indonesian Nationalist ideologue Mohammad Yamin. See Yamin, *Naskah Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*. [Jakarta: Siguntang, 1959] 127-135.

<sup>118</sup> Statement by Muhammad Yamin at the meeting of the BPKI in BPKI, *The Territory of the Indonesian State*, 6.

<sup>119</sup> This is interesting for the fact that Mohammad Yamin, the chief ideologue and progenitor of Pan Indonesia based on a revival of Majapahit, was a Sumatran.

<sup>120</sup> For the relatively less significance placed on pan idealism on the part of Indonesian nationalists, see Abdul Rahman Ismail, “*Takkan Melayu Hilang di Dunia: Suatu Sorotan Tentang Nasionalisme Melayu*” in R. Suntharalingam and Abdul Rahman Ismail (eds), *Nasionalisme: Satu Tinjauan Sejarah*. [Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti, 1985].

The kinship factor then, though significant in laying the basis for co-identification in the anti-colonial struggle, was nevertheless a convoluted phenomenon in the emerging politics of the Malay World. It quite clearly generated both binding and divisive dynamics, and the manner in which it played out depended in particular on how the various streams of nationalist thought on the peninsula conceptualised their affiliation with Indonesia, which of these streams eventually inherited the post-colonial order, the shape of Indonesian and Malayan national identity as they evolved, and eventually how they came to understand the terms of reference of their relations as post-colonial kin states. These unresolved convolutions would subsequently cloud the functional aspects of relatedness, defined as the fulfilment of expectations and obligations of kinship, in the immediate post-colonial years.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **1949-1965: Enemies Beneath the Skin**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed in detail the relevance of the kinship factor to the nationalist projects in the Malay World. While its significance was no doubt magnified in the common struggle against colonialism, underneath this solidarity lay substantial differences in terms of how the kinship factor was conceived to be a basis for affinity among various political quarters in Indonesia and Malaysia. Concomitantly, these contested conceptions of kinship resulting from alternative interpretations of history and historical experience played a significant role in influencing the shape and direction of post-colonial relations. As the domestic process of state consolidation and identity formulation was put into motion, so too did the different worldviews that emerged out of respective historical experiences work to further transform conceptions of kinship in the era of post-colonial boundaries. It was also in the post-colonial era that the functional aspect of relatedness took on greater prominence in political relations, when affinity had to translate into policy.

#### **I. The shaping of foreign policy outlooks**

An accomplished scholar of Indonesian foreign policy has described the post-colonial Javanese-dominated Indonesian worldview in the following manner:

The struggle for independence exposed the weakness and vulnerability of the Indonesian state arising from its fragmented social and physical condition. In addition, an awareness of the attraction of Indonesia's bountiful natural resources and the importance of its strategic location between the Indian and Pacific Oceans reinforced an apprehension of external powers. By contrast, that common international outlook encompassed also a proprietary attitude towards the regional environment<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*. [London: Allen & Unwin, 1983] xiv.

The “proprietary attitude” Michael Leifer wrote of stemmed from the fact that Indonesian independence was won through revolution and the central Indonesian state created through a conspicuous act of nationalist will. This informed the outlook of the political elite in Jakarta towards newly-formed states within its geographic locale. Malaya in particular was singled out as a state requiring “revolutionizing” as a result of their “counterfeit independence”<sup>2</sup>.

The belief prevalent among the political and military elite in Jakarta at the time was that independence could never be “granted” by imperialists nor “won” in collaboration with them, but had to be fought for if it were to be considered genuine. By this token, it was not surprising that the Indonesian leadership was highly critical of the nationalist credentials of the Malay ruling elite on the peninsula. This was corroborated by Franklin Weinstein’s survey of the attitude of Indonesian leaders to Malaysia, where he found that “as for Malaysia, there was more to admire, but there were still grave doubts about the authenticity of its independence”<sup>3</sup>. Symptomatic of this was a quip directed at Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman by Sukarno. On the occasion of a visit by Tunku in 1955 (in his capacity as Chief Minister of British Malaya), Sukarno reportedly turned to him during a public rally and proclaimed, “Here is a man I am trying to persuade to fight”<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, the condescension in Indonesian attitudes to Malayan leaders set in train subsequent perceptions of expectations in relation to bilateral relations. Because of the nature of their respective independence struggles, many among the Indonesian leadership viewed Malaya’s standing as one of deference. Yet under Tunku however, as it was soon to become clear, Malaya was unwilling to assume this role.

It needs to be said that the revolutionary diatribe of the Jakarta leadership during this period was hardly an issue of mere political rhetoric. Indonesian foreign policy, described in official discourse as *Bebas dan Aktif* (independent

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<sup>2</sup> See Frederick Bunnell, “Guided Democracy Foreign Policy: 1960-1965”, *Indonesia*, Vol.11 (October 1966) 37-76; see also George Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*. [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952] 253-270.

<sup>3</sup> See Franklin Weinstein, *Indonesian Foreign Policy and the Dilemma of Dependence*. [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976] 166-171; See also Mohammad Hatta, “One Indonesian View of Malaysia”, *Asian Survey*, Vol.V (March 1965) 139.

<sup>4</sup> Marvin Ott, “The Sources and Content of Malaysian Foreign Policy towards Indonesia and the Philippines”, Ph.D dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University, 1971, 11.

and active), strove to provide substance to flamboyant policy statements. Very early on, this was manifested in the Hatta government's rejection of a Philippine suggestion for the formation of an anti-communist Pacific Pact in May 1950. This trend was followed by subsequent governments from Mohammad Natsir, who succeeded Hatta in August 1950, through to 1959. Later, foreign policy making during the period of Guided Democracy (1959-1965) became auxiliary to the domestic purpose of sustaining the revolutionary culture of Indonesian politics. The nationalistic character of Indonesia's foreign policy during this period was registered most conspicuously in Jakarta's demand for West Irian, an unresolved issue carried over from the 1949 Round Table Conference at which the Dutch reluctantly recognised Indonesian independence, and one over which no Indonesian administration could afford to compromise as a symbol of national fulfilment. By the mid-1950s, the non-aligned impetus to foreign policy began taking more concrete form in Indonesia's founding role at the 1955 Bandung Afro-Asian Conference. As further evidence of Indonesian attempts to project a non-aligned foreign policy, Jakarta also roundly condemned Washington's sponsorship in September 1954 of a Collective Security Defence Treaty for Southeast Asia and took a decidedly anti-Western position in response to the British and French invasion of Egypt in 1956.

By mid-1957 however, it was becoming clear that the Sukarno administration's "independent and active" policies were becoming more aligned with those of the Soviet Union and China. This was particularly noticeable after the President's visits to the two communist giants the year before. The advent of the Guided Democracy era saw diplomatic belligerence raised to a level where much resource and attention was given to the prescription of an alternative regional and international order. Indonesia's radical foreign policy was taken to the extreme as much out of a need to divert domestic attention from the increasingly precarious political and economic situation in Indonesia as to an intensified assertion of the revolutionary legacy of Indonesia's international outlook. Indeed, many of Indonesia's trademark policies during this period were targeted at challenging the prevailing regional and international order. It is from this perspective that the Jakarta's relationship with Malaya should be viewed.

One point of interest during this time was Jakarta's inordinate interest in the evolution of independent Malaya, the international outlook of its political leadership, and its position on international affairs. Already, at the Malayan independence celebration, Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio had expressed to the Australian High Commissioner that Malaya was "particularly important" to Indonesia<sup>5</sup>. This active interest in Malaya's affairs would be further magnified by Indonesia's proprietary attitude to regional entitlement on affairs concerning archipelagic Southeast Asia. It was from this vantage point that Jakarta questioned the "neutrality" of early post-colonial Malayan foreign policy. Robert Tilman, a close observer of Malayan foreign policy, has described Kuala Lumpur's position on international affairs as that of a "committed neutral"<sup>6</sup>. This characterization of Malayan foreign policy, particularly in the early years of independence, has been erroneous. Many in the Kuala Lumpur policy circles were avowed anti-communists. Most notable was Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, who himself claimed that:

It is sheer hypocrisy to suggest that when democracy is attacked we should remain silent and consider ourselves at peace with the world. Small as we are, we are not cowards and we are not hypocrites. In fact, today neutralism is no guarantee of one's safety. India was neutral before she was attacked. Many other countries will soon find themselves in the same predicament<sup>7</sup>.

Because of Malaya's underlying concern for communism, it was difficult for them to convince Indonesia (or indeed their own domestic opposition) of their neutrality.

The newly independent Malayan government's strong foreign policy inclinations towards the West was epitomised by the priority placed on relations with Britain and the Commonwealth<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore it was the ANZAM

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<sup>5</sup> "Relations between Malaya and Indonesia", A1838 3006/4/7 Part 2, NAA.

<sup>6</sup> Robert O. Tilman, "Malaysia Foreign Policy: The Dilemmas of a Committed Neutral" in J.D. Montgomery and A.D. Hirschman (eds), *Public Policy*. [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969] 115-159.

<sup>7</sup> Tunku's address to Parliament, 5 December 1962, 39/87/2, DO 169/74, PRO.

<sup>8</sup> This despite former Malaysian Foreign Minister Ghazalie Shafie's insistence that in emphasizing relations with Britain and the commonwealth Malaya was not compromising on sovereignty nor subservient to British interests. See for example, Ghazalie Shafie, address delivered at Tunku Abdul Rahman Hall, Kuala Lumpur, 26 January 1960.

agreement of 1949 and subsequently the AMDA (Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement) signed with Britain in October 1957 that underwrote Malayan security<sup>9</sup>. While one could suggest that Malayan commitment to neutrality and non-alignment was exemplified by Kuala Lumpur's absence from the SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), the fact that the Malayan government remained firmly committed to the AMDA and was part of ASA (Association of Southeast Asia), an organization which included two countries (Thailand and the Philippines) which were signatories of security arrangements with the US, was in itself indicative of Malaya's inclinations on questions of alignment<sup>10</sup>.

The issues and events surrounding the formation of SEATO are of particular relevance to any attempt at understanding the early currents of Indonesia-Malaysia relations. Here, it was the ambiguity surrounding Malaya's position on the organisation that evoked the ire of an Indonesian government strongly convinced of its futility and suspicious of its intentions. Tunku had noted in private that while he and his cabinet "fully understood that the ultimate defence of Malaya lay in SEATO, politically the word 'SEATO' could not be safely used in connection with anything Malayan without provoking hysteria"<sup>11</sup>. It was likely that on his mind was the pressure being exerted by pro-Indonesian forces within the Malayan parliament for Kuala Lumpur to dissociate itself from Britain. While the Malayan leadership saw the need for rhetorical compromise, it was also keenly aware of London's warnings "not to give handle to Indonesian propaganda . . . to the effect that British forces are here primarily for (our) own purposes rather than to defend Malaysia and that defence agreement is a neo-colonial imposition on Malaysia"<sup>12</sup>. In fact, Tunku had tacitly supported the security function of SEATO. This was evident in the Commonwealth Secretary's report to Prime Minister Macmillan:

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<sup>9</sup> Australia and New Zealand subsequently signed on to participate in this security agreement in April 1959.

<sup>10</sup> Of course, the Abdul Rahman government's pro-West policy expressed through AMDA was not without its critics at home. In particular, UMNO backbenchers and the opposition parties were vocal in their criticisms that the security pact compromised Malayan sovereignty. See Malaya Legislative Council, *2<sup>nd</sup> Debates*, Vol. 3, 1957-58. [Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers, 1959] 67-69.

<sup>11</sup> Draft report titled "Participation in SEATO Activities by Commonwealth Forces based in the Federation of Malaya", JP(59) 66(A), 28 May 1959, DO 35/9957, PRO.

If it were a question of active operations in support of SEATO, no difficulties would be placed in our (Britain's) way. So long as his (Tunku's) government was in power, we (Britain) could safely plan on the assumption that British forces could move by road or any other means direct from Malaya into Siam<sup>13</sup>.

On another occasion, Tunku had gone to the extent of claiming that "the Federation of Malaya, by signing a mutual defence treaty with Britain is indirectly in the SEATO"<sup>14</sup>. This association between Malaya's commitment to AMDA and Britain's obligation to SEATO was clear from Article VI of the so-called "Singapore Proviso" in the Malaysia Agreement of 1963. The provision, which was essentially an extension of the AMDA agreement of 1957 to cover the additional territories of Malaysia in 1963, gave Britain the right "to make such use of these (Malayan) facilities as the (British) Government may consider necessary for the purpose of assisting in the defence of Malaysia, and for Commonwealth defence and the preservation of peace in Southeast Asia". It was clear from the final sentence of Article VI that these provisions were designed to secure maximum cooperation of Malaya in a SEATO contingency, when the "peace in Southeast Asia" was threatened. Interpreted in this manner, this agreement certainly lent credence to Indonesian suspicions that AMDA was a neo-colonial imposition with Malayan contrivance.

Given Malaya's tacit backing of SEATO, it is also interesting to note that the Tunku's administration still refrained from official commitment to the organisation. As often as he espoused the value of SEATO to Malaya, he was also fervent in publicly rejecting any prospect of Malayan participation in it, arguing that Malaya did not believe in alliances<sup>15</sup>. On the issue of SEATO membership, it has come to light that the Tunku's administration refrained from participating in SEATO for purely domestic reasons, for fear that sentiments in

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<sup>12</sup> Telegram 1306 from British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 2 August 1965, DO 169/397, PRO.

<sup>13</sup> Record of conversation between the Commonwealth Secretary and the Prime Minister of Malaya in London on 18 October 1960, DO 169/170, PRO.

<sup>14</sup> Inward Telegram No.32 from British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 21 February 1958, DO 35/9957, PRO.

<sup>15</sup> See "Why Malaya does not intend to join SEATO", Straits Budget, 14 January 1959.

Malaya were strongly against Malayan involvement in any military alliance<sup>16</sup>. The vagaries behind the Malayan government's policy proclivities toward SEATO surfaced in public debates over Malaya's involvement in Laos in the late 1950s, where Malaya only barely managed to convince Britain that evoking the AMDA agreement would put Kuala Lumpur in a tenuous position on the domestic political front<sup>17</sup>. Explaining this phenomenon, the British High Commissioner noted:

Even the Malays are divided on issues of the greatest importance to the Government. This division arises from the fact that a large proportion of them . . . are of Indonesian origin and sympathizers, and that most of the Malay vernacular press is under Indonesian influence. This group has shown signs of regarding the Tunku as too much committed to the West . . . . As a whole they seem to incline towards socialism and neutralism on the Bandung model. These trends have been discernible in UMNO itself, particularly in its youth sections<sup>18</sup>.

As for Indonesia's response to Malaya's commitment to the West, any hopes that Jakarta harboured of weaning Malaya away from the West and SEATO influence were effectively laid to rest when during his visit to Jakarta in November 1958, Malayan Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak expressed the opinion that while Malaya was not part of SEATO, it did not and would not oppose it<sup>19</sup>.

Not only was Malayan foreign policy during this period effectively pro-West in substance if not in form, it was also marked by attempts to manage regional security issues. Malaya was the progenitor of the regional cooperation initiative SEAFET (Southeast Asia Friendship and Economic Treaty) in February 1959, which would eventually evolve through an arduous process into ASA (Association of Southeast Asia) by July 1961. As it happened, Malayan interest in regional leadership was taking shape during the height of Indonesian internationalism and in Jakarta's own regional locale, and the latter's response to Malayan prescriptions for regional order clearly illustrated the extent of the clash

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<sup>16</sup> Australi High Commission Cable no.2274, 14 August 1964, A1838 2498/11 Part 2, NAA..

<sup>17</sup> See JP(59) 66(A), 28 May 1959, DO 35/9957, PRO.

<sup>18</sup> Report entitled "*Federation of Malaya: Review of Events Since Independence*", CRO Reference MAL 30/11, DO.35/9957, PRO.

<sup>19</sup> Foreign Office, London, Southeast Asia (General) File D 10362/11, December 1958, DO 35/9951, PRO.

that seemed inevitable under these circumstances. Indonesia frowned upon Malaya's SEAFET and ASA proposals, arguing that they ran counter to the Bandung spirit and weakened Afro-Asian solidarity<sup>20</sup>. Compounding matters was Tunku's public disregard for the Non-Aligned Movement. In January 1958 Tunku criticized non-aligned countries for not taking a definite stand against communism. Later, in a veiled challenge to Indonesia, he contested the viability and effectiveness of Bandung, the jewel in the crown of Indonesia's international activism, by asking mockingly: "Where is this conference? Where is its permanent organisation which the Bandung conference proposed? To whom do we apply to become members?"<sup>21</sup>. In a further affront to the Sukarno regime, Tunku jested that guided democracy meant "you don't know which way you're going to be guided"<sup>22</sup>.

Bilateral tensions as a result of divergent conceptions of regional order were aggravated, paradoxically enough, by the fact that Malaya's opposition and challenge to Indonesian regional primacy did not actually preclude the possibility of Indonesian membership and participation in the regional organs envisaged by Kuala Lumpur. Nevertheless Indonesia's participation in any of Malaya's regional initiatives was clearly an issue involving prestige. Bearing this in mind, participating in and contributing to the realization of any regional initiative that originated from outside of Jakarta was viewed as a submission of its regional leadership role, a surrendering of its prestige in Southeast Asia and the Third World, and an undermining of its revolutionary legacy. Indeed, these differences in perceptions of each other's regional role would serve to be a major stumbling block for attempts to premise their relations as sovereign nation-states on kinship.

## **II. Indonesia-Malaya Treaty of Friendship, 17 April 1959**

Even before contending regional perspectives came to the fore, tension between Indonesia and Malaya had already been brewing with the latter's

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<sup>20</sup> Correspondence between British Embassy, Jakarta and Southeast Asia Department, Foreign Office, London, 11611/59, 22 May 1959, DO 35/9913, PRO.

<sup>21</sup> "Malaysia's Search for Identity", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 February 1964, 355.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

independence. Indonesian suspicions of the benign circumstances surrounding Malayan independence in August 1957 was certainly portentous of the potential problems that would confront relations between these kin states. Likewise, the fact that the Malayan political elite viewed Indonesia as a possible security threat was evident early in their independence when Kuala Lumpur expressed reservations that Britain's contemplated arms supply to Jakarta would add to Indonesia's offensive potential<sup>23</sup>. That said, Malayan leaders were also acutely aware of the special consideration that relations with Indonesia demanded. In assessing the popular pressures he faced, Tunku's belief was reported by High Commissioner Critchley to this effect:

There was now a very strong feeling amongst many Malays who looked to Indonesia as a "big brother" which his government could not ignore. He pointed out that two-thirds of the Malays in Johore, most of the Malays in Kuala Lumpur, and one cabinet minister (Sardon) were Indonesian. He also said that most of the Malay press was controlled by Indonesian-trained journalists<sup>24</sup>.

Domestic pressures dictated attempts to premise relations with their larger kin neighbours on the kinship factor of shared language, religion and cultural practice<sup>25</sup>. In an attempt to place relations on such a footing, Tunku Abdul Rahman had earlier paid a goodwill visit to Indonesia in his capacity as Chief Minister of Malaya in 1955. Subsequently in early 1957, Malaya opened a diplomatic mission in Jakarta. When the mission was converted to an embassy after Malayan independence, Tunku chose as his ambassador a trusted political ally, Senu bin Abdul Rahman. The following observations on Senu's arrival in Jakarta were telling of the terms of Indonesian expectations at that juncture:

In accordance with a pleasant local custom, all other commonwealth Heads of Mission joined . . . to offer an informal welcome to Malaya's first Ambassador . . . . These occasions are normally small and quite unofficial, with no Indonesians present other than a representative of the protocol division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Yesterday's

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<sup>23</sup> See Commonwealth Relations Office Telegram, FE 35/282/3, 28 April 1959, DO 35/9951, PRO.

<sup>24</sup> Critchley to Casey, 7 November 1957, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 1, NAA.

<sup>25</sup> See Department of Information, Malaysia, Malaya-Indonesia Relations, 31 August 1957 to 15 September 1963. [Kuala Lumpur: Department of Information, 1963] 1.

arrival . . . attracted considerable attention. The airport was thronged with press reporters and photographers; the proceedings were broadcast by *Radio Republik Indonesia*; and the airport building was decorated with an enormous welcoming poster<sup>26</sup>.

During an official visit to Jakarta in November 1958 however, Deputy Prime Minister Razak, for reasons never made clear, was apparently confronted abruptly with a cultural agreement in a final form and his signature promptly solicited. Needless to say, Razak was taken aback by the forcefulness of this Indonesian gesture. He explained that the Federation government could not conclude treaties in this fashion, and that a draft would have to be examined in Kuala Lumpur and agreed by the cabinet before any commitment was made. It would have been clear to Malayan policy makers that these early events were premonitions that bilateral relations would entail subservience to an enthusiastic Indonesia seeking to exert influence upon Malayan policy. For Malaya, a thin, easily transgressed line lay between cordial bilateral relations on the one hand, and what could be conceived as Malayan acquiescence to Indonesian tutorship and directives on the other.

Notwithstanding the problems that simmered beneath the surface in those formative years, both states were receptive enough to the potential for collaboration as kin states to have entered into a friendship treaty. From a Malayan perspective, the signing of the treaty itself is significant in that it remains the only Treaty of Friendship ever signed by Kuala Lumpur<sup>27</sup>. Signed on 17 April 1959 on the occasion of the Indonesian Prime Minister Djuanda's goodwill visit to Malaya, the treaty was supposed to "restore blood and racial relations" and "re-discover common heritage", building on precisely the historical ties of kinship that was interpreted to have existed and which functioned as a rallying point for anti-colonial struggle. The main clauses of the treaty, focusing as they did on language standardization and enhanced cultural and educational exchanges, attested to attempts at emphasizing avenues of kinship as a basis for bilateral relations.

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<sup>26</sup> McIntyre to Tange, 2 October 1957, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 1, NAA.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Zainal Sulong, Kuala Lumpur, 14 August 2001.

Djuanda's visit however, did not pass without controversy, even if tensions were masked by forced displays of camaraderie. It was notable for example, that the Indonesian delegation did not appreciate the inordinate amount of time spent on formal calls to feudal rulers<sup>28</sup>. Also, Indonesia's cool reception to Tunku Abdul Rahman's scheme for the establishment of the SEAFET did not go unnoticed. On his part, the Tunku was reluctant to express overt support for the five principles of Bandung, choosing instead to make reference to the UN Charter. It was clear from this that Malaya was still anxious not to be drawn too far into the Afro-Asian fold with which Indonesia was closely identified. Furthermore, Malaya's emphasis on SEAFET over Bandung was viewed as an affront in Indonesian circles. Two years later, in a commentary comparing ASA, the successor to SEAFET, and Bandung, the Malayan media tellingly reported: "the one remains what it was at Bandung, the expression of nationalist fervour among ex-colonial territories; the other is an association looking to economic, social and cultural advance"<sup>29</sup>. The Indonesian press retorted by arguing that the association was doomed to failure without Indonesian participation<sup>30</sup>. Central to Jakarta's reaction to Kuala Lumpur's foreign policy initiatives was their dislike of what they saw as a newcomer taking the initiative in an area where they considered themselves as rightful leaders. They resented how the Malayan leadership could declare themselves to be "neutral" while in effect showing benevolence to the West. In the words of an Australian observer, "the Tunku has been showing too much initiative and independence for the liking of a people who promoted and staged the Bandung Conference and who confidently expected to have the new independent Malaya in their pocket"<sup>31</sup>. This acrimony led to the cancellation of Prime Minister Djuanda's reciprocal visit to Kuala Lumpur in 1961<sup>32</sup>.

Contending perspectives on regional security were not the only avenue for discord between the two kin states. Other indirect diplomatic fracas included

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<sup>28</sup> Critchley to Casey, 30 April 1959, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 2, NAA.

<sup>29</sup> "Beginning at Bangkok", *Straits Times*, 4 August 1961.

<sup>30</sup> "Malaya: The Indonesia Issue", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 March 1961, 433.

<sup>31</sup> McIntyre to Quinn, 8 March 1959, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 2, NAA.

<sup>32</sup> Secretary of State, Prime Minister's Office, London, to Tunku Abdul Rahman, MAC 20/67, 23 January 1961, DO 35/9951, PRO.

Indonesia's criticism of Malaya's condemnation of China in the wake of the latter's colonization of Tibet, which Indonesia saw as a matter of China's "domestic affairs", as well as Jakarta's withdrawal of its UN contingent from the Belgian Congo, apparently from a change of policy position, but which occurred coincidentally right after Malaya sent theirs.

It was quite evident then, that Malaya's foreign policy prerogatives were emerging fundamentally and diametrically opposed to that of Indonesia's. On hindsight, it is not surprising that in spite of the promptings of the opposition Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, consisting of residual elements from the pro-Indonesia MNP, the Friendship Treaty was not followed up with further plans to strengthen cooperation<sup>33</sup>. Similarly, while a measure of cultural cooperation persisted, particularly in the realms of language policy and religious exchange, politics remained at a level separate from everyday affairs. On the contrary, events surrounding this period of relations indicated that the leaderships of these two kin states were instead headed toward confrontation. It would be three issues pertaining directly to Indonesia's sense of national and territorial vulnerability that would become the definitive markers of how leaders of both Indonesia and Malaya perceived and interpreted their relations as kin states in this period.

### III. PRRI/Pemesta Rebellion

A major crisis that had long standing repercussions for relations pertained to Malaya's policy towards a renegade regional movement that sought to challenge the Indonesian central government in Java.

By the late 1950s, regional dissent against the central Indonesian government was fast fermenting into a political movement to challenge the authority of Jakarta. In December 1956, the West Sumatra military command revolted and took over civil administration. In March 1957, a similar military-based regional political movement was formed in Sulawesi. Named Pemesta (an acronym for *Piagam Perjuangan Semesta Alam* or Universal Struggle Charter), this movement was formed in retaliation against the Jakarta government's

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<sup>33</sup> "Malaysia's Search for Identity", Far Eastern Economic Review, 13 February 1964, 354.

clampdown on smuggling activity undertaken by the military commanders and units in Sulawesi to supplement the meagre funding given by the central government<sup>34</sup>. Later on 15 February 1958 a group of dissident politicians and military officers in Sumatra formed the PRRI (*Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* or Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) in Padang and Bukittinggi, West Sumatra. What was noticeable about the PRRI/Permesta movement was that it consisted of essentially non-Javanese, Muslim and generally pro-Western elements in Indonesian politics. By virtue of this, the PRRI rebels had propensities similar to the newly independent administration in Malaya. Beyond their similar political outlook, kin affiliation felt by the Malays in Malaya toward Sumatra was much more resilient than their feelings toward the Javanese, and this would subsequently define both Malaya's response to the rebellion and the Javanese-dominated Indonesian central government's interpretation of Malayan intentions.

One of the immediate factors that precipitated the regional rebellion was the rapid decline of non-Javanese influence in the upper echelons of the central government. This was significant because until then Sumatra had enjoyed a strong presence in the highest levels of leadership in Indonesia through Masyumi and PSI (Indonesian Socialist Party), both regional parties with close links to Malayan political organisations (UMNO in the case of the former, and elements of MNP in the case of the latter). By the mid 1950s however, Javanese elements started to assert themselves in government, taking over key positions with the help of Sukarno. Symbolic of this was the resignation of the most prominent Sumatran nationalist, the respected Vice-President and Prime Minister Mohammad Hatta, in July 1956 out of a sense both of disillusionment at Indonesian developments and helplessness regarding the country's slide into political and economic chaos.

Alongside the decline in regional (and especially Sumatran) influence in the central government was the heightened tendency of the Sukarno administration toward authoritarianism and communism. A shift in the Sukarno administration's ideological propensities had begun to take shape by 1955-56.

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<sup>34</sup> Much of this smuggling, it must be noted, involved Malaysians.

Indicative of this was the decline in essentially pro-Western regional elements in the central government and the President's increasingly active flirtation with the left. By that time, Sukarno, duly impressed during his visits to the Soviet Union and China, had begun seriously contemplating establishing a form of leftist and authoritarian rule in the wake of Indonesia's apparently incurable political and economic problems.

When the Sumatran rebellion broke out, Malaya declared a policy of non-interference. At an official level, Kuala Lumpur also denounced foreign aid to the rebels and condemned external interference in Indonesian affairs. While ostensibly a public commitment to abstain from supporting the rebellion, the Malayan government's condemnation of foreign interference could also be read as a veiled attack on Soviet support for the central government in the latter's clampdown on the rebels. On the other hand, the rebels were receiving support, both psychological as well as material, from Britain and the US<sup>35</sup>. To London and Washington, the emergence of this alternative power centre was a good check on the reactionary potential of the forces of Indonesian nationalism represented by Sukarno and his supporters<sup>36</sup>. Further to that, the rebel government in Indonesia was also looking for SEATO assistance to overthrow Sukarno<sup>37</sup>. These developments created a predicament for a Malayan government closely allied to these Western powers.

The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the rebels shared a deep affinity with Malaya. By virtue of the fact that most of the rebels were Sumatran, there was a strong kinship bond between them and the Malays of the peninsula, with whom they shared much by way of indigenous culture, and in some respects even ethnicity. Moreover the rebels were also staunch anti-communists, further availing an ideological avenue for affiliation. This made it difficult for the Malays to view with equanimity the suppression of their Sumatran cousins by an

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<sup>35</sup> See George Kahin and Audrey Kahin, Subversion as Foreign Policy. [Washington and London: University of Washington Press, 1995]; Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, Feet to the Fire: Covert Operations in Indonesia, 1957-1958. [Annapolis, M.D: Naval Institute Press, 1999]; Matthew Jones, "Maximum Disavowal of Aid", English Historical Review, CXIV (November 1999).

<sup>36</sup> Memo 31/3 from the Colonial Office, 26 March 1959, DO 35/9951, PRO.

<sup>37</sup> Inward Telegram No.215 from British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, DO 35/9957, PRO.

overwhelmingly Javanese Indonesian military<sup>38</sup>. There is also evidence that at a conference of dissident leaders in Sumatra in January 1958 the desirability of federation between Malaya and Sumatra was discussed, and prominent rebels such as Colonels Hussein and Barlian were in favour of the idea in principle<sup>39</sup>. On another occasion, the rebel leaders in Sumatra were alleged to have assured the Dutch that if Java fell into communist (PKI) hands, Sumatra would declare independence, ostensibly with the support of Malaya<sup>40</sup>.

Despite Malayan proclamations of non-involvement, Jakarta was well aware of the fact that the rebels had access to arms purchased via Singapore and the Thai-Malayan border. The rebels were also able to obtain foreign exchange by engaging in trading activity through Singapore and Penang<sup>41</sup>. More significant was the fact that PRRI rebels and sympathizers were permitted to visit the Federation regularly to publicize their cause<sup>42</sup>. In the face of accusations of complicity, Kuala Lumpur maintained that these rebels held valid visas which the government was "bound to honour"<sup>43</sup>. Bilateral tensions reached new heights in the aftermath of the collapse of the regional rebellion, when despite protestations by Jakarta, rebels continued receiving asylum in Malaya on "humanitarian grounds"<sup>44</sup>. Certain quarters have also suggested that some Malaysians of Sumatran origin actively facilitated these rebels' flight to Malaya<sup>45</sup>. Using legalistic arguments, the Malayan government had maintained that there was no extradition treaty in place with Indonesia, and hence no basis for repatriation. Nevertheless to placate the Indonesian government's feelings, Kuala Lumpur enacted a law in which visas were issued to Indonesians only after they signed an

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<sup>38</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Commonwealth Relations Office, 164/104/5, 28 November 1961, DO 169/74, PRO.

<sup>39</sup> "Future Relations Between Indonesia and The Federation of Malaya", Foreign Office Steering Committee Paper, Southeast Asia (General), 7 April 1959, DO 35/9951, PRO.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew Jones, "Maximum Disavowal of Aid", 1192.

<sup>41</sup> Colonel Simbolon himself admitted to such activities in Payung Bangun, *Kolonel Maludin Simbolon: Liku-liku Perjuangannya dalam Pembangunan Bangsa*. [Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1996] 204.

<sup>42</sup> See Lawrey to Tange, 21 February 1958 and Cablegram no.84, Australia High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, 26 March 1958, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 1, NAA.

<sup>43</sup> Government of Malaysia, *Malaya-Indonesia Relations*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> These rebels included a group of former Indonesian diplomats stationed in Europe who had defected to the PRRI during the rebellion and who requested asylum in Malaya. See Government of Malaysia, *Malaya-Indonesia Relations*, 5-6.

<sup>45</sup> Marvin Ott, "The Sources and Content of Malaysian Foreign Policy", 117.

undertaking not to engage in politics whilst in the Federation. Kuala Lumpur also requested from Jakarta a list of names of offenders along with their invalidated travel documents so that the Malayan government could take legitimate measures to prevent their entry. By then however, a substantial number of these dissident rebels had already arrived in Malaya, knowing that they need not worry about repatriation.

In sum, Jakarta resented the Federation's harbouring of Sumatran rebels, as well as what it perceived to be Malaya's reluctance to curb their activities in Malaya. Indonesian expectations were for Malaya to take an active position to condemn the rebellion and provide support for the central government in Java. In the perception of the central government, diplomatic support from Malaya would have been significant given the knowledge in Jakarta that Britain, the US and Australia were actively supporting the rebels<sup>46</sup>. Moreover, any declared support on the part of Malaya for the central government would have assuaged Jakarta's enduring suspicion that Malayan foreign policy was in fact voluntarily skewed towards the West. Needless to say, this support was not forthcoming from Kuala Lumpur, and the failure, or rather unwillingness, of Malaya to "fulfil" such expectations was viewed with disdain in Jakarta. Indonesian "disappointment" at Kuala Lumpur's position on the rebellions would be publicly expressed several years later in a government report<sup>47</sup>. Evidently, President Sukarno was by that time already highly suspicious of Malaya's sincerity and intentions, and he was quoted at a public meeting on 8 April 1958 to opine that an attempt was being made by Malaya to create a new Islamic bloc in Southeast Asia including an independent Sumatra<sup>48</sup>.

On Malaya's part, its official position was that blood brotherhood, insofar as it existed with Indonesia, should not impede the application of international law, which Kuala Lumpur intended to abide by with regards to the repatriation of asylum seekers. Beneath this however, lay a concern for the manner in which

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<sup>46</sup> By July 1958, the Indonesian government could claim that it "has been able to learn in great detail the source and scope of outside assistance to the rebels". "Memorandum from Robertson to Dulles, 30 July 1958" in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960 Vol.XVII: Indonesia. [Washington: 1989].

<sup>47</sup> The Problem of "Malaysia". [London: Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, London, 1964] 1.

<sup>48</sup> G.P.S. DINF4/58/100 (Exaffs), 15 April 1958.

Jakarta's demands of the Malayan government clearly betrayed the former's expectations of deference on the part of the "younger brother" to its wishes. The Malayan government also found it difficult to condemn the Sumatran rebels for another reason: many among the Malay political elite considered Sumatra the cradle of the Malay race, whereas Java was seen as more distant (both geographically and culturally) and also the stronghold of communists<sup>49</sup>. Tunku himself was known to have felt strong sympathies towards the rebels<sup>50</sup>. The slant of the kinship factor in operation here is particularly interesting for, as suggested earlier, it was the close affinity between the Malays of the Peninsula and Sumatra that impeded close cooperation between Malaya and the Javanese dominated central government. Attesting to the potential political utility of this affinity, the opinions of Ghazalie Shafie expressed during a visit to Washington, quoted as follows, is worthy of note:

Regional feelings were strong in the country (Indonesia), and especially so in Sumatra and Sulawesi. He (Ghazalie) could cite no current dissidence in Sumatra but said he was in very close touch with the situation and with many responsible Sumatran leaders and was convinced that Sumatra is "on the move". . . . Ghazalie said that Malaysia was quite capable of taking advantage of this situation, but insisted that his country is not taking action to do so just yet. He felt that when the time came the mistakes of 1958 should be avoided, that the United States and the West should stay out of the picture, and that Malaysia should be the power to stimulate action, using Indonesians with whom it is in contact<sup>51</sup>.

With fewer words but no less authority, Tunku Abdul Rahman is known to have expressed his opinion that if he so much as stretched out his hand at that time, Sumatra "would have been his"<sup>52</sup>. Indonesia's concern for the lack of support on

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<sup>49</sup> Shanahan to Tange, 1 February 1958, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 1, NAA.

<sup>50</sup> Critchley to Quinn, 2 April 1959, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 2, NAA. In fact, Tunku was known to have expressed sometime later that "it was unfortunate that Colonel's revolt against Sukarno failed" – Cablegram no.465, Australia High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, 23 December 1962, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 3, NAA.

<sup>51</sup> US National Archives, RG 59, POL 7 Malaysia, memorandum of conversation, 23 July 1964, also quoted in Matthew Jones, "Maximum Disavowal of Aid", 1214.

<sup>52</sup> Discussions with Michael Leifer, London, 28 September 2000.

the part of Malaya for its territorial integrity was further aggravated by Kuala Lumpur's position on the former's claim over the Dutch territory of West Irian.

#### IV. West Irian

Indonesia's claim to West Irian was carried over from the inconclusive terms of the 1949 Round Table Agreement, when sovereignty over the Dutch East Indies was transferred to Indonesia<sup>53</sup>. The Agreement provided that the political status of West Irian was to be determined by negotiations between the signatories within a year of its signing. Negotiations took place at various times from 1952 to 1956, but proved inconclusive as the Dutch refused to rescind their claim. Indonesia, on the other hand, claimed that *de jure* sovereignty rested with them. Diplomatic support for Indonesia's cause was provided by the Soviet Union and the Afro-Asian bloc. As sabre-rattling over West Irian intensified, the Dutch dispatched military reinforcements to West Irian in mid-1960<sup>54</sup>. Indonesia retaliated by stigmatising this action as "provocative", and launched an intense propaganda campaign within the Afro-Asian bloc against the Dutch. The fiery and abrasive rhetoric of Indonesian leaders fed the nationalistic fervour that the West Irian issue was inspiring in Indonesia<sup>55</sup>. Matters came to a head when Jakarta declared a policy of "Confrontation" against the Netherlands over West Irian on 21 July 1960; diplomatic ties were broken on 17 August 1960, Indonesia's independence anniversary.

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<sup>53</sup> See Ide Anak Agung Gde Agung, *Twenty Years Indonesian Foreign Policy, 1945-1965*. [The Hague: Mouton and Co, 1973] 79-177; x Colin Brown, "Indonesia's West Irian Case in the UN General Assembly", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. VII, No.2 (June 1976).

<sup>54</sup> The most memorable example of Dutch military pressure was the dispatch of the aircraft carrier *Karel Doorman* in an exercise of gunboat diplomacy toward Indonesia.

<sup>55</sup> In his Independence Day speech of 1950, Sukarno declared "The Irian question is a question of colonialism or non-colonialism, a question of colonialism or independence. Part of our country is still colonized by the Dutch. This is reality and we cannot accept this . . . according to our Constitution, Irian is also Indonesian territory, territory of the Republic of Indonesia – not tomorrow, not the day after tomorrow, but now, at this very moment. If a settlement by negotiation cannot be arrived at within this year a major conflict will arise over the issue of who will be in power in that island from then onward. For once again I declare: we will not stop fighting, we will continue fighting, we will keep on fighting whatever may come, until Irian has been returned to our fold". Sukarno's nationalistic rhetoric was echoed by other leaders such as Subandrio, who declared that "Indonesia was determined to meet force with force over West Irian", and Nasution, who proclaimed "the struggle for West Irian will be determined on the soil of West Irian itself".

West Irian not only remained a thorn in relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands, but also emerged as an increasingly precarious security issue in Southeast Asia. Indeed, it was precisely the destabilizing potential of a military conflict over West Irian that drew Malaya into the fray as a possible mediator. More specifically, it was the expressed fear of the Malayan government at the time that an Indonesian confrontation with the Dutch over West Irian would play into the hands of the PKI and give the communists a foothold in the largest country in Southeast Asia, thereby threatening the security of Malaya itself. The fact that communist countries were Jakarta's major source of political support and Moscow their main source of material assistance further aggravated Malayan concerns<sup>56</sup>. The situation was made even more precarious by the fact that in pursuit of the nationalistic, propagandistic objectives in his West Irian campaign, Sukarno had brought the Indonesian economy to the brink of collapse in order to make a political point<sup>57</sup>. It was these concerns that drove Tunku Abdul Rahman to offer himself as a mediator on the West Irian issue<sup>58</sup>.

The notion of Malaya playing the role of mediator in this dispute was from the very beginning questionable insofar as the Indonesian government was concerned. Given that Malaya had abstained from voting on the West Irian question at Twelfth UN General Assembly in September 1957, and in so doing drawn a negative response from Indonesia, it was hardly surprising that elements within the Indonesian government had misgivings toward Malayan intentions<sup>59</sup>. The perceptual and diplomatic repercussions of this lack of support from Kuala Lumpur were aggravated by the fact that after a trip to Kuala Lumpur, Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio had returned with what apparently was a promise of

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<sup>56</sup> For a discussion of communist support for Indonesia's West Irian cause, see WAH-14-62, "The Irian Barat Settlement", American Universities Field Staff Report, Southeast Asia Series, Vol.X, No.18, 15 October 1962.

<sup>57</sup> It was after the failure of Indonesian objectives at the 1957 UN General Assembly that a series of takeovers of Dutch enterprises began. Because of the still extensive Dutch economic presence in Indonesia at the time, the policy of nationalisation plunged the Indonesian economy into chaos. This point was stressed in Amry Vandenbosch, "Indonesia, the Netherlands and the New Guinea Issue", Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. VII, No. 1 (March 1976), 110.

<sup>58</sup> Inward telegram, Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 20 September 1960, DO 169/70, PRO.

<sup>59</sup> See Peter Boyce, Malaysia and Singapore in International Diplomacy. [Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1968] 54.

Malayan “support”<sup>60</sup>. Subsequently, Malaya’s reluctance to throw its lot behind Indonesia’s claims at the UN drew criticisms not only from Indonesia, but from pro-Indonesia Malay circles in Malaya as well. Indeed, the domestic repercussions caught the Malayan government by surprise, and prompted a change in policy towards the Indonesian claim when the matter arose again at the UN in November that same year.

After November 1957, Malaya began pressing for the peaceful departure of the Dutch from West Irian<sup>61</sup>. Malaya’s Ambassador to Jakarta, Senu Abdul Rahman, was dispatched with a personal letter to President Sukarno to ascertain Indonesia’s willingness regarding Malaya’s offer to mediate the conflict. In response, Prime Minister Djuanda accepted Malayan mediation on behalf of Jakarta<sup>62</sup>. The Indonesian government’s positive response was further reiterated by Armed Forces General Nasution during his visit to Malaya in 13 October 1960<sup>63</sup>. Nevertheless, other parties expressed doubts as to the efficacy of Malayan mediation. To that effect, the British High Commissioner noted somewhat prophetically in October 1960: “It is questionable whether he (Tunku Abdul Rahman) has appreciated the delicacies and difficulties of the issue or realised that his activities in his self-appointed role as mediator may do little more than annoy both parties”<sup>64</sup>.

With Indonesia’s apparent blessings, expressed through Djuanda and Nasution, the Tunku presented his proposal that West Irian be placed under UN Trusteeship (monitored by Malaya, India and Ceylon), after which sovereignty was to be transferred to Indonesia. To gain support for his proposal, Tunku embarked on an international mission which took him to the capitals of the major

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<sup>60</sup> Document 1-1 1061/3, 28 November 1957, DO 35/9951, PRO.

<sup>61</sup> Department of Information, Malaysia, Malaya-Indonesia Relations, 8.

<sup>62</sup> President Sukarno was away on vacation at the time, and Dr. Djuanda accepted the Tunku’s letter in his capacity as acting President.

<sup>63</sup> It should be noted however, that General Nasution was initially less receptive to the Malayan government’s offer to mediate. It was only after he was shown Dr. Djuanda’s letter of appreciation that he spoke more supportively of the idea. Government of Malaysia, Parliamentary Debates. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Rakyat, 1960-1967] 3419.

<sup>64</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Commonwealth Relations Office, London, KL-C-187, 21 October 1960, DO 169/170, PRO.

Western powers<sup>65</sup>. Despite the expressed reservations of those consulted, by the close of his diplomatic tour the Tunku and Dutch Prime Minister Jan de Quay signed a Communiqué stating inter alia that “the Netherlands Government was willing to subject their policies in Netherlands New Guinea to the scrutiny and judgment of the United Nations”<sup>66</sup>. While seemingly clear, the Communiqué in fact suffered from fundamental misinterpretations on the Tunku’s part, which led to the unravelling of his diplomatic effort as well as the generation of negative sentiments in both the Indonesian government and public towards him. In the main, Tunku had misread Dutch intentions. The Dutch, as de Quay made clear to Tunku *after* the signing of the Communiqué and the press conference that followed, had agreed to the Tunku’s proposal to transfer West Irian administration to UN Trusteeship *with the sole objective of self-determination for the West Irian population*.

Despite Tunku’s public claims that “it would not be in keeping with my own nationality to side with somebody who has got no blood connection with us whereas, on the other hand, the Malays and Indonesians are, what we might call, blood brothers”, the signing of the Communiqué amounted to a diplomatic *faux pas*, which cast doubts in Indonesian minds over Malayan intentions<sup>67</sup>. The situation was further aggravated by the Tunku’s delay in presenting the terms of the Communiqué to Jakarta officials, who first came to know of it only via the media. Foreign Minister Subandrio subsequently criticized Tunku Abdul Rahman in public for acting without prior consultation with Jakarta, and declared that the only UN intervention acceptable to Jakarta was its supervision of the transfer of West Irian from the Netherlands direct to Indonesia<sup>68</sup>. A scathing Indonesian press campaign against the Tunku followed<sup>69</sup>. The Malayan government protested Subandrio’s criticisms and the press attacks by highlighting the Jakarta government’s previous support for the Tunku’s initiative. It is now known that the Tunku himself was close to divulging a letter from Djuanda, which they both

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<sup>65</sup> It should be noted that not all the countries supported the Tunku’s proposal. Australia and New Zealand in particular had reservations. Inward telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office, London from Canberra, 7 November 1960, DO 169/170, PRO.

<sup>66</sup> “Tunku meets Dutch leaders on W.Irian”, *Straits Times*, 26 November 1960.

<sup>67</sup> Government of Malaysia, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3414.

<sup>68</sup> Department of Information, Malaysia, *Malaya-Indonesia Relations*, 9.

had earlier agreed to commit to secrecy, explicitly approving Malayan mediation<sup>70</sup>. Subandrio subsequently issued an apology through an official from the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, Suska, expressing gratitude for the Tunku's efforts and goodwill. Nevertheless he also made clear to the Malayan government that Indonesia no longer approved the temporary UN Trusteeship scheme.

Even though bilateral relations were prevented from deteriorating further with Subandrio's apology, events surrounding the Tunku's mediation attempt touched raw nerves and revealed Indonesian perceptions of and attitudes toward Malaya. First, it was clear that beneath Jakarta's apparent approval of the mediation efforts suspicions of Malaya's intentions persisted. This was evident in the fact that several members of the Indonesian government, such as Subandrio and Nasution (before he was made aware of Indonesia's "official" position) were less than enthusiastic over Tunku's proposal. Sukarno's position on Malayan mediation was also questionable, though it should be noted that in the aftermath of the Tunku's failed attempt at mediation, he did send a personal letter to the latter acknowledging his efforts. Nevertheless still implicit within his appreciative words was Sukarno's dissatisfaction at the outcome of Tunku's mediation:

Although the Indonesian Government did not expect that a Joint-Communique would be issued by your Excellency and the Dutch Government, yet we did not make any announcement at that time, despite the fact that the Joint-Communique had already created doubts among the Indonesian populace . . . .

I am sure Your Excellency would have understood that the Joint-Communique with all the accompanying explanation would set a strong reaction in Indonesia against the Government of the Indonesian Republic and Your Excellency, if there was no firm objections from yourself or your side. Due to this, Minister of Foreign Affairs,

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 9-10.

<sup>70</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Commonwealth Relations Office, London, C.207, 27 January 1961, DO169/171, PRO.

Subandrio, considered it necessary to issue a statement opposing the statement made by Mr. Luns . . . .

As Your Excellency knows, whether it was in my explanation or from the letter of Dr. Djuanda from the President's office, the people of Indonesia regard West Irian as an Indonesian territory . . . . Based on this consideration, the Indonesian people regard the additional statements on the Joint-Communique as an attempt to force Indonesia to acknowledge Dutch sovereignty over West Irian<sup>71</sup>.

The veiled import of the letter is evident upon close reading. In it, Sukarno essentially agreed with Subandrio's actions, indicated that the Tunku made a mistake in signing the Joint-Communique, and that Indonesia would not recognise the document.

Second, the fact that throughout the entire West Irian episode (including the period of Tunku's mediation) the Malayan government never once declared official support for Indonesia's position on West Irian was not lost on the Jakarta government. As a scholar of Indonesian affairs once noted succinctly:

It is an indication of the mental gulf that separated their (Malayan) thinking from that of the Indonesians that Tunku Abdul Rahman should have offered, on his own initiative, to mediate the Indonesian-Dutch dispute. The substance of his proposals was in itself highly offensive to the Indonesians, who considered that Irian should have been surrendered together with the rest of the Netherlands East Indies at the time of the transfer of sovereignty. The very proposition of such terms implied that the Malaysians were more concerned with a bloodless compromise between the two parties than with any genuine conviction of the rightness of Indonesia's case. That Tunku Abdul Rahman, as a fellow Malay and Asian, should have made such proposals at all, 'arbitrating' or mediating between the colonial power and its former victim added insult to injury<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> The unofficial translation of Sukarno's letter was attached to the document entitled "A Report on the Reports of the Honourable Prime Minister in Seeking a Peaceful Solution to the Problem of Irian Barat", Ministry of External Affairs, Kuala Lumpur, 15 December 1960, DO 169/171, PRO.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Curtis, "Malaysia and Indonesia", *New Left Review*, No.28 (November-December 1964) 22.

If anything, this entire episode hardened Indonesian views of Malaya as a colonial stooge who still danced to the tune of imperialism.

Finally, it can be ascertained on hindsight that evidence existed to corroborate Indonesian suspicions of Tunku's intentions. Records of the Tunku's private conversations with British Prime Minister Macmillan revealed that he in fact sympathised with and supported the Netherland's position that West Irian should only be relinquished via referendum<sup>73</sup>. When Macmillan expressed doubts over his proposal to hand West Irian over to Indonesia after a year of U.N. Trusteeship, the Tunku replied that:

The trustees need not hand over to anyone. The U.N. should decide . . . . The Indonesians could not afford to spend any money on West New Guinea which would be an expensive trusteeship for anyone to take on. The Indonesians would no doubt hope that the inhabitants of West New Guinea would eventually opt for union with Indonesia, but as they were still cannibals it would take some time before they were able to decide anything at all for themselves<sup>74</sup>.

On another occasion, he had admitted to the Commonwealth Secretary that "Indonesia has no claim on legal or racial grounds to this territory (West Irian)"<sup>75</sup>. As late as 1963 Tunku and his foreign secretary Ghazalie Shafie were still meeting with leaders of the Freedom Movement of West Papua and expressing sympathy for their cause against the Indonesian government<sup>76</sup>.

Jakarta's apprehensions mirrored the fact that in Indonesian opinion, Malaya's attempt to fashion a neutral mediatory role for itself implied Kuala Lumpur's opinion that there were in fact "two-sides-of-the-story". In this light, the gesture of mediation in effect flew in the face of Indonesia, which had expected from its Malayan kin unwavering support. Instead, mediation was interpreted as the audacious act of a government that never struggled for its

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<sup>73</sup> Tunku had given Macmillan an assurance that he would inform Jakarta that "trusteeship need not necessarily end in handover to Indonesia". Abdul Rahman to Macmillan, 16 November 1960, PREM 11/4309, PRO. The author found no evidence that suggests Tunku did in fact relay this sentiment to Jakarta.

<sup>74</sup> Correspondence between the British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Commonwealth Relations Office, London, KL 483/1, 7 October 1960, DO 169/170, PRO.

<sup>75</sup> Record of conversation between Commonwealth Secretary and the Prime Minister of Malaya, London, 18 October 1960, DO 169/170, PRO.

national independence, but that presumptuously deemed itself “qualified” to mediate over an issue that was clearly a vestige of Indonesia’s anti-colonial struggle. Bearing this in mind, it was indeed ironical that the final solution that Jakarta accepted for the resolution of the West Irian crisis in 1962 was in fact strikingly similar to the initial Malayan proposal for UN Trusteeship of West Irian.

Bilateral tensions notwithstanding, the fact that there was marked support among Malays for Indonesia’s cause during this entire episode should not be lost. When Malaya voted positively in support of a UN resolution on Irian in November 1957, the Malay press lauded it as “the right move in support of Indonesia, which is closely linked with Malaya”<sup>77</sup>. UMNO Youth members further sought permission from the authorities to volunteer for Indonesia’s cause against the Dutch should conflict foment<sup>78</sup>. The pro-Indonesia daily, *Utusan Melayu*, also emphasised:

It is with such a feeling of brotherhood that the people of Malaya are careful about any deed or word which might hurt the feelings of the Indonesian people and government. In fact, a similarly close feeling could not be shown towards Malaya’s other neighbours although Malaya desires good relations based on mutual understanding and aid<sup>79</sup>.

Correspondingly, the Indonesian Ambassador noted that these responses “proved that Indonesia’s expectations about the Federation’s foreign policy, particularly on colonial issues, was well justified”<sup>80</sup>. Tunku himself was aware of the constraints of popular sentiments of affinity on his policy choices, as he had on occasion noted to his British counterpart (almost apologetically, it seemed) that in the event hostilities broke out between Indonesia and the Dutch over West Irian, “Malaya . . . because of her affinity with Indonesia, might have to declare openly

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<sup>76</sup> Telegram No.2328 from British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 19 October 1963, DO 169/159, PRO.

<sup>77</sup> “Strengthening Mutual Understanding”, *Utusan Melayu*, 4 December 1957, in A1838 3006/4/7 Part 1, NAA.

<sup>78</sup> Critchley to Tange, 24 December 1957 in *ibid*.

<sup>79</sup> “Establishing Closer Relations with Indonesia”, *Utusan Melayu*, 26 September 1957, *ibid*.

<sup>80</sup> Horne to Tange, 13 December 1957, *ibid*.

her support of Indonesia”<sup>81</sup>. British officials had also noted prophetically in 1957 that “racial affinity with Indonesia and closeness of it (sic) make it politically difficult for Tunku to advocate policies unsympathetic to Indonesia and this will be one of his main political dilemmas”<sup>82</sup>. Following this, London expressed reservation for what it saw as Malaya’s deference to Indonesia represented in their support for the tabling of Indonesia’s claims at the UN<sup>83</sup>.

Notwithstanding popular support, the events that transpired immediately after Tunku’s failed attempt at mediation did have a considerable impact on Malayan perceptions of Indonesia. At an individual level, Indonesia’s rejection of his initiatives after first endorsing it was clearly a personal affront to Tunku Abdul Rahman<sup>84</sup>. Tunku observed that “the Malays had in the past tended to look up to Indonesia as a big brother but they were now angry over the attack that had been made on him”<sup>85</sup>. Tunku also opined to Dutch Ambassador van Gulik that he regarded the Indonesian mission to Moscow and Subandrio’s public rebuff as “having slammed the door in my face and in these circumstances, any further attempt to mediate would be regarded as a sign of weakness”<sup>86</sup>. Clearly from this statement, the Tunku was determined not to permit Indonesia to undermine his and Malaya’s international stature attained in the process of mediation.

The two events of the PRRI/Permesta Rebellion and West Irian crisis generated mutually reinforcing dynamics that influenced leaders of Indonesia and Malaya toward increasingly different and divergent perceptions and interpretations of their ties. Indonesian leaders were highly suspicious of

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<sup>81</sup> Abdul Rahman to Macmillan, 19 October 1960, PREM 11/4309, PRO.

<sup>82</sup> Telegram no.334 from British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 29 November 1957, FO 371/129520, PRO.

<sup>83</sup> Telegram no.42 from British Embassy, Jakarta to Foreign Office, London, 30 October 1957, *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> The fact that Tunku took Subandrio’s rebuff personally was expressed to the Secretary of State for War Profumo on 12 January 1961. See correspondence between the British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Commonwealth Relations Office, London, C.207, 62/39/3, 27 January 1961, DO 169/170, PRO.

<sup>85</sup> Critchley to Menzies, 20 December 1960, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 2, NAA.

<sup>86</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 483/1, 21 January 1961, DO 169/171, PRO. While Tunku’s mediation was taking place, Sukarno had dispatched Nasution to the Soviet Union to obtain arms and equipment for the enforcement of Indonesian claims to West Irian. In response, the Malayan Federation Cabinet decided on 20 December 1960 to mobilize the defence of the Federation in the event of a breakout of hostilities. Report of the Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 22 December 1960, DO 169/171, PRO.

Malayan complicity during the regional rebellion. Instead of backing a fellow kin state, Indonesian leaders perceived Malaya to have contributed to moves to undermine it. Subandrio reportedly opined for instance, that Tunku was “seeking to annex Sumatra because he needs Indonesia badly to face Chinese equality with the Malays inside Malaya”<sup>87</sup>. More importantly, while choosing a declaratory policy of distance, the Malayan government expressed sympathy for, not to mention provided indirect assistance to, the rebels in private.

Similarly over the West Irian issue, the Malayan Prime Minister’s attempt to fashion a mediatory role implied again that Kuala Lumpur adopted a position of neutrality on an issue that involved Indonesian unity. This was unacceptable to Jakarta, which once again expected Malayan support in the spirit of kinship. In signing the Communiqué with the Dutch, the Malayan government was seen to have taken a position without prior consultation with Jakarta, and one which was directly opposed to Jakarta’s interests. Not surprisingly, the Malayan government was subjected to severe criticism in the Indonesian press, which clearly reflected a sense of betrayal on the part of Indonesia. For instance, one reported that Indonesia “should have refrained from too much enthusiasm when Malaya received her independence”<sup>88</sup>. Another claimed in response to Malaya’s lack of support for Indonesia’s struggle to preserve national unity and territorial integrity that Indonesia “was surprised that her neighbour, a nation of the same blood and stock as Indonesians, did not follow the attitude of other newly-born nations such as Ghana, Tunisia and Morocco”<sup>89</sup>.

From the Malayan perspective, these two episodes also left bilateral ties with much to be desired. Malayan hands were tied over the issue of Sumatra, when the government clearly was unable to meet the expectations Jakarta. Not only was the cause of their Sumatran cousins uppermost in the minds of the Malayan political leaders, but also the fact that the rebellion in effect worked to Malaya’s own interest in seeing the tide of communism in the region stemmed. Matters were no less complicated on West Irian. For Malaya, West Irian presented an opportunity for active engagement in international diplomacy. This

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<sup>87</sup> Government of Malaysia, *Malaysia-Indonesia Relations*, 15.

<sup>88</sup> “R.I. papers blast Malaya’s silence in UN vote”, *Singapore Standard*, 25 September 1957.

<sup>89</sup> “The Irian issue: Why Malaya abstained”, *Straits Times*, 25 September 1957.

was important not only for reasons of security, but also for the newly independent state to establish itself as an actor of some consequence in the international political arena. In that vein, it was important not only for Malaya to assert its sovereignty, but to do so independent of Indonesian influence.

This of course, did not go down well in Jakarta. Indonesia disliked the idea of a newcomer taking the initiative in an area where they considered themselves the rightful leaders by virtue of their size and legacy of national struggle. The Tunku's apparently "easy" assumption of a leadership role in Southeast Asia was seen as upstaging Sukarno, and Indonesia was incensed with Tunku's "insolence" in thinking that Malaya should become a model for all newly independent nations<sup>90</sup>. Even more difficult for Jakarta to swallow was the fact that several of Malaya's activist foreign policies involved Indonesia's own political predicaments, such as West Irian. Insofar as Malaya's own security was concerned the Indonesian leadership's persistence in making West Irian a highly charged nationalist affair and its constant reiteration of race and ethnic-based irredentism as the basis of its claims were unsettling for a Malayan political leadership still uncertain of Indonesian intentions toward Malaya. These concerns were further aggravated by the militaristic cloak with which Jakarta asserted its claims. Indeed the underlying concerns of Malayan leaders, that such tactics may well be applied at a later time against Malaya itself, was soon to become a reality.

## V. *Konfrontasi*

On 27 May 1961, Tunku Abdul Rahman mooted the idea for the confederation of Singapore, Sarawak, North Borneo, and Brunei with Malaya into a single political entity to be called the Federation of Malaysia<sup>91</sup>. To this proposal Indonesia initially raised no objections. In fact, in Sukarno's own words, the Malaysia project was welcomed in Jakarta as long as it was advanced as a

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<sup>90</sup> "Interview with Subandrio", *Antara News Agency*, 12 February 1963.

<sup>91</sup> He had in fact briefly mentioned such a confederation in 1957. See "Next step: A greater federation of Malaya", *Singapore Standard*, 25 September 1957.

decolonisation project<sup>92</sup>. By January 1963, matters had turned around. Indonesia officially rejected the Malaysia plan and launched a policy of “*Konfrontasi*” against the new federation. The impetus behind Jakarta’s aggression has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Mackie viewed it essentially as a result of Indonesia’s convoluted domestic politics playing out between the triumvirate of Sukarno, the PKI and the military<sup>93</sup>. Others have chosen to locate *Konfrontasi* against the broader picture of the Cold War, and they explore the event in that context<sup>94</sup>. Some have even suggested Western-inspired intelligence conspiracy as a possible cause<sup>95</sup>. Aside from Mackie’s work, most of these theories interpreted *Konfrontasi* as a diplomatic quandary inspired by external factors. While this view is not disputed, one should also consider the internal political dynamics within the Malay world and its shaping of this event. By this token *Konfrontasi* can also be viewed as the climax of antagonistic diplomacy between two kin states whose understanding of the basis of their relations as sovereign nation-states were evolving along diametrically opposite planes. Prior to expanding on this argument however, it would be worthwhile to reiterate the key events of *Konfrontasi* in brief.

Not long after their initial reaction to Tunku’s proposal in 1961, Jakarta soon became convinced that the Malaysia project was not an act of decolonisation but rather a manifestation of neo-colonialism in their backyard<sup>96</sup>. This confirmed suspicions the Jakarta elite held toward Kuala Lumpur since 1957, that because of the close cooperation the latter maintained with Britain, they were susceptible to colonial influence. These suspicions should be viewed in the context of the international politics of the day, when anti-colonialism was at its peak and decolonization projects were often marked by bloody revolution. Malaysian

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<sup>92</sup> See Cindy Adams, *Sukarno: An Autobiography*. [New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co Inc, 1965] 300.

<sup>93</sup> See J.A.C. Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute, 1963-1966*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974].

<sup>94</sup> See Brackman, *Southeast Asia’s Second Front: The Power Struggle in the Malay Archipelago*. [Singapore: Donald Moore Press, 1966]; John Subritsky, *Confronting Sukarno; British, American, Australian, and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-1965*. [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999]; Matthew Jones, *Conflict and Confrontation in Southeast Asia, 1961-1965: Britain, the United States, and the Creation of Malaysia*. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001].

<sup>95</sup> Greg Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia 1945-1965*. [Bathurst: Crawford House Publishing, 1998].

<sup>96</sup> Indonesia’s case against Malaysia was laid out in *The Problem of “Malaysia”*.

camaraderie with Britain was indeed a peculiar phenomenon in this light. Further fanning the flames of suspicion was Kuala Lumpur's apparent support, manifested in their position on the PRRI/Pemesta rebellion, West Irian, and the AMDA treaty, for the seemingly provocative policies of certain Western states towards Indonesia. This view crystallized among the Jakarta elite in the wake of the Brunei revolt of 8 December 1962 in opposition to the Malaysia plan<sup>97</sup>. The Brunei revolt was led by A.M. Azahari, who was highly regarded in Indonesian nationalist circles for his anti-colonial activities in the Sultanate as opposed to the reticence of Malaya's so-called independence heroes such as the Tunku<sup>98</sup>. The Indonesian leadership viewed the Brunei revolt as evidence that the Malaysia plan was being pushed forward against the will of the population in the Borneo territories, and this fanned their suspicions of the relationship between the Malaysian elite and the West. Other centres of power in Indonesia shared similar suspicions. The military viewed Malaysia as a potential Chinese fifth column at Indonesia's doorstep that would threaten the security of the archipelago, while the PKI saw Malaysia as a legacy of imperialism in Southeast Asia<sup>99</sup>.

Insofar as the Indonesians were concerned, *Konfrontasi*, was a statement against the neo-imperialism that Malaysia was seen to represent. This was encapsulated in Sukarno's radio address on the eve of the launch of *Konfrontasi*, where he declared:

We were born in fire. We were not born in the rays of the full moon like other nations. There are nations whose independence was presented to them. There are nations who, without any effort on their part, were given independence by the imperialists as a present. Not us, we fought for our independence at the cost of great sacrifice. We

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<sup>97</sup> For details surrounding the Brunei revolt, see Mackie, *Konfrontasi*, 112-122; Poulgrain, *The Genesis*, 206-230.

<sup>98</sup> The militant nature of the rebellion however, was not brought about directly by Azahari but by H.M. Salleh, a former vice-president of the Party Rakyat Brunei. See Poulgrain, *Genesis*, 280.

<sup>99</sup> See correspondence between Cambridge, British Embassy, Jakarta, and White, Southeast Asia Department, Southeast Asia Department, Foreign Office, London, 1042/64, 30 September 1964, FCO 371/176460, PRO; See also J.D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography*. [London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1972] 364-365.

gained our independence through a tremendous struggle which has no comparison in this world<sup>100</sup>.

Indonesian suspicion and distrust of the motivations behind the Malaysia plan were later explicated by Michael Leifer as follows:

Certainly evident was a resentment of a revision of political boundaries in the vicinity of Indonesia which reconfirmed the legacy of colonialism in determining the territorial basis of state succession. Indonesia, in terms of population and scale as well as experience, had adopted a role of regional leadership which was not acknowledged in Kuala Lumpur. Its government, under Sukarno, held a strong presumption that it was entitled to be a party to territorial changes, especially where defence arrangements gave a former colonial power the right to use proximate bases as it deemed necessary for the preservation of peace in South-East Asia<sup>101</sup>.

The early stages of *Konfrontasi* were marked by regular diatribes emanating from all sections of the Jakarta government against Malaysia. Coercive diplomacy was synchronised with limited military action that began with the intrusion of Indonesian guerrillas into Sarawak in support of a “national liberation movement”, an act that subsequently led to clashes with British forces<sup>102</sup>. Warnings were also issued to the effect that Malayan fishing vessels caught “poaching” in Indonesian waters would be “burnt on sight”<sup>103</sup>. Confrontation was subsequently intensified with troop landings on the peninsula<sup>104</sup>. Policy makers in Kuala Lumpur interpreted these incursions as acts of reprisal for Malayan aid to the regional rebels from Sumatra and Sulawesi<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>100</sup> These comments were expressed in a radio broadcast in December 1962, and were quoted from Colin Wild and Peter Carey (eds), *Born in Fire: The Indonesian Struggle for Independence*. [Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986] xix.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*, 80.

<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, there have been suspicions that it was the Philippine President Macapagal who first made the suggestion to Sukarno to introduce Indonesian guerrillas into Britain's Borneo possessions. See correspondence between Peters, British Embassy, Manila, with Martin, British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, 9 December 1964, FO 371/176462, PRO. The role that the Philippines played in the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation offers up interesting yet uncharted areas of research.

<sup>103</sup> Correspondence between British Embassy, Jakarta and Southeast Asia Department, Foreign Office, DH 1271/5, 5 March 1963, DO 169/74, PRO.

<sup>104</sup> Indonesian “volunteer” troops landed at Pontian on 17 August, paratroop drops into Labis on 2 September, and another landing in Muar on 29 October 1964, all located the southern peninsula.

Despite the sound and fury of Sukarno's vitriolic rhetoric and periodic military incursions undertaken by Indonesian paramilitary forces, it is important to note that active diplomacy was being undertaken on a separate track as Indonesia sought to extricate itself from a crisis that was fast growing out of proportion for an Indonesian state increasingly destabilized by economic failure. From the outset of *Konfrontasi*, active diplomacy had been undertaken by the governments of Japan, the US, Thailand, the Philippines, and the UN. Feelers were also being sent by various factions within the Indonesian government in an attempt to pursue the path of diplomacy beneath the aggressive veneer of Indonesian rhetoric, while Sukarno and Tunku also met for a Summit in Tokyo in June 1963 in an ultimately failed attempt to iron out their differences.

Because Jakarta viewed Malaysia as an illegitimate neo-colonial creation supported by an anglophile leadership, initial opinions were that termination of their *Konfrontasi* policy could only be brought about by secret Anglo-Indonesian talks, without the involvement of Kuala Lumpur<sup>106</sup>. This position was maintained for a substantial period, and the Indonesian government only began to re-assess its position on this when its own internal structure of power shifted away from Sukarno and Subandrio, whom the British called "the real nigger in the woodpile"<sup>107</sup>. Even then, Sukarno was reluctant to meet Tunku in the latter's capacity as "Prime Minister of Malaysia"<sup>108</sup>. On his part, Tunku was aware that if Anglo-Indonesian talks proceeded, it could be construed by Jakarta as evidence that the British were indeed the "puppet masters" behind the formation of Malaysia<sup>109</sup>. Attesting further to Malaysian suspicions over Indonesian gestures,

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For details into Indonesian incursions, see Government of Malaysia, *Indonesian Aggression Against Malaysia*, Vol.1. [Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1965].

<sup>105</sup> Oliver, British Embassy, Jakarta, to Cable, Foreign Office, London, 1042/64, 9 October 1964, FO 371/176460, PRO.

<sup>106</sup> See Chaerul Salleh, Jakarta Embassy telegram to Foreign Office, London, No.1611, 9 October 1964; Hatta to U.S. Embassy, Jakarta, telegram No.1618, 12 October 1964; Bottomley, British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, to Golds, Commonwealth Relations Office, Joint Malaysia/Indonesia Department, 1229/164/2, 13 October 1964, FO 371/176460, PRO.

<sup>107</sup> Correspondence between British Embassy, Jakarta to Foreign Office, London, tel no.1699, 30 October 1964, FO 371/176461, PRO; British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, tel no.2025, FO 371/176461, PRO.

<sup>108</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, RG-59, Central Files 1964-66, POL 321, Indonesia-Malaysia, [www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/johnsonlb/xxvi/index.cfm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/johnsonlb/xxvi/index.cfm).

<sup>109</sup> Foreign Office, London to British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, tel no.2646, 27 October 1964, FO 371/176461, PRO.

Tunku refused to entertain Sukarno's suggestion made in September 1964 that a plebiscite be conducted to determine the will of the Borneo people towards absorption into Malaysia, or his promise to abide by its result<sup>110</sup>. To Tunku, such an act would both affirm Indonesia's right to a voice in major political changes in Malaysian affairs<sup>111</sup>.

Following Kuala Lumpur's refusal to submit to Anglo-Indonesian negotiations, moves were taken to bring both the Indonesian and Malaysian governments to the negotiation table. Of the many diplomatic overtures were undertaken during this period, it was an attempt to build a sub-regional organisation on the basis of race and ethnicity, termed Maphilindo, which was most intriguing.

## **VI. Maphilindo: Illusion or Reality?**

Maphilindo was essentially a proposed confederation of the states of Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia, which found endorsement through the Manila agreement of July-August 1963. The brainchild of Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal and an acronym coined with the diplomatic contrivance of Subandrio, Maphilindo was envisaged to bring the three states into close association on the basis of Malay regional unity<sup>112</sup>. Maphilindo was to build on the Tokyo meeting between Sukarno and Abdul Rahman in early June 1963, where Sukarno apparently announced the termination of his policy of confrontation and both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the 1959

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<sup>110</sup> To Tunku, such a plebiscite was unnecessary as a UN team had already carried out a fact-finding poll of the leaders of the Borneo states in August 1963. Sukarno had rejected those findings on the basis that Indonesia was not given sufficient representation in the committee observing the fact-finding poll.

<sup>111</sup> Department of External Affairs, Canberra to Australian High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, O.25834, 9 October 1964, FO 371/176460, PRO.

<sup>112</sup> It should be worth noting that the Philippines' initial proposal for a "greater Malayan Conference" comprised of the Philippines, Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo (Sabah) and was put forth by then President Carlos Garcia in 1959. Indonesia was tellingly excluded from this original conception. See "A New Manila-Kuala Lumpur-Djakarta Axis?", Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol.26, No.3, 15 January 1959. It has also been highlighted in the previous chapter that Malaysian leaders such as Onn bin Jaafar and Tunku Abdul Rahman himself had also entertained visions of pan-Malay union at various times prior to Maphilindo.

Friendship Treaty<sup>113</sup>. It was at the Manila Summit that Sukarno, Tunku Abdul Rahman, and Macapagal devised a mechanism for regular consultation in order to achieve consensus with regard to regional order<sup>114</sup>. With regards to *Konfrontasi*, Indonesia agreed to cease their confrontation of Malaysia, and the latter acceded to a UN survey to determine the wishes of the Borneo populations toward Malaysia. Beneath these concessions lay a further logic - Maphilindo also had as a sub-text a coordinated and implicit expression of concern at an increasing Chinese presence, both in the internal political environment in the three countries as well as the broader regional context<sup>115</sup>. This was reflected in Subandrio's comment that "the Malaysians, who could not handle the Chinese alone, might do so in a wider concept of Malay confederation"<sup>116</sup>.

The Manila Agreement was set up as a "face-saving" device for Indonesia to withdraw from *Konfrontasi*. But this was contravened when Malaysia announced the new date for its formation before the UN survey team could announce their findings, as should rightfully have been the procedure<sup>117</sup>. Predictably, this announcement elicited a negative response from Indonesia, with Sukarno claiming that it violated the Manila Agreement and as a result, Indonesia was not bound by the results of the U.N mission. Following this, Sukarno called for the reinstatement of the policy of aggression. Even though Maphilindo witnessed a revival with the Tokyo Summit of 20 June 1964, again involving Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, it suffered a similar fate as both Indonesia and Malaysia refused to concede on any terms<sup>118</sup>.

It is clear from hindsight that the two Maphilindo summits were nothing more than an exercise in grandiose public relations. It suffered from a host of

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<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, the Communiqué that arose from the Tokyo meeting had as its first paragraph a Malayan "admission" that the Malaysia plan should have been discussed initially with Indonesia.

<sup>114</sup> The consultation and consensus phenomenon has since entered the lexicon of the international relations of Southeast Asia as the operative principles *musyawarah* and *muafakat*. See "Philippines: Summit Results", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol.41, No.7, 15 August 1963, 371.

<sup>115</sup> See Alistair M. Taylor, "Malaysia, Indonesia – and Maphilindo", *International Journal*, Vol.XIX, No.2 (Spring 1964).

<sup>116</sup> Record of conversation between Subandrio and Shann, 2 July 1963, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 9, NAA.

<sup>117</sup> Telegram 727 from British Embassy, Manila to Foreign Office, London, 18 September 1963, DO 169/245, PRO.

<sup>118</sup> See Mohd Abu Bakar, *The Escalation of Konfrontasi (June-September 1964)*. *Kertas Seminar Jabatan No.2*. [Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya, Jabatan Sejarah, undated].

shortcomings that all but destroyed the chances it had of re-organising bilateral relations. Not least among these was the lack of sincerity on the part of the two main players, Malaysia and Indonesia. Evidence available today indicates the highly questionable sincerity of Sukarno and Subandrio towards rapprochement on the principles of blood brotherhood encapsulated in the Maphilindo spirit. On their part, it has also become clear that in private, the likes of Tunku and Ghazali Shafie, the main policy makers at the Malaysian end, remained suspicious of Indonesian intentions. It was noted that at the Maphilindo summits the Malaysian delegation was subjected to much patronising cant by Indonesia for being “our Malay brothers”. The Malaysians were evidently unimpressed by this, and their tough negotiation at the second round of tripartite talks in February 1964 exemplified their disdain:

Listening to them (the Malaysians) talk, one had the fear not that the Malaysians would not be tough in dealing with the Indonesians . . . , but that they might be so aggressive as not to see good opportunity for calming things down if one arose<sup>119</sup>.

Added to that was the fact that Maphilindo was subject itself to different interpretations among its proponents. Kuala Lumpur saw Maphilindo as Indonesian acceptance of “Malaysia”, while Jakarta viewed it as sounding the death-knell of “Malaysia”. This ambiguity was encapsulated in a singular clause of the Manila Agreement, that the formation of the Malaysian Federation would be approved “provided the support of the people of the Borneo territories is ascertained by an independent and impartial authority, the Secretary-General of the United Nations or his representatives”. In fact, this ambiguity led to a perception held in some quarters that Maphilindo was expressed as a Southeast Asian Munich, tantamount to Malaysian capitulation.

Quite clearly, suspicion and hostility dominated each party’s perception of the other during this period. While it is certainly true that Indonesia’s internal political dynamics played an important role in dictating the course of Jakarta’s policy toward Malaysia during this time, it would be a gross over-simplification to attribute *Konfrontasi* solely to this. It should be noted that even when the

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<sup>119</sup> Marshall, British Embassy, Bangkok to Cable, Southeast Asia Department, Foreign Office, London, 1057/64, 15 February 1964, FO 371/175076, PRO.

initiative passed from Sukarno to the new administration of Suharto and Adam Malik, military incursions persisted, and the policy of confrontation remained intact for another year. Within the broader context of the evolution of relations, it was obvious that historical undercurrents and circumstances had an equally important role in shaping bilateral relations over the course of this period<sup>120</sup>.

Several factors account for Indonesian hostility toward the Malayan government in this regard. First, Malayan foreign policy during this period was construed by the predominantly Javanese elite in Jakarta as a move to challenge to Indonesia's rightful leading role. Indonesia, it appeared, could not stomach the fact that "a country peopled by the same race of people, speaking a common language, and yet smaller and with fewer resources, was making a success of things whereas Indonesia was getting nowhere"<sup>121</sup>. Added to that was the belief that London and Kuala Lumpur had bulldozed the Borneo territories into Malaysia, clearly an act of imperialist intent in their own backyard in Indonesian eyes<sup>122</sup>. That neo-colonial collaboration between Britain and the UMNO-led government in Malaysia was a primary concern was corroborated by the following confession of a Sukarno confidante in the wake of clandestine negotiations for a solution to the conflict: "If the British Government were now to announce a date, however remote . . . for the withdrawal of British bases in Malaysia, such action would make more credible Britain's claims that Malaysia was not a threat to Indonesia"<sup>123</sup>. More important than Malaysia being a neo-colonial creation was the fact that Indonesia was clearly irked that Malaysia was created without consultation with Jakarta. This was evident in the fact that although it accused Malaysia of being a neo-colonial creation (thus implying a re-imposition of British imperialism), Indonesian vitriol was always targeted at

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<sup>120</sup> See Alistair Taylor, "Malaysia, Indonesia", 160-167. Indonesian suspicions of the neo-colonial intent behind Malaysia may not have been too far of the mark either. See Tan Tai Yong, "The 'Grand Design': British Policy, Local Politics and the Making of Malaysia, 1955-1961", paper presented at Conference on Decolonisation and the Transformation of Southeast Asia, Singapore, 19-21 February 2001.

<sup>121</sup> Jamieson to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 2 November 1961, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 2, NAA.

<sup>122</sup> This despite the fact that a member of the Indonesian Observer Team, Abdul Rachman, had publicly stated that he was "convinced of the impartiality of the UN Team's work", Antara News agency, 5 September 1963.

<sup>123</sup> Record of conversations between General Parman and Colonel Berger, Paris, 9-13 October 1964, ODR 707/6/2, FO 371/176462, PRO.

Malaya, not Britain. Corroborating this were the various early Indonesian attempts to negotiate a settlement with Britain as well as Sukarno's many urgings for London to force Tunku Abdul Rahman to return to the terms of the Manila Agreement<sup>124</sup>. The Malaysian affront was further repeated when, contrary to what was apparently agreed upon, Kuala Lumpur proceeded with the pronouncement of Malaysia Day in advance of the publication of the report of the UN commission to determine the wishes of the Borneo peoples. Second, the emergence of regional groupings such as the Malaya-inspired SEAFET and ASA threatened to weaken the Afro-Asian spirit that Indonesian foreign policy was so closely identified with<sup>125</sup>. Third, there was residual resentment over the Malayan government's lack of support for Jakarta during the regional rebellions and over West Irian. While some might argue that these factors were merely rhetorical cover for Indonesia's real purpose of *Konfrontasi*, namely to divert domestic attention from a failing regime, recently released documents on private negotiations between Indonesian and Malaysian leaders show that many of these were genuine concerns being felt by the Indonesian government at the time<sup>126</sup>.

Beyond this lay broader strategic concerns. Malaysia was also viewed as a potential challenge to Indonesia's own territorial integrity<sup>127</sup>. Harking back to the regional crises in Sumatra and Sulawesi and the suspicions of Malayan involvement, there was a genuine fear in Jakarta that a successful Malaysia could inspire dissident groups in Sumatra to rise again and agitate to join in the federation<sup>128</sup>. Michael Leifer summarized Jakarta's concerns as such: "Malaysia was perceived and depicted as an unrepresentative alien-inspired polity designed to perpetuate colonial economic and military interests in Southeast Asia which, by their nature, posed a threat to the viability and regional role of Indonesia"<sup>129</sup>. To that effect, concerns over the strategic implications of "Malaysia" were an extension of an already apprehensive attitude in Jakarta towards Kuala Lumpur's

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<sup>124</sup> See Bottomley to Gilchrist, 24 November 1964, FO 371/176462, PRO.

<sup>125</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, KL 601/1, 21 January 1959, DO 35/9913, PRO.

<sup>126</sup> See Bangkok tel. No. 92: Foreign Ministers Meeting in Bangkok, 7 February 1964, FO 371/175074, PRO.

<sup>127</sup> See "Malaysian Attitudes", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 April 1963, 162-163.

<sup>128</sup> C.L.M. Penders, *The Life and Times of Sukarno*. [London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974] 176-177; J.M. Gullick, *Malaysia and its Neighbours*. [London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1967] 110.

foreign relations tendencies manifested in ASA and SEAFET<sup>130</sup>. Jakarta's distaste for Kuala Lumpur's increasing assertiveness in the international arena, which they interpreted as being undertaken at their expense, was mirrored in the deterioration of the personal relationship between Sukarno and the Tunku. Their deep personal antagonisms have been summarized as follows:

In Indonesia he (Sukarno) created a socialist regime and was committed to proving it superior to the free-enterprise regime of Malaya. With his bitter resentment at Malaya for clinging to her ties with Britain, his fears of the expansion into South-East Asia of Chinese Communists, and above all his grandiose dream of ruling the entire Archipelago, the rift began to widen. The Tunku (Abdul Rahman), for all his aristocratic pride, must receive credit for his sustained efforts to bring Indonesia and Malaya closer together; Sukarno was determined to kill the Malayan tiger and drive off the British lion. His aim was to destroy the Tunku's idea of Malaysia in embryo, or, failing this, to attack it militarily, economically and politically while the infant nation was still learning to walk<sup>131</sup>.

For the conservative Malaysian government the implications of *Konfrontasi* were unequivocal. However Jakarta attempted to rationalize it, it was simply an encroachment upon Malaysian sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this sense, it was the climax of an increasing Indonesian reluctance to disengage its interest in Malaysia's domestic affairs that had been brewing even before Malayan independence in 1957. Justifying this concern for example, was the fact that the Indonesian ambassador during the genesis of *Konfrontasi*, General Djatikusuma, was suspected of stirring up anti-Chinese feelings in Malaya<sup>132</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup> Michael Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*, 75.

<sup>130</sup> See Bernard Gordon, "Problems of Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia", *World Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (January 1964).

<sup>131</sup> James, Harold and Sheil-Small, Denis, *The Undeclared War: The Story of the Indonesian Confrontation*. [Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1971] xviii.

<sup>132</sup> See "Malaya Fortnightly Summary", FE 58/11/1, DO 169/74, PRO.

## Concluding remarks

Indonesia's confrontation policy toward Malaysia officially lasted until 12 August 1966 when both parties reached an accord in Bangkok to cease hostilities and restore diplomatic relations. On their part, Indonesia was finally able to abandon its policy of confrontation after the purge of the PKI (after the latter's abortive 30 September 1965 coup), and the transfer of power to Suharto's New Order administration in July 1966. This begs the question as to what role the kinship factor had to play (if at all) in all this.

If indeed, the proposition expressed earlier that relations between kin states need not always be defined by amity is viable, then clearly it is possible to conceptualise *Konfrontasi* as a manifestation of problems between kin states, rather than a problem for the concept of kinship itself. In this event, it is important to register that even as *Konfrontasi* reached its height, Indonesian and Malaysian leaders repeatedly expressed their despondency at the deterioration of relations in the language of kinship. For instance, it was noted that one of the main reasons why Indonesia did not oppose Malaysia when the idea was mooted in the beginning was because "they feared this would alienate Sumatran Malays still further from Jakarta"<sup>133</sup>. A Malaysian government publication later testified:

There has always been a strong desire on the part of the Malayan people for a very close and friendly relations with the people of Indonesia not only because of the sentimental and blood ties which bind a major part of the population of the Federation of Malaya with that of Indonesia but also because, apart from Thailand, Indonesia is the nearest neighbour of the Federation with which close cultural and economic relations existed<sup>134</sup>.

Likewise, *Konfrontasi* was viewed in some Malay circles as an Indonesian "sell-out of peninsular Malays"<sup>135</sup>.

Of course, rhetoric could not conceal the fact that by 1963 the familiar pattern of relations between these two kin states, where the political function of kinship shifted from cooperation to rivalry among kin states, was repeating itself

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<sup>133</sup> Critchley to Baswick, 9 April, 1962, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 2, NAA.

<sup>134</sup> Government of Malaysia, *Malaya-Indonesia Relations*, 1.

again. Nevertheless, it was with the termination of *Konfrontasi* that the notion of blood brotherhood was revived in diplomacy within the Malay World. The first indication of this was evident with the warm greetings offered by Malay Ministers and officials to the Indonesian Military Mission from KOGAM (the Crush Malaya Command) upon the latter's arrival in Kuala Lumpur on 27 May 1966 to prepare for the Bangkok meeting (1 June 1966). It was noted by Michael Leifer that upon the party's arrival at the Tunku's house for discussions, they were confronted by a banner in Malay above the door which proclaimed: "Welcome to our blood-brothers on this goodwill visit"<sup>136</sup>.

Aside from the rhetoric of kinship surrounding the termination of *Konfrontasi*, what was less well known was the extent of support and sympathy Jakarta found among the Malays in the peninsula for their cause against Malaysia. At the popular level sentiments were far less abrasive as people questioned the logic of "blood brothers" going to battle against each other. It was suggested by a prominent Malay journalist: "on the surface, it appeared that the Confrontation was directed at the new nation of Malaysia, but in fact, it was meant to confront Western powers that had masterminded the creation of Malaysia"<sup>137</sup>.

The termination of *Konfrontasi* was also an important event in relation to Indo-Malay concerns over the ascendancy of the Chinese communities among their midst:

At the root of much of the Malaysian jubilation over the ending of Confrontation is the feeling that the Chinese in the Borneo territories, and particularly in Malaya and Singapore, will be securely boxed in by more than 100 million people of the Malay race. It was precisely this feeling which led a Malaysian minister to say of Singapore that it was now a nut in a nutcracker<sup>138</sup>.

This commentary echoed Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's private concerns that rapprochement might be directed at Singapore<sup>139</sup>. Indeed the spectre of the Chinese "issue" had already been lurking in the shadows of

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<sup>135</sup> Smithies to Jockel, 12 September 1966, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 34, NAA.

<sup>136</sup> Michael Leifer, *Indonesia and Malaysia: The Changing Face of Confrontation*. [Hull: University of Hull, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1966] 395.

<sup>137</sup> Said Zahari, *Dark Clouds at Dawn: A Political Memoir*. [Kuala Lumpur: Insan, 2001] 159.

<sup>138</sup> "What comes after Confrontation?", *Canberra Times*, 5 July 1966.

*Konfrontasi* at its outbreak, when Ambassador Djatikusomo saw its utility as a propaganda tool and admitted that his work in Malaya “was to save Malays from being swallowed up by Chinese . . . . Only Indonesians would bathe in blood to help Malaya”<sup>140</sup>.

It is worth noting also that despite the fact that their numbers were curtailed and ideology wounded by government repression, proponents of pan-unity with Indonesia persisted in pressuring the UMNO-led government to adopt more conciliatory approaches towards Indonesia<sup>141</sup>. The likes of Ahmad Boestamam, former KMM and MNP member and at the time Chairman of the PRM (*Partai Rakyat Malaysia*) and Ishak Mohamed, Chairman of MPSF (Malayan People’s Socialist Front) worked together in the formation of *Gerakan Pemuda Melayu Raya* (Greater Malaysia Youth Movement) to further the cause of pan-unity. Their endeavour was supported by the Labour Party of Malaya, the PMIP under the leadership of Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, and former government minister Abdul Aziz Ishak, chairman of “the United Opposition Parties”<sup>142</sup>.

Indonesia even found quiet sympathy in the corridors of the Malayan parliament. While the Indonesian neo-colonial critique did not weaken Malaysian resolve to resist Indonesia, “it was nevertheless seen by many Malaysians, including moderates, as humiliatingly true”<sup>143</sup>. UMNO Youth persistently pushed for closer relations with Indonesia, and their leader Syed Jaafar Albar, Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Razak and parliamentarian Mahathir Mohammad were all known to have sympathised with the spirit behind the Indonesian campaign. Without Tunku’s knowledge Mahathir led a Malaysian delegation to the May 1965 Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) meeting in Ghana. There, he supported a negotiated settlement between Indonesia and Malaysia with a view that that would facilitate British withdrawal from the country<sup>144</sup>.

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<sup>139</sup> Critchley to Plimsoll, 2 May 1966, A2908 M120 Part 6, NAA.

<sup>140</sup> Critchley to Jockel, 29 May 1963, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 7, NAA.

<sup>141</sup> See John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS*. [Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983] 54.

<sup>142</sup> See Government of Malaysia, *A Plot Exposed*. [Kuala Lumpur: Government Publishers, 1965]. This published document includes the confessions of Ishak Mohamed and Raja Abu Hanifah of sedition.

<sup>143</sup> “Quadripartite Talks: Agenda Item (B)”, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 22 June 1966, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 35, NAA.

<sup>144</sup> See *Malay Mail*, 12 May 1965.

Evidently, opposed as they were to Indonesia's military incursions, these Malaysian leaders nevertheless identified with the subtext of Indonesia's policy insofar as continuing the fight against Western imperialism was concerned. In Indonesia too, certain quarters also questioned the logic of confrontation between kindred populations<sup>145</sup>.

Noticeably, it was the kinship factor that was advocated as the basis for a new phase of Indonesia-Malaysia relations. The following exposition captures the essence of this transition:

A significant number of politically minded Malay, particularly of the younger and more educated generation, seem to be attracted by an anti-imperialist Indonesia free of international Communist associations. And these people offer a point of entry for the Indonesians to exploit such attitudes to their advantage. Indeed, many Malays would feel little alarm at Indonesian hegemony; such an arrangement would relegate the economically dominant and numerically important Chinese community to the similar minority position which they occupy in Indonesia.

The Malaysian Government has no desire to sacrifice its independent existence on the altar of Malay blood-brotherhood, yet the Bangkok Accord and the related agreement in Jakarta may have opened up a Pandora's box of racial affinity which could be a more serious threat than military confrontation<sup>146</sup>.

Indeed, the above commentary on the implications and sub-text to the rhetoric of blood brotherhood was telling in light of the sympathy felt among many Malays toward the spirit of Indonesia's *Konfrontasi* policy. Moreover, the comments also highlighted an increasingly pertinent dimension to the kinship factor that was taking shape in this relationship – the need to reinforce Indo-Malay solidarity and identity in the face of the increasing political weight of their respective domestic Chinese constituencies.

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<sup>145</sup> See Agus Soetomo (ed), *S. Takdir Alisjahbana, 1908-1994: Perjuangan Kebudayaan Indonesia*. [Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1999] 91-92.

<sup>146</sup> Leifer, *Indonesia and Malaysia*, 404-405.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 1967-1980: Re-building the “Special Relationship”

#### Introduction

*Konfrontasi*, as it emerged, signalled the apex of bilateral tension that had been building up since Malayan independence, as well as the crystallisation of negative elite perceptions of each other. For Jakarta, the Malaysia plan was a manifestation of the neo-colonial influences against which their foreign policy was staunchly opposed. For Kuala Lumpur, Indonesia’s response to the formation of Malaysia should have been predictable in view of the Sukarno government’s bellicose and aggressive postures towards Malaya and Sumatra. While this Java-centric, “big-brother” attitude did garner some measure of support from certain quarters in Malaysia, it was not appreciated in government circles. As Ghazali Shafie highlighted to British High Commissioner Gilchrist:

It remained extremely difficult (to get rid of Sukarno) if only because so many Javanese, probably not excluding Suharto himself, identified themselves with Sukarno. He was in some semi-mystic way an embodiment of the Javanese people and personality, and there was a deep grained feeling that by condemning him they would condemn themselves<sup>1</sup>.

Beyond this, *Konfrontasi* also had a fundamental impact on kinship discourse. Notwithstanding the measure of popular support from within Malaysia for the anti-colonial spirit of *Konfrontasi*, there was a sense among the Malay population in the Peninsula that Indonesia had stepped out of line by encroaching upon Malaysian soil. This fact severely dented the political objectives of the pan-unionist Malays in the Peninsula. It is hence not surprising that PAS (Parti-Islam Se-Malaysia), successors to the MNP, turned away from the political objective of pan-unification in the aftermath of *Konfrontasi*.

Yet paradoxically, it was in the wake of *Konfrontasi* that the politics of kinship seemed to find new impetus in bilateral relations. Talk among Malaysian

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<sup>1</sup> Bentley, British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur to Reed, Commonwealth Office, London, HK 3/3, 3 March 1967, FCO 24/243, PRO.

and Indonesian leaders of blood brotherhood as a basis for post-*Konfrontasi* reconciliation gained prominence and publicity. Reconciliation based on blood brotherhood was portrayed as an attempt to repair a bilateral relationship scarred not so much by unwarranted Indonesian aggression, but by foreign policy lapses during the Sukarno-Tunku era. This sparked a re-assessment of *Konfrontasi*, with some reflecting that “referring to Indonesia the Tunku never wavered in his belief that there was a permanent bond of brotherly relationship between the people of Indonesia and those of the peninsula”<sup>2</sup>. Correspondingly, Indo-Malay rapprochement was portrayed as a return to the pre-*Konfrontasi* kinship relationship<sup>3</sup>; and immediately became a policy “popular with the Malays”<sup>4</sup>.

Such was the extent of Indonesia-Malaysia goodwill that rumours circulated of the Malaysian government’s preparation for a mass migration of Indonesians to offset the shift in their communal balance towards the Chinese<sup>5</sup>. Echoing the discourse surrounding Maphilindo, the end of *Konfrontasi* witnessed a resurgence of attention given to the idea of “Malay regionalism”. This time however, it appeared that Malaysia was more prepared to accept Indonesia’s “political paramountcy”<sup>6</sup>. Central to the resurgence of Malay regionalism during this period was the solidarity built upon the shared concern for the Chinese factor in domestic and regional politics. As an Australian intelligence report suggested: “There is undoubtedly an element of encircling Singapore in their (Malaysian) current thinking and . . . the attractions of a deal with Indonesia that will keep the Chinese in their place and permanently ensure Malay hegemony in this area must loom larger than in the past”<sup>7</sup>. This view was reaffirmed when Toh Chin Choy, Deputy Prime Minister of the Chinese dominated city-state of Singapore, expressed that “Singapore had to watch that it was not squeezed between brother Malays”<sup>8</sup>. Given the acrimonious separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965, such sentiments were hardly surprising.

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<sup>2</sup> Ghazali Shafie, *Malaysia, ASEAN and the World Order*. [Bangi: Penerbit University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2000] 388.

<sup>3</sup> And quite conceivably, a return to pre-West Irian and PRRI/Pemesta rebellion episodes as well.

<sup>4</sup> Eastman to Department of External Affairs, Canberra, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 37, NAA.

<sup>5</sup> Bentley to Reed, 2KL/16/89/9, 14 December 1966, DO 169/413, PRO.

<sup>6</sup> “K.L., Jakarta talking of axis”, *Melbourne Age*, 15 October 1966.

<sup>7</sup> Arawa to Hasluck, 23 May 1966, A1838 3006/4/7 Part 39, NAA.

<sup>8</sup> Correspondence between Australia High Commission, Kuala Lumpur to Prime Minister’s Office, Canberra, 22 May 1966, A1838/4/7 Part 39, NAA.

To be certain, events immediately after *Konfrontasi* bore compelling evidence indicating the sincerity of these attempts at re-orienting bilateral relations on the basis of kinship. In a symbolic gesture of sincerity on the part of both parties to re-establish relations on firmer grounds, a commission to unify language and spelling was set up immediately<sup>9</sup>. More striking were joint efforts to root out remnant communist elements in Borneo. Insurgency remained a problem for post-*Konfrontasi* Indonesia and Malaysia as a result of lingering activities of the PKI along the border areas in Sabah and Sarawak. In response, the Indonesian and Malaysian governments cooperated to an extent and in a manner few would have thought possible only months earlier. Following a mutual security arrangement in March 1967, joint counter-insurgency operations, which included intelligence sharing and joint military patrols, were carried out on a regular basis<sup>10</sup>. Supplies for Indonesian regiments were also allowed to be channelled through Sarawak (Malaysian territory) instead of Kalimantan's inadequate roads and difficult rivers, and a GBC (General Border Committee) was established to coordinate Indonesian and Malaysian military activities along this border. Such was the extent of military cooperation that one observer noted it assumed the quality of a *de facto* alliance<sup>11</sup>.

## I. Transformation in foreign policy prerogatives

It has already been suggested in the previous chapter that *Konfrontasi* terminated with domestic political change in Indonesia. This is an important point to register, for the change did more than just end three years of hostility and open the door for rapprochement. From a broader perspective, it also facilitated the re-establishment of bilateral relations on more stable foundations.

With the consolidation of Suharto's New Order administration, Indonesian foreign policy made a firm shift away from revolutionary symbolism and expression. Foreign policy was re-directed to fervent anti-communism (marked by the suspension of diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China in October 1967 and a significant improvement of relations with the United States) and an

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<sup>9</sup> This was MABBIM, discussed earlier.

<sup>10</sup> This arrangement built on an earlier agreement on border security signed in September 1966. See Justus M. Van Der Kroef, "The Sarawak-Indonesian Border Insurgency", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.2, No.3 (July 1968).

emphasis on trade and economics. The logic behind this shift was simple. The New Order government felt that Indonesia's claim as a nation of consequence in the regional and international political arena had to be backed by political stability and economic vibrancy if it was to be recognised. Suharto's pragmatic commitment was encapsulated in the pronouncement of *Ketahanan Nasional* (National Resilience) as the basis for Indonesia's subsequent conduct of international affairs. An active foreign economic policy was subsequently emphasised by the foreign ministry as Jakarta quickly resumed trade relations with major Western powers and Japan. In order to attain its political goal of stability, the principles of Sukarno's *Pancasila* were resurrected to form the cornerstone of Indonesian society after the domestic turmoil of the later Sukarno administration years<sup>12</sup>.

The advent of change however, was noticeably balanced by elements of continuity as well, in particular the Java-centric view of the regional standing and vulnerability of archipelagic Indonesia which was formed during the struggle for independence<sup>13</sup>. Continuity also persisted because of the nationalistic character of Indonesia's newfound anti-Communism<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, as Foreign Minister Adam Malik expressed, Indonesia's declaratory foreign policy at this time was still targeted at "the elimination of colonialism and all its manifestations"<sup>15</sup>. This was illustrated in the new regime's continued abidance by two tenets of earlier foreign policy practice – a continued opposition to membership in military alliances and aspirations to pre-eminence in the management of regional order<sup>16</sup>. This view was corroborated by Suharto when he visited Washington in 1966:

Indonesians see themselves as potentially the dominant power of the Malay World – and possibly of all Southeast Asia. They have learned, however, that the aggressive policies of Sukarno did more to damage than to promote the kind of leadership that Indonesia seeks. Thus, the

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Leifer, *Conflict and Regional Order in South-East Asia*. [London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper Series, 1980] 8.

<sup>12</sup> The *Pancasila* referred to the officially sanctioned philosophical precepts upon which the Republican nationalists envisioned Indonesia to be built after independence. It enunciated five principles – Nationalism, Internationalism, Belief in God, Popular Sovereignty and Social Justice.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*. [London: Allen & Unwin, 1983] 173.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of State, INR/EAP files: lot 90D 165, NIE 54/59-65, Washington, December 16, 1965, [www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/johnsonlb/xxvi/index.cfm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/johnsonlb/xxvi/index.cfm).

<sup>15</sup> SWB FE/5595/A3/3, 22 August 1977, "Malik on Indonesia's relations with Asian countries".

<sup>16</sup> See Michael Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*, 111-112.

Suharto government has chosen to follow the path of regional cooperation instead of conflict<sup>17</sup>.

It was also reflected in the recognition of the Indonesian military's Commander-In-Chief General Panggabean that "Indonesia has a very great role to play in safeguarding Southeast Asia . . . . This heavy task resting upon our shoulders, as a consequence, also brings very great responsibilities"<sup>18</sup>.

The confluence of continuity and change was profoundly evident in Indonesia's post-Sukarno policy towards regional cooperation. As previously registered, one vehicle of contention for Indonesia-Malaysia relations during the Sukarno years centred on the matter of regional cooperation. Many of these differences surfaced again as the theme of regional cooperation emerged as a key agenda of the Adam Malik-Tun Razak talks in Bangkok in May-June 1966 aimed at terminating *Konfrontasi*. As mediators for the Bangkok Accords, Thailand was actively pushing for the inclusion of Indonesia within a regional framework. Jakarta itself seemed increasingly amiable toward this prospect. Malaysian response however, was markedly subdued. Still largely the prerogative of Tunku Abdul Rahman at the time, Malaysian policy towards Indonesia remained cautious. The Tunku was adamant that an Indonesia dominated by Javanese politicians and military commanders was not to be embraced with open arms so soon after they had challenged a nation that they declared was kin. In his view, "if (Indonesia) stuck to the present system of centralised rule by the Javanese, there could be no future peace or stability and this presented considerable dangers for Malaysia"<sup>19</sup>. Discussions in Bangkok revealed the Malaysian view that "the Bangkok Accord was reached in order to help Indonesia overcome its problems, and not as a settlement between two equal nations agreeing to end a dispute on parity"<sup>20</sup>. By this token, Malaysia was in fact not interested in "grand schemes" of regionalism, especially those proposed by Indonesians. To Kuala Lumpur, Indonesian inclusion into ASA was sufficient insofar as their involvement in regional projects was concerned<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Department of State, INR/ERP files, lot 90 D 165, NIE55-68, Washington, 31 December 1968.

<sup>18</sup> "Indonesian Armed Services Responsibilities in Southeast Asia", *Berita Yudha*, 23 July 1968.

<sup>19</sup> H2/1-264, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>20</sup> Correspondence between Australian High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 225/17. 7 March 1967, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>21</sup> See Cabinet Minutes, "Discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia", 13 April 1967, A5840 654/FAD, NAA.

Clearly, threads of continuity amidst the change wrought by *Konfrontasi* also had a significant impact on how Malaysia viewed post-1965 Indonesia, tempering any immediate exuberance Kuala Lumpur might have felt in reaction to the change in government in Jakarta. The experience of *Konfrontasi* had resulted in a marked transformation in Malaysian foreign policy outlook. What had surprised Tunku and his conservative government most about that experience was not so much Indonesian audacity in landing troops in the Peninsula, or even their willingness to engage Kuala Lumpur's British and Australian allies militarily in what was clearly a mismatch. Rather it was the amount of sympathy Indonesia managed to solicit from Third World states for the spirit of Jakarta's confrontation of Malaysia<sup>22</sup>. Correspondingly, this alerted Kuala Lumpur to the need for a re-think of the Malaysian approach to international affairs<sup>23</sup>. This was intimated by Foreign Minister Ghazali Shafie, who noted that "Confrontation by a big neighbour in 1963 provided a stimulus to foreign policy. For example, several new diplomatic missions in Africa and Asia have been established and foreign service recruitment accelerated"<sup>24</sup>. Another scholar noted more specifically that the event was "the turning point for Malaysian relations with the Muslim World"<sup>25</sup>. This change in international outlook set in motion a move to enhance Malaysia's presence in international affairs.

Sensing a more reticent administration in Jakarta, Tunku moved cautiously to set a new tone for bilateral relations. During his visit to Indonesia in March 1968, Tunku could not resist airing misgivings, and proceeded to lecture his Indonesian audience about the need for "wise leadership" in managing a multi-racial society, suggesting that Indonesia could learn from Malaysia's experience<sup>26</sup>. Needless to say, his Indonesian counterparts were unimpressed<sup>27</sup>. Yet this triumphant outlook belied lingering concerns over Indonesia. Insofar as dealing with a post-Sukarno Indonesia was concerned, Tunku Abdul Rahman remained convinced that Indonesian arrogance and aggression had not subsided with the end

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<sup>22</sup> It was Indonesian lobbying that denied Malaysia participation at the Cairo NAM Conference and the May 1965 Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation Conference in Winneba, Ghana..

<sup>23</sup> See WAH-4-64, "The Importance of Being Afro-Asian: Malaysia Feels Pressures Toward Ideology", American Universities Field Staff Report, Southeast Asia Series, Vol.XII, No.11, December 1964.

<sup>24</sup> "Malaysia's Foreign Policy", *Siaran Akhbar*, 19 July 1966.

<sup>25</sup> Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysia's Foreign Policy*. [London: Routledge, 1997] 57.

<sup>26</sup> "Tunku Gives Lecture to Indonesians", *The Times*, 9 March 1968.

<sup>27</sup> Draft Report, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 37, NAA.

of *Konfrontasi*. His train of thought can be easily distilled from the fact that Tunku frequently made plain in private that he did not fully trust the Indonesian government, even as he made reconciliatory remarks in public<sup>28</sup>. This view was shared by his advisors, some of whom were still concerned that there were lingering anti-Malaysian elements among some of the leading generals in Jakarta as well as “relics of the Subandrio era” in the Indonesian foreign ministry<sup>29</sup>. To them this suspicion alone warranted caution in negotiating a resumption of bilateral relations. To that effect Indonesia’s less-than-cooperative response in the prelude to the resumption of diplomatic ties served only to heighten suspicions further. In their Note of Intent, Indonesia reiterated their position that diplomatic recognition was to be extended to the Malaysian government on the understanding that the people of Sabah and Sarawak be given an opportunity at an early date to re-affirm their wish to be part of Malaysia<sup>30</sup>. Indonesia’s special envoy to Malaysia Sunarso expressed to his Malaysian counterpart in private that while Suharto and Adam Malik were supportive of the restoration of ties even before elections, such a move would be unpopular with significant groups in the Indonesian Parliament<sup>31</sup>. The Tunku took exception to this and refused to agree to any linkage of recognition with elections. He felt that Malaysia had already provided sufficient guarantees and that Indonesia's decision to establish diplomatic relations should not be made conditional in such manner<sup>32</sup>. Malaysia’s position was summarized as such:

Although the Malaysians remained relaxed at the prospect of not having diplomatic relations with the Indonesians for another year they are rather irritated at the way the Indonesians have chopped and changed in their recent public statements. Their feeling is that little attention has been paid to Malaysia’s position or prestige in these statements<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Murray, Commonwealth Office, London to Philips, British Embassy, Jakarta, 1 May 1968, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>29</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, and Commonwealth Office, London, 2KL 16/89/9, 26 May 1967, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>30</sup> See “Full ties: A big ‘yes’”, *Straits Times*, 26 August 1967.

<sup>31</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, and Foreign Office, London, 15 May 1967, FCO 24/243, PRO. It was further expressed at this meeting that while the Indonesian foreign ministry had looked to regard the outcome of the recently concluded Sabah elections as sufficient grounds for the restoration of ties, this was blocked by the politically-powerful military.

<sup>32</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, and Commonwealth Office, London, 2KL 16/89/9, 30 August 1967, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>33</sup> Bentley to Mason, 2KL/10/89/9, 26 May 1967, FCO 24/243, PRO.

Indeed, such was Tunku's ire toward Indonesia's terms that he had contemplated at the time a postponement of the re-establishment of relations<sup>34</sup>. That the Indonesian government eventually relented was telling of Jakarta's desire to prove their sincerity, if not contrition. Together with a concerted push for the establishment of ASEAN, Jakarta's acceptance of the Malaysian interpretation of the Bangkok Accords inspired confidence in the latter that relations could finally be based on firmer ground.

## II. ASEAN

The change in Jakarta's attitude toward the terms for the normalisation of ties with Malaysia paved the way for the formation of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). By abandoning initial demands that normalization be contingent upon elections, the Suharto government evinced a measure of humility and compunction that was crucial in dispelling at least some of the lingering concerns that Kuala Lumpur had of their intentions. In return, the Malaysian government saw that there was an urgent need to keep the new Suharto administration afloat in what at the time were extremely rough Indonesian political waters. Certainly for Malaysia, for all their misgivings toward Indonesians in general and the Javanese in particular, and with the memories of *Konfrontasi* still fresh, it was clear to them that the evidently staunch anti-communist Suharto government was their best hope for closer ties with their larger kin<sup>35</sup>. With this backdrop, the question of Indonesian participation in a regional organisation arose again. This time, Tunku left it to his deputy, Tun Abdul Razak, to negotiate.

The formation of ASEAN in August 1967 is widely accepted among scholars as one of the clearest manifestations of Indonesia-Malaysia rapprochement<sup>36</sup>. Some policy-makers have been amenable to this suggestion as well, noting for example, that ASEAN was "conceived out of the pangs of *Konfrontasi*, an idea to obviate all future *Konfrontasis* in the region"<sup>37</sup>. What is important to note about the formation of ASEAN for the purposes here is the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> See correspondence between British Embassy, Jakarta and Southeast Asia Department, Foreign Office, London, DH 3/5, 30 January 1967, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>36</sup> See for example, Michael Antolik, ASEAN and the Diplomacy of Accommodation. [London: M.E. Sharpe, 1990].

central role Indonesia and Malaysia played in the buildup to its formation. Attempts to locate rapprochement within the framework provided by a regional institutional structure had previously been thwarted by contending conceptions as to the terms of this new regionalism. As noted above, the Malaysian government was of the view that the existing structure provided by ASA was sufficient to provide the institutional setting required. On their part, Indonesia desired a “clean slate” in the form of a new organisation. This was of particular importance to Jakarta for two reasons. First, it allowed Indonesia to avoid giving the impression that it was capitulating. Second, it would have been a humiliation for the Suharto regime if Indonesia was forced into membership of regional organisations whose principle values were directly opposed to the fundamental and unchanging principles of Indonesian foreign policy. It was these prerogatives that prompted Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik to suggest in a secret letter to Razak the establishment of a bigger ASA grouping in June 1967<sup>37</sup>. Malaysian accession to Indonesia’s initiative was premised on Jakarta’s recognition of Malaysian sovereignty over Sabah and Sarawak as determined in the 1966 Bangkok Accords. In turn, Malaysia reciprocated by supporting Indonesia’s proposal for the formation of this new organisation, which in effect satisfied Jakarta’s lingering desire to play a managerial role in regional affairs<sup>38</sup>. During initial negotiations on the preamble to the ASEAN Declaration, Indonesia and Malaysia reached a watershed, which foretold of the subsequent shape of relations over the next decade, when both shared the similar position that foreign bases should be removed from ASEAN member states<sup>40</sup>.

Symptomatic of the measure of Malaysian and regional deference to benign Indonesian primacy within ASEAN was the decision to hold the first ASEAN Ministerial meeting and house the ASEAN Standing Committee in Jakarta. What is important to note regarding events surrounding the formation of ASEAN is the fact that Kuala Lumpur made a deliberate decision to accept and defer to Jakarta’s

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<sup>37</sup> Ghazali Shafie, “Think ASEAN”, *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, Vol.16, No.2 (June 1983) 237.

<sup>38</sup> See “Malik sends secret note to Razak”, *Straits Times*, 5 June 1967.

<sup>39</sup> See Michael Leifer, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy*, 142-143.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with former senior Singaporean diplomat, Singapore, 2 February 2002. The terms of the preamble were only changed when Singapore objected to this clause.

leadership of this new organisation, even if this managerial role was deliberately downplayed<sup>41</sup>.

### III. Malaysia's Indonesia Policy in Transition

For Malaysia, the formation of ASEAN marked a turning point in their relations with Indonesia. In essence, it locked Indonesia into a regional framework which functioned as a symbolic non-aggression pact. This transformation in Malaysian attitudes toward their larger kin state was manifested in the Tunku's visit to Indonesia in March 1968, which opened with his portentous invocation of blood brotherhood:

Malaysians are blood brothers of the Indonesians. We are few in number. I sometimes wonder whether the Malays would have come into being if it had not been for the Indonesians. Thanks to Allah, Confrontation is over. It was not Indonesians confronting Malays, but communists opposing non-communists<sup>42</sup>.

While the 1968 visit did achieve much in terms of cultural and economic cooperation as well as a Malaysian declaration to extend their territorial waters in sync with Indonesia (a matter to be discussed at greater length later), it was "a significance which goes beyond the letter of the published Communiqué"<sup>43</sup>. The visit marked an important gesture on Malaysia's part that Kuala Lumpur was ready to make efforts to reinstate bilateral ties on more substantial grounds. It was also of great consequence that during his visit the Tunku made a public call to all ASEAN members to render assistance to the Suharto government as it sought to bring growth and development to a ravaged economy<sup>44</sup>. Also notable were attempts during this visit to institutionalise a joint effort to unify the Malay and Indonesian languages, as well as suggestions to revive the 1959 Friendship Treaty. Yet notwithstanding the symbolic value of the Tunku-Suharto meeting, equally telling were matters of disagreement. Of particular interest was the Tunku's

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Abdullah Ahmad, Kuala Lumpur, 7 November 2001; See also McLennan to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 8 March 1968, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 37, NAA.

<sup>42</sup> Correspondence between British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, and Commonwealth Office, London, 10/1, 16 March 1968, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>43</sup> Philips, British Embassy, Jakarta to Foreign Office, tel. No.148A, 12 March 1968, FCO 24/243, PRO. For details of this bilateral agreement, see "Indonesia-Malaysia Joint Communiqué", 7 March 1968, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>44</sup> "Tengku's plea to ASEAN nations to help Suharto", *Straits Times*, 6 March 1968.

attempt to engage Suharto in discussions over the possibility of framing the friendship treaty as the cornerstone of ASEAN as a defence agreement of sorts<sup>45</sup>. This had in fact been an option the Malaysian government had been contemplating in view of the British decision to withdraw its forces<sup>46</sup>. To this Suharto was not disposed, politely opining that “it was not desirable at this time”<sup>47</sup>. Interpreting the impetus behind Tunku’s proposal as a Malaysian desire to “neutralise” the Indonesian “threat”, Indonesia’s rejection was itself driven by their belief that Jakarta’s accession to the Malaysian suggestion would have been tantamount to an acceptance of Malaysia’s historical suspicions of Indonesia. Clearly, the Indonesian and Malaysian delegations both carried their own suspicions to the meeting, and while it was indeed a watershed event that did much to alleviate many of their private concerns, it did not entirely remove these suspicions<sup>48</sup>.

Nevertheless, residual mistrust did not dampen further attempts by either side to rebuild bilateral ties on firmer grounds. This was expressed when Tunku lent his voice to Suharto’s supplications for clemency from the Singapore government for two Indonesian marines sentenced to death for their role in sabotage activities<sup>49</sup>. Subsequently Tunku Abdul Rahman’s visit was reciprocated by an equally monumental visit in March 1970, when President Suharto became the first Indonesian head of state to set foot on Malaysian soil. Again, the language of brotherhood was employed to rationalise the visit: “There are many things in common between Indonesia and Malaysia and therefore we want to foster our brother relations with the Malaysians”<sup>50</sup>. The Malaysian press took great lengths to portray Suharto as the “antithesis in personality of Sukarno – modest, gentle, hard-working, reticent”<sup>51</sup>. These efforts to rebuild ties were reaffirmed with the signing of a Treaty of Friendship, reviving a similar agreement signed in 1959 but which was rendered void with *Konfrontasi*.

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<sup>45</sup> See “Rebuilding Stability in Southeast Asia”, *Straits Times*, 16 March 1968.

<sup>46</sup> Falle, British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur to Moreton, Commonwealth Office, 10/1, 2 February 1968, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>47</sup> “Indonesia Reaffirms Her Defence Policy”, *The Times*, 17 March 1968.

<sup>48</sup> Sutherland, British Embassy, Jakarta to Stewart, Foreign Office, London, 3/20, 19 March 1968, FCO 24/243, PRO.

<sup>49</sup> It is also interesting to note that Malays in Kuala Lumpur and Johore also demonstrated against the hanging of the marines. See Cable no.2691, Australia High Commission, Singapore, 23 October 1968, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 38, NAA.

<sup>50</sup> “Suharto visit will set seal on growing friendship”, *Straits Times*, 10 March 1970.

<sup>51</sup> “Across the Straits”, *Straits Times*, 10 March 1970.

By the end of Tunku Abdul Rahman's tenure as Prime Minister the tone of relations with Indonesia had begun to change. The aristocratic leader, whose term was marked by deep suspicions of the Javanese-centred mindsets of the Indonesian leadership, was himself beginning to re-orientate his attitudes toward Jakarta. His homage to former President Sukarno on the occasion of the latter's death was especially poignant. The Tunku publicly acknowledged his former nemesis as a leader who "bravely fought the forces of colonialism and stirred up a strong wave of nationalism in Malaya"<sup>52</sup>. This eulogy was followed by tributes from Abdul Razak and Home Affairs Minister Ismail Abdul Rahman. Yet if the final years of Tunku's administration set in train the transformation of Malaysia's policy towards Indonesia, it was the transfer of leadership to Tun Abdul Razak that in effect codified this *volte face* in the tone of Indonesia-Malaysia relations that would have seemed impossible only a few years earlier.

Malaysia's relations with Indonesia during this period of transition experienced a noticeable shift when significant events taking place in the Malaysian domestic political arena transformed the complexion of policy toward Jakarta<sup>53</sup>. Most notable of these events was the rupture to Malaysia's domestic political tranquillity that was wrought by the race riots of 13 May 1969.

#### **IV. 13 May and the resurgence of the Chinese "issue"**

Since 1957, the multi-racial Alliance coalition had managed to hold together a potentially disparate polity in Malaysia through a mixture of sound economic policies and political accommodation. This political formula however, unravelled when Malays and Chinese clashed in the wake of Malay reaction to the Chinese opposition's exuberance on their success at the 1969 national election<sup>54</sup>. In the aftermath of the racial riots, issues surrounding national identity leaped to the forefront of national discourse, and have remained there ever since.

Though primarily a domestic crisis, the 13 May 1969 racial riots had three international dimensions to it. First, because it involved the brittle relations

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<sup>52</sup> "'Soek-Man who fought bravely' tribute by Tengku", Straits Times, 23 June 1970.

<sup>53</sup> This point has also been noted in Johan Saravanamuttu, The Dilemma of Independence: Two Decades of Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1957-1977. [Penang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1983] 126-140.

between the Malay and Chinese communities, it had a definite impact on the issue of relations with China and Chinese-dominated Singapore, and the potential influence that close ties with Indonesia might have in relation to these concerns. To that effect, a Malaysian political affairs report had hypothesised that:

Good relations with Indonesia have overriding significance because, to the Malays, Indonesia represents their ultimate source of strength in a region under the heavy shadow of communist China and with large overseas Chinese populations of unpredictable loyalty<sup>55</sup>.

Even prior to the riots, this racial dimension had already been an underlying influence on the triangular relations between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Benny Moerdani had previously expressed that “it seemed inevitable . . . that one day Malaysia and Indonesia would come together” and “Singapore would need to adjust its relations with Malaysia and Indonesia in order to fit in with the circumstances of the region”<sup>56</sup>. Correspondingly, Singapore leaders were always uneasy about the pace of post-*Konfrontasi* rapprochement between Indonesia and Malaysia<sup>57</sup>.

Second, 13 May also encouraged Indonesian interest in the repercussions the riots had for their Malay cousins as well as their own indigenous population, who themselves were harbouring deep-seated distrust toward the ethnic Chinese community in Indonesia. This phenomenon was aggravated by the fact that the 1965 anti-communist coup in Indonesia had provided greater stimulus for Malay communal feelings throughout the region. Commenting on this influence on Malaysia, an Australian intelligence source reported portentously:

The moderates (in Malaysia) see in a new relationship with Jakarta some element of insurance against the Chinese . . . . More radical Malay feeling may move the government in Kuala Lumpur further in an anti-Chinese direction, and towards greater concerting of Malaysian and Indonesian policies<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> For a study of the 13 May 1969 incident, see Leon Comber, *13 May 1969. A Historical Survey of Sino-Malay Relations*. [Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Asia, 1983].

<sup>55</sup> “Extract from KL’s 1967/8 Annual Report”, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 38, NAA.

<sup>56</sup> McLennan to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 19 December 1968, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 38, NAA.

<sup>57</sup> Critchley to Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 15 July 1968 A1838 3006/4/9 Part 38, NAA.

<sup>58</sup> “Quadripartite Talks: Agenda Item (B)”, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 22 June 1966, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 35, NAA.

In fact, many among the Malay community, particularly among the Malay radicals, believed that in the event of a clash with the Chinese, Indonesia would come to their assistance<sup>59</sup>. The negative implications of such a state of affairs for the fragile multi-racial Malaysian national identity was that “backed by Indonesia, and stimulated by Indonesia’s attitudes towards the Chinese . . . the radical Malays could increasingly campaign to use Malay predominance in Government and administration for anti-Chinese measures”<sup>60</sup>.

Hence, it was in this context that the 13 May riots were followed closely in Indonesian circles. Although Jakarta was careful not to get involved, it was concerned enough that meetings were convened at the highest levels to determine the course of action to be undertaken should the Malaysian situation deteriorate. General Tjokropranolo, a close aide of Suharto, felt that “the Indonesian people as a whole felt they had an obligation to help the Malays in their ‘struggle’ with the Chinese”<sup>61</sup>. Evidently, Malaysian students even visited Indonesia to study tactics used during the Indonesian student riots of 1965-66, and the PMIP worked closely with Indonesian Muslim parties and organisations to instigate Malay sentiments against the Chinese<sup>62</sup>.

Finally, the riots all but brought an end to the administration of Tunku Abdul Rahman, and confirmed the transfer of power to Abdul Razak<sup>63</sup>. Changes at the helm of Malaysian politics were not merely cosmetic, for they signalled the emergence of a new national discourse that preached Malay supremacy in the construction of Malaysian national identity<sup>64</sup>. Closely associated with this discourse, but yet to receive scholarly attention, was the manner in which it related to and impacted upon the shape of Malaysian foreign policy. While perhaps not as fundamental a change compared to its impact on the domestic political sphere,

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<sup>59</sup> Cable no.2493, Australia High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, 26 July 1969, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 39, NAA.

<sup>60</sup> Jockel to Hasluck, 12 May 1966, A1838, 3006/4/7 Part 39, NAA.

<sup>61</sup> Cable no.1459, Australia High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, 31 May 1969, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 39, NAA.

<sup>62</sup> McLennan to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 26 September 1969, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 39, NAA.

<sup>63</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng suggests that Razal’s assumption of power “had all the makings of a coup”. See Cheah Boon Kheng, *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation*. [Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002] 130.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 121-150.

Malaysian foreign policy did experience a discernible shift under Razak, and it was in Indonesia policy that one witnessed the clearest signs of this<sup>65</sup>.

Razak was far more accommodating toward Indonesian desires to assume an active leadership role in regional affairs than his predecessor. For example, as Deputy Prime Minister, Razak eagerly kept Jakarta informed of developments in the Five-Power Talks - discussions which led to the formation of the FPDA (Five Power Defence Arrangement), and which was sparked by Britain's withdrawal from the region<sup>66</sup>. While there were clearly strategic reasons for him to adopt a more obliging position toward Malaysia's much larger neighbour, there was also a strong sense that the Buginese Razak was a keen believer in building a strong foundation for bilateral relations on the basis of the kinship factor. As a senior Malay diplomat intimated to the author, it was Razak who "did have visions of *Rumpun*"<sup>67</sup>.

Razak's influence on Indonesia policy effectively took shape in the years during confrontation with Jakarta. Conspicuously less open with outright condemnations of Sukarno's "*Ganjang Malaysia*" ("Crush Malaysia") campaign than his predecessor, Razak's role in fact focused on behind-the-scenes negotiations with elements of the Indonesian military and government less averse to Malaysia's existence. Unlike his predecessor, Razak had also long supported Indonesia's nationalist cause and ironically enough, maintained a close friendship with Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio (who along with Sukarno was considered an instigator of *Konfrontasi*)<sup>68</sup>. During *Konfrontasi* it was Razak who urged that "Malaysia wanted to live in peace with Indonesia" and that he hoped strained relations would be a "passing phase". Later in a statement revealing the future basis of bilateral relations during his tenure, Razak commented during a motion in parliament to welcome agreement with Jakarta on the termination of *Konfrontasi* that: "We (Malaysia and Indonesia) must totally reject outside elements which aim at destroying peace, stability and progress of our region. It is

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<sup>65</sup> A scholarly exposition of the distinction between Malaysian foreign policy of the Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Abdul Razak administrations remains to be undertaken. Owing to its time of publication, a tentative account can be found in Marvin Ott, "Foreign Policy Formulation in Malaysia", *Asian Survey*, Vol.XII, No.2 (March 1972).

<sup>66</sup> "Five-Power Talks", 17 October 1967, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 37, NAA.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Zainal Sulong, Kuala Lumpur, 14 August 2001.

<sup>68</sup> William Shaw, *Tun Razak: His Life and Times*. [London: Longman, 1976] 75-79. He was also a close friend of Des Alwi, the adopted son of former Indonesian Prime Minister Sutan Sjahrir, and who was implicated in the PRRI Rebellion.

in this context that Malaysia . . . regard the role of Indonesia . . . as of utmost importance”<sup>69</sup>. More to the point, it was Razak, not Tunku Abdul Rahman, with whom Indonesia chose to negotiate the termination of *Konfrontasi*. It was also Razak who convinced Tunku of the need to create a new regional organisation (ASEAN) in order to capitalize on Jakarta’s new-found humility and willingness to work in unison with Malaysia to secure regional order<sup>70</sup>.

Subsequently when he replaced Tunku Abdul Rahman as Malaysian Prime Minister in the aftermath of the May 1969 racial riots, Razak moved to cement relations with Indonesia at a level never before experienced between these two states, much to the chagrin of Malaysia’s feudal leaders<sup>71</sup>. The subtext to Razak’s policy towards Indonesia appeared to be deference for what his administration viewed as a larger kin state. In an attempt to consolidate national identity in the aftermath of May 1969, the Razak administration introduced the concept of *Rukun Negara* (Articles of Faith of the State) on 31 August 1970. As a blueprint for national solidarity and the re-establishment of national identity, the *Rukun Negara* echoed the *Pancasila* of Indonesia, itself a concept rejuvenated during Suharto’s New Order administration. Again, echoing Indonesia’s security policy imperatives, Malaysia’s priorities after the May 1969 racial riots were also oriented towards internal economic and social development<sup>72</sup>. The Razak administration also actively sought to re-frame Malaysia’s posture on international affairs away from its traditional identification with the West, and plot out a more independent outlook on foreign affairs which he termed “free and neutral”. It was this transformation in Malaysia’s international outlook that brought it closer in strategic vision to Indonesia.

Evidence emerged early in Razak’s tenure that under him, Malaysia would pay close attention to improving relations with Indonesia. When Indonesia experienced a severe rice shortage in the early 1970s, Suharto’s personal appeal to Malaysia for assistance was promptly met with a dispatch of a substantial amount of food aid<sup>73</sup>. Zainal Sulong, the Malaysian Ambassador to Jakarta during this period, recounted that upon relaying an emergency Indonesian request for 20 000

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<sup>69</sup> “Indonesia’s Major Role in Region”, *Straits Times*, 27 August 1966.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Abdullah Ahmad, Kuala Lumpur, 7 November 2001; Interview with Ghazali Shafie, Kuala Lumpur, 8 November 2001.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Ariffin Omar, Penang, 16 September 2002.

<sup>72</sup> SWB FE/4802/A3/9 13 January 1975, “Malaysia’s Defence Policy”.

tons of rice to Razak, the latter's immediate offer of 5 000 tons was quickly increased by 15 000 when Sulong convinced him that their "Indonesian brothers" needed help urgently, and that Malaysia "had to do more"<sup>74</sup>. This act led to an appreciative response on the part of President Suharto, who intimated that "this was how brothers should act"<sup>75</sup>. This episode in effect set the tone for an extended period of close rapport between Indonesia and Malaysia. Such was the rapport that on the occasion of his visit to Malaysia in July 1971, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik was personally invited by Razak to stay in the latter's private house during the duration of his stay<sup>76</sup>. This close rapport subsequently led to convergence in strategic perceptions as well, of which one of the earliest manifestations was the joint Indonesia-Malaysia position on the Straits of Melaka and Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur's attendant support of Indonesia's archipelagic principle<sup>77</sup>.

## V. Indonesia's Archipelago Doctrine

On 13 December 1957, the Indonesian government made a unilateral declaration that:

All waters surrounding, between and connecting the islands constituting the Indonesian state, regardless of their extension of breadth, are integral parts of the territory of the Indonesian state and, therefore, parts of the internal or national waters which are under the exclusive sovereignty of the Indonesian state.

Following this statement, the Jakarta government further declared an extension of the breadth of its territorial sea from the customary three miles to 12 nautical miles. The government also adopted the concept of straight baselines, in effect drawing a boundary connecting the outermost points of its outermost islands to demarcate what Indonesia argued was its internal seas, which consequently lay outside the purview of international maritime law. Foreign ships travelling through these waters were no longer considered to enjoy the "right" of innocent passage as they

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with Zainal Sulong, Kuala Lumpur, 14 August 2001.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Abdullah Ahmad, Kuala Lumpur, 7 November 2001.

<sup>77</sup> See "Malacca Straits: For Malaysia and Indonesia, A Family Affair", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 15 April 1972, 18.

would in international waters. Instead, their innocent passage through sovereign Indonesian waters would be “granted” pending Indonesian approval. These statutes have come to be known as the Djuanda Declaration or “Archipelagic Principle”<sup>78</sup>. Insofar as the impetus behind the elucidation of the Archipelagic Principle was concerned, it was likely that it was formulated and passed as a direct result of Jakarta’s concern for the potential of its waterways being used by external powers to threaten Indonesian security, as was the case during the 1946-1948 revolution<sup>79</sup>. The implications of this declaration were significant; notwithstanding practical capabilities for policing its waters, the Indonesian government could conceivably deny naval passage to any maritime power anywhere within its “legal regime” of internal waters. This same implication would later hold for the Indonesia-Malaysia agreement of November 1971 to deny the customary legal status of the Melaka and Singapore Straits.

Running corollary to the Archipelagic Principle was the Act of Innocent Passage of 1962 that regulated the “innocent passage” of foreign ships across Indonesia’s waterways, and the doctrine of *Wawasan Nusantara*. An initiative by the Indonesian military to revive and revise the archipelagic principle in the wake of the transfer of government from the Sukarno to Suharto administrations, *Wawasan Nusantara* not only reiterated the statutes of the Djuanda Doctrine, but “also had the effect of formalizing the notion that this area was a strategic area (where) . . . the whole entity of land and water becomes a single strategic defence system”<sup>80</sup>. Explaining the relationship between the Archipelagic Principle and the doctrine of *Wawasan Nusantara*, former Foreign Minister and architect of the concept, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, clarified:

Whereas the archipelagic state principle is a concept of national territory, the *Nusantara* concept is a way of looking at the political unity of a nation and people that subsumes the national geographic reality of an archipelagic state. It can also be said that the concept of the unity of land and seas contained in the concept of the archipelagic

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<sup>78</sup> B.A. Hamzah suggests the possibility that the declaration might actually have been an extension of the 1945 Indonesian Constitution. See B.A Hamzah (ed), *Malaysia and Law of the Sea*. [Kuala Lumpur: Heng Lee Stationary and Printing Co, 1983] 4. However, Michael Leifer contends otherwise. See Michael Leifer, *Malacca, Singapore, and Indonesia*. [Alphen ann den Rijn, Netherlands: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1978] 17-24.

<sup>79</sup> See Dino Patti Djalal, *The Geopolitics of Indonesia’s Maritime Territorial Policy*. [Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1996] 34-42.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 65.

state constitutes the physical forum for the archipelago's development<sup>81</sup>.

It is evident that the rationale behind Indonesia's promulgation of the archipelago principle was two-fold. First, it reflected Jakarta's acute sense of political and strategic vulnerability. To that effect, it has been opined by the Indonesian government that:

The *Wawasan Nusantara* must become a reality. Our stand has been quite clear for a long time past. Just as in our national anthem we speak of land and water, there is no other country that makes similar mention. The *Wawasan Nusantara* concept is life or death for us<sup>82</sup>.

Indeed, Indonesian politics since 1945 has seen much undesired external intervention, and this gave credence to their perception that freedom of navigation in waters surrounding Indonesia actually constituted a threat to both the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Indonesian state<sup>83</sup>. To the power brokers in Jakarta, the waterways cordoning and intersecting the archipelago were clearly within Indonesia's strategic milieu, and hence had to be secured.

A second justification for the Archipelago Principle lay in its nationalist imperative. Because the post-colonial political boundary of the Dutch East Indies had always been the point of reference for Indonesian nationalism, drawing borders around the archipelago by adjoining outermost points of furthest islands was a logical foreclosure of *Indonesia Raya* (*sans* Malaya). This cartographic exercise, thence, demonstrated Indonesia's assertion of total sovereignty over its motherland or "*Tanah Air*" (literally "land and waters"), and represented the apex of the political aspirations of Indonesian nationalists who envisaged the territory of Indonesia united as one nationality, one language and one homeland. Noticeably also, Indonesia's position on its waterways had strong historical coincidence to the pre-modern Sumatran kingdom of *Srivijaya* and its control of its surrounding waters. This prompted one scholar to opine that what the post-colonial Jakarta

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<sup>81</sup> Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, "The Concept of the Indonesian Archipelago", *Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol. X, No.4, (1982) 23.

<sup>82</sup> *Sinar Harapan*, 30 October 1974, 1.

<sup>83</sup> The particular impetus provided by Indonesia's fear of foreign involvement and aggravation of regional dissent is emphasised in Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, "The Legal Regime of Archipelagoes: Problems and Issues" in L.M. Alexander (ed), *The Law of the Sea: Needs and Interests of Developing Countries*. [Kingston: University of Rhode Island Press, 1973].

government was articulating was in fact the “outlook of Palembang”<sup>84</sup>. It would hence be interesting to note in this context the omission of the Malay Peninsula, for as an earlier chapter had already discussed, the latter historically fell into the sphere of influence of *Srivijaya*.

Although a unilateral policy undertaking based on Indonesia’s domestic political and security concerns, the postulation of Jakarta’s archipelagic principle had implications beyond Indonesian borders. Most striking was its impact on relations with Malaysia, Jakarta’s closest neighbour vis-à-vis the shared waterways of the Straits of Melaka and Singapore<sup>85</sup>.

Indonesia’s claim to application of the straight baseline system as well as the extension of territorial sea from three to 12 miles challenged the international status of the Melaka Straits guaranteed in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, and posed legal and juridical problems for the international community. In the first instance, adoption of the straight baseline system was argued by Jakarta to be in accordance with precedence set by the Anglo-Norwegian Fisheries Case decided at the International Court of Justice in 1951, even though “in the case of the Indonesian claim . . . there does not appear the special conditions and factors given by the Court to justify its exceptional approval of the application of the special method. *The Indonesian case is totally different from the Norwegian case; there is no similarity at all*” (emphasis added)<sup>86</sup>. Further to that, the extension of territorial sea jurisdiction from three to 12 miles was only valid if other states sharing similar waters (in this case Malaysia) adopted similar measuring standards. On their part, Malaysia was at that time signatory to the Geneva Conferences on the Law of the Sea of 1958 and 1960, which abided by the three-mile rule.

In order to bring the vision of *Wawasan Nusantara* to fruition, Indonesia embarked on a massive diplomatic initiative to rally support for its cause among Third World states. This diplomatic initiative began with a delegation to the UNCLOS (United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea) meeting in Geneva in February 1958, where the Indonesian government presented its case to the international community. Following that, Indonesia’s claim to the archipelago

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<sup>84</sup> See Leifer, *Malacca, Singapore, and Indonesia*, 27. Palembang was the capital of the Srivijayan kingdom.

<sup>85</sup> Since the signing of the Safety Navigation agreement in 1971 between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, both the *Melaka* and Singapore straits become regarded as a single strait.

principle was raised to the Afro-Asian Legal Consultative Committee, Sea-Bed Committee of the United Nations General Assembly and at all subsequent UNCLOS meetings. Beyond pursuing their case through multilateral institutional means, Indonesia also cultivated like-minded states at a bilateral level<sup>87</sup>. Nevertheless, the one state apart from Indonesia who had the greatest stake in the archipelago doctrine, and whose support was critical to the Indonesian cause, was Malaysia. Indonesia's realization of *Wawasan Nusantara* hinged on Malaysia's backing because part of what Jakarta claimed was Indonesia's "territorial waters" actually lay between the peninsular and East Malaysia. Because of this geographical circumstance, the validity of Indonesia's Archipelagic Principle primarily hinged on Malaysian recognition.

Differences had emerged in the initial years of Indonesia-Malaysia dialogue on the legal status of the Straits. These differences were traced back to the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, which guaranteed the international juridical status of the Melaka Straits and stipulated the responsibilities of Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta as inheritors of British and Dutch colonies to treaty obligations.

Upon being granted independence, the Malayan government was prepared to abide by all treaties signed by the British colonial government. Reflecting this commitment, it was noted in the Devolution Clause signed by these two governments that:

All obligations and responsibilities of the Government of the United Kingdom which arise from any valid international instrument are, from August 31, 1957, assumed by the Government of the Federation of Malaya, in so far as such instruments may be held to have application to or in respect of the Federation of Malaya. The rights and benefits heretofore enjoyed by the Government of the United Kingdom in virtue of the application of any such international instrument to or in respect of the Federation of Malay are from 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1957, enjoyed by the Government of the Federation of Malaya<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> K.E. Shaw (ed), The Straits of Malacca: in Relation to the Problems of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. [Singapore: University Education Press, 1979] 44.

<sup>87</sup> See Leifer, "Malacca, Singapore, and Indonesia", chap 1 for a background to Indonesia's early diplomatic initiatives pertaining to their declaration of the archipelago principle.

<sup>88</sup> Exchange of Letter concerning Succession to Rights and Obligations arising from International Instruments, September 12, 1957, in International Law Association, The Effect of Independence on Treaties: A Handbook Prepared by the Committee on State Succession to Treaties and other Governmental Obligations. [London: International Law Association, 1965] appendix to chap 9.

In Indonesia's case however, Dutch treaties signed with regard to their East Indies possessions enjoyed no such commitment. Instead, it was declared at the Round Table Conference at the Hague in 1949:

The Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of the United States of Indonesia understand that . . . the rights and obligations of the Kingdom arising out of treaties and other international agreements concluded by the Kingdom shall be considered as the rights and obligations of the Republic of the United States of Indonesia only where and inasmuch as such treaties and agreements are applicable to the jurisdiction of the Republic of the United States of Indonesia and with the exception of rights and duties arising out of treaties and agreements to which the Republic of the United States of Indonesia cannot become a party on the ground of the provisions of such treaties and agreements<sup>89</sup>.

It is clear from these two statements that both countries accorded a different measure of consideration towards the treaty obligations committed to by their colonial masters. Once again, the divergence in approach can no doubt be attributable to their different anti-colonial experiences.

Problems subsequently arose as a result of the different perspectives held in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur over the definition of territorial seas. Indonesia, because of its indented coastline, claimed the application of the straight base-line system to define its territorial seas. Malaysia, on the other hand, because of its straight coast, insisted on the application of the prevailing coast-line system. The problems with these contending definitions has been elaborated on by K.E. Shaw:

An adoption of the system claimed by Indonesia is *ipso facto* a further extension of Indonesian territorial sea towards the coast of the Malay Peninsula, as the base-line for measuring the outer-limit of territorial sea would under this system start at the line linking all the islands within the archipelago and thus part of the free High Seas would become internal sea of Indonesia. This system together with the claim for extension of territorial sea from 3 to 12 miles would make up a double-extension putting a large part of the Strait-waters under

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Also quoted in K.E. Shaw, "The Juridical Status of the Malacca Straits and its Relation to Indonesia and Malaysia" in Shaw (ed), The Straits of Malacca, 34. This clause was later incorporated into Article 169 of the Constitution of Malaysia.

<sup>89</sup> Daniel P. O'Connell, State Succession in Municipal and International Law – Vol.II. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967] 364-365.

Indonesian jurisdiction. This certainly compromises Malaysia's interests, and a struggle starts accordingly<sup>90</sup>.

This divergence in views was no doubt exacerbated by the Malayan government's concern over the potential for Indonesian hegemony, which by the early 1960s had heightened as a result of Indonesia's belligerent claim to West Irian and later, its policy of confrontation against Malaysia<sup>91</sup>.

Nevertheless in a reflection of a gradual change of Malaysian attitudes toward Indonesia, the Malaysian government eventually acceded to the abandonment of the three-mile limit for the extension of territorial sea to 12 miles in accordance to Indonesian measurements and codified in Jakarta's declaration of the Archipelagic Principle. The Malaysian government also adopted the system of straight baselines which the Indonesians were using. The bill to extend Malaysia's territorial waters was submitted to the Malaysian parliament in 1967. Notably, the two-year hiatus between the submission of the bill and its eventual passing (in 1969) has been explained by some analysts as an abeyance in lieu of a perceived need in Kuala Lumpur to consult with Indonesia<sup>92</sup>. The agreement between Malaysia and Indonesia to delimit the continental shelves was eventually signed on 18 March 1970 on the occasion of President Suharto's watershed visit to Malaysia<sup>93</sup>.

Indo-Malaysian conformity in demarcating territorial waters however, shifted attention to the question of the status of the Melaka Straits, which fell into the sphere of both parties if the 12-mile delimitation mark was observed. This raised the further issue of the terms of navigation through the Straits. The foregoing discussion has already highlighted the international status of the Melaka Straits protected under the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824. By way of the Indo-Malaysian agreement of 1970, both Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur sought to exercise the right to regulate traffic along the Melaka Straits, in so doing denying the customary legal status of the Straits.

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<sup>90</sup> K.E. Shaw, "The Juridical Status" in K.E. Shaw (ed), The Straits of Malacca, 2-3.

<sup>91</sup> That said, it needs to be recognized that at no time during *Konfrontasi* did the Indonesian government make any territorial claim against Malaysia.

<sup>92</sup> See Leifer, Malacca, Singapore, and Indonesia, 30. It should be noted here that the bill passed in 2 August 1969 through an emergency ordinance. No vote was taken because of the suspension of parliament after the 13 May 1969 racial riots in Malaysia.

<sup>93</sup> The full text of the document is titled "Indonesia-Malaysia: Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of Malaysia relating to the Delimitation of the

Of greater concern in terms of bilateral relations however, was the issue of Indonesia's archipelago principle and its implications for Malaysia's management of the waterways linking East Malaysia to the peninsula. To that effect, Kuala Lumpur's initial response is best described as "cautious support". After expressing rhetorical support, a Memorandum of Understanding was finally signed in 1974 between the two parties prior to the UNCLOS meeting at Caracas in July that year. In it, Malaysia expressed conditional support for Jakarta's Archipelagic Principle and its propagation. In return, Indonesia was to take into account the legitimate interests of Malaysia, defined as the right for free and unimpeded communication flow between the Malay Peninsula and East Malaysia, as well as the establishment of a special corridor of passage. In spite of these commitments, the Malaysians continued to press their case further at Caracas and also the Geneva UNCLOS in May 1975. This persistence did not go down well in some Indonesian circles. Certain quarters in Jakarta were of the opinion that Malaysia was attempting to "negate and diminish" Indonesia's archipelago principle<sup>94</sup>. On Malaysia's part, there were some concerns within domestic circles that Kuala Lumpur might be bending too far backwards in synchronising their position with Jakarta's. As Leifer articulated:

Within the Malaysian foreign ministry, a sense of reserve has existed about its maritime policy in as far as it has been believed that Malaysia moved somewhat precipitately in serving Indonesian interests more than its own, especially in as far as initiatives over the Straits of Malacca and Singapore seemed to have strengthened Indonesia's archipelago claim, which did not accord fully with Malaysian interests<sup>95</sup>.

The stalemate was broken when Suharto and Razak met in Prapat, North Sumatra, on November 1975. It was at this meeting that Malaysia made a commitment to "fully support" Indonesia's declaration of the Archipelagic Principle. This agreement took the form of another Memorandum signed in September 1976. The 1976 document set basic terms covering the recognition by

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Continental Shelves between the two countries", and can be found in B.A. Hamzah, Malaysia and Law of the Sea, 295-296.

<sup>94</sup> See Hasjim Djalal, *Perjuangan Indonesia di Bidang Hukum Laut*. [Bandung: Percetakan Ekonomi, 1979]. This point was also stressed in B.A. Hamzah, "Indonesia's Archipelagic Regime: Implications for Malaysia", Marine Policy, January 1984.

<sup>95</sup> Leifer, Malacca, Singapore and Indonesia, 157.

Malaysia of archipelagic state principles and Indonesian sovereignty over its territorial sea and archipelagic waters, and the recognition by Indonesia to the rights of Malaysia to continue to enjoy existing rights and all other legitimate interests which it had traditionally exercised in the Indonesian territorial sea and archipelagic waters between West Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak. It is important to note however, that despite Razak's personal enthusiasm in pushing forward Malaysia's recognition of Indonesia's archipelago doctrine, the rank and file at the foreign ministry continued to harbour reservations regarding the Malaysian commitment<sup>96</sup>. Consequently to this day, Kuala Lumpur's position vis-à-vis the archipelagic principle has yet to be ratified by the Malaysian parliament.

## **VI. Neutralization and ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality)**

Attendant to bilateral accommodation around the issue of the Melaka Straits and Indonesia's Archipelagic Principle was Indo-Malaysian cooperation over the neutralization of Southeast Asia as part of the management of regional order in Southeast Asia.

The idea of creating a zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality in Southeast Asia was the brainchild of former Malaysian Home Minister Tun Ismail, and was primarily a reaction to the changing regional security circumstances brought about by British military withdrawal. The ZOPFAN initiative can be traced back to the "Ismail Peace Plan" based on Ismail's suggestion made in parliament in January 1968 that "the time is . . . ripe for the countries in the region to declare collectively the neutralisation of South-East Asia"<sup>97</sup>. Tun Ismail's proposal for the neutralisation of Southeast Asia contained three core tenets - first, the neutralisation of the region had to be guaranteed by the great powers (the US, the Soviet Union, and China); second, it would be based on non-aggression pacts among regional states; and finally, it would also stand on a policy of peaceful co-existence among the countries of the region<sup>98</sup>. Following Ismail's presentation of his proposal, the push for the neutralisation of Southeast Asia gained greater

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Idris Junid, Kuala Lumpur, 1 November 2001.

<sup>97</sup> This quote was taken from Chandran Jeshurun, Malaysian Defence Policy: A Study in Parliamentary Attitudes, 1963-1973. [Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit University Malaya, 1980] 120.

<sup>98</sup> See Heiner Hanggi, ASEAN and the ZOPFAN Concept. [Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991] 13.

urgency with the enunciation of the Guam doctrine, signalling the pulling out of American troops from Southeast Asia. Neutralisation was initially brushed aside by Tunku Abdul Rahman as unrealistic<sup>99</sup>; but was supported by his deputy Abdul Razak<sup>100</sup>. Predictably, it was during the Razak administration that the neutralisation proposal was pushed to the fore of ASEAN's regional security agenda, and became an international initiative that first surfaced at the Lusaka Non-Aligned Movement Conference in 1970, when Razak presented Malaysia's plan to create a "zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality"<sup>101</sup>. Again, this prescription for regional order was to be premised on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity among the ASEAN states, and the undertaking by the key external powers to exclude the region from power struggles as well as to play a supervisory role in guaranteeing the neutrality of the region<sup>102</sup>.

Indonesia's initial response to Malaysia's proposal was carefully calibrated. In reaction to Razak's presentation of the scheme at Lusaka, Adam Malik opined that while it was something worth looking into, Jakarta's bone of contention with the Malaysian proposal revolved around the understanding that in order to create a neutral Southeast Asia, "the understanding and the help of the big states was needed"<sup>103</sup>. To him, this was unacceptable to Indonesia. Jakarta's initial response was followed by scepticism as to whether states like Malaysia, who maintained security arrangements with foreign powers, could realistically abide by such tenets of the neutralisation scheme. In a veiled criticism, an Indonesian editorial argued:

The real neutralisation of Southeast Asia will have many consequences for several member countries that have so far fostered historical relations with powers outside Southeast Asia. Agreements on defence, special political relations, and the (*sic*) rest must be released<sup>104</sup>.

At the heart of Jakarta's unwillingness to wholeheartedly endorse the Malaysian proposal for neutralisation was the issue of great power guarantees,

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<sup>99</sup> See Dick Wilson, The Neutralization of Southeast Asia. [New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975] 8-9.

<sup>100</sup> Cable No.253, Australia High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, 2 February 1968, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 37, NAA.

<sup>101</sup> The expansion of the Ismail Peace Plan into a detailed prescription for regional order was expounded in Ghazali Shafie, "The Neutralization of Southeast Asia", Pacific Community, Vol.3, No.1 (October 1971).

<sup>102</sup> See *Ibid*.

<sup>103</sup> See "The Process of Neutralisation of Southeast Asia Needs a Long Time", Kompas, 22 December 1970.

<sup>104</sup> "Declaration on Neutralisation", Indonesia Raya, 30 November 1971.

which in effect granted external players virtual policing rights in the region. Indonesian concern was articulated by Adam Malik, who noted that “neutralisation that is the product of ‘one-way’ benevolence on the part of the big powers, at this stage, would perhaps prove as brittle and unstable as the interrelationship between the major powers themselves”<sup>105</sup>.

The notion that the neutrality of the region required the guarantee of external powers stood in direct contradiction to Jakarta’s own prescription for regional order – that the latter had to be grounded on regional resilience<sup>106</sup>. The Indonesian military in particular, was wary of the fact that China was to be included in the regional formula as a guarantor<sup>107</sup>. The issue of the neutralization of Southeast Asia featured prominently in the Razak-Suharto talks of December 1970, and at Razak’s impromptu meeting with Adam Malik in July 1971<sup>108</sup>. What comes across clearly from this series of bilateral meetings was that Kuala Lumpur was moving proactively and unilaterally to consult with Jakarta prior on a matter relating to their regional initiatives. As a result of these consultations, by the time the neutralisation proposal was tabled and jointly agreed upon at the ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in November 1971, its complexion had fundamentally changed. Taking Indonesian reservations into consideration, ZOPFAN was expressed in what has become known as the Kuala Lumpur Declaration as “a desirable objective” in line with Indonesia’s position that the neutralisation of Southeast Asia was likely to be a long-term prospect<sup>109</sup>.

Razak himself was to offer a further concession to Indonesian sensitivities. In a marked shift away from the original Malaysian proposal which stipulated a requirement of external power guarantees, Razak instead announced at the Kuala Lumpur Ministerial Meeting that “the premise of the neutralisation proposal is regional and national resilience”<sup>110</sup>. Indeed, such was Malaysia’s willingness to take Indonesian concerns and sensitivities into account that despite its eventual imprecise form, “neutralisation of Southeast Asia as had been proposed by

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<sup>105</sup> “Towards an Asian Asia”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 September 1971, 31.

<sup>106</sup> See Michael Leifer, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy*, 148-149.

<sup>107</sup> China was in fact the only external power that voiced support for the ZOPFAN proposal.

<sup>108</sup> See “Razak-Suharto summit talks of vital significance: Indonesian Press”, *Straits Times*, 18 December 1970; “‘Family’ talks, then Malik flies home”, *Straits Times*, 18 July 1971.

<sup>109</sup> See Heiner Hanggi, *ASEAN*, 19-20.

<sup>110</sup> Malaysia, *Jabatan Penerangan, Siaran Akhbar*, 1975, quoted in Johan Saravanamuttu, “Malaysia’s Foreign Policy, 1957-1980” in Zakaria Haji Ahmad (ed), *Government and Politics in Malaysia*. [Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987] 142.

Malaysia is mentioned neither in the operative part of the Declaration nor in the Joint Communiqué which goes with it”<sup>111</sup>. By the time the “desirable objective” of ZOPFAN evolved into a more concrete formula for regional order in 1976, its determining character had transformed from the external power guarantee and non-aggression pacts of the original Malaysian proposal to the notion of regional resilience, which was identified and accepted as Indonesia’s prescription for regional order. To that effect, an Indonesian analyst made the prescient observation that “Indonesian leaders, in fact, claimed that the ZOPFAN idea was basically theirs since Indonesia was the country that had consistently stressed the concept of an indigenous Southeast Asian regional order from the beginning of ASEAN”<sup>112</sup>. This was further manifested when Indonesia subsequently moved to tie its proposal for the establishment of a nuclear weapons-free zone (SEANWFZ) to the concept of ZOPFAN<sup>113</sup>. Likewise Malaysia’s willingness to allow for the dilution of its original proposal in order to accommodate Indonesian perspectives was telling of its willingness to defer to Indonesian proclivities.

Malaysia’s abidance by Indonesia’s Archipelagic Principle, as well as its attendant position on the Melaka Straits, and Indonesia’s accommodation of Malaysia’s neutralisation proposal, albeit with some adjustment to its terms, represented a *quid pro quo* that served once again to illuminate the extent to which international outlooks had converged over a short period of time, and further reinforced the perception that the Indonesia-Malaysia relationship formed the core of ASEAN<sup>114</sup>. While these events were definitive of the level of Indonesia-Malaysia fraternity during Razak’s administration, they were by no means the only examples of the extent to which bilateral ties had recovered from *Konfrontasi*. The Razak administration visibly threw its support behind Jakarta when the latter moved to annex Portuguese Timor in 1975<sup>115</sup>. In defence of Indonesian actions that were increasingly subjected to harsh international criticisms, Razak argued that “the obvious future for Portuguese Timor is for the territory to become part of

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<sup>111</sup> Hanggi, ASEAN, 18.

<sup>112</sup> Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Indonesia in ASEAN: Foreign Policy and Regionalism. [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994] 177.

<sup>113</sup> See Muthiah Alagappa, Towards a Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone in Southeast Asia. [Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1987].

<sup>114</sup> See WAH-7-73, “Nationalizing The Straits of Malacca”, American Universities Field Staff Report, Southeast Asia Series, Vol.XXI, No.8, July 1973.

<sup>115</sup> See “Malaysia accepts Indonesian action”, Straits Times, 14 December 1975.

Indonesia”<sup>116</sup>. Central to Malaysia’s concern, which it shared with Jakarta, was the spectre of the revival of communist insurgency in the event of Timorese independence. This concern was drawn from the fact that the Portuguese and Macau governments were at the time under communist control, and the latent fear in Malaysia and Indonesia was that Portugal and China would facilitate the dispatch of communist elements from Macau to support the Fretilin government in an independent Timor, a move which would have repercussions for Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta in their own fights against local communist insurgents<sup>117</sup>. Correspondingly, Ghazali Shafie was dispatched to Bali in 1976 to mediate between the Apogethi party and the Jakarta government in order for an agreement to be reached for the absorption of Portuguese Timor into the Indonesian Republic. One would certainly have noticed that Malaysia’s position on this matter stood in stark contrast to that taken during the 1950s on Sumatra and Sulawesi, where Kuala Lumpur instead sympathised with the anti-Jakarta cause. Further cooperation was evidenced in Malaysia and Indonesia jointly sponsoring UN resolutions on the decolonisation of Brunei<sup>118</sup>.

## VII. Relations with China

Events surrounding Malaysia’s normalisation of ties with China in 1974, in particular, marked how the potential for diplomatic tension arising from contradictory policy positions was extinguished by kinship diplomacy between these two kin states.

The fact that both post-Sukarno Indonesia and Malaysia viewed China as a security threat stemmed from China’s reluctance to disavow support for the predominantly ethnic Chinese communist movements in both countries. Be that as it may, drastic changes in the strategic environment (most notably President Nixon’s visit to Peking) alerted Kuala Lumpur to the need for a re-assessment of their policy toward the People’s Republic of China<sup>119</sup>. This re-assessment began with Kuala Lumpur’s support for China’s membership at the UN and peaked with

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<sup>116</sup> SWB FE/5040/I, 23 October 1975, “Malaysian Prime Minister on future of East Timor”.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Ghazali Shafie, Kuala Lumpur, 8 November 2001.

<sup>118</sup> SWB FE/5061/A3/13, 19 November 1975, “The Razak-Suharto Talks”.

<sup>119</sup> For a study of Malaysia-China relations during this period, see R.K. Jain, China and Malaysia, 1949-1983. [New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1984].

Razak's landmark visit to Peking in May 1974 to establish diplomatic ties. These developments were of further significance for the fact that not only did Malaysia become the first ASEAN state to establish ties with China, but that its policy seemed to run against the grain of strategic thinking vis-à-vis China in the region at the time. In particular, it seemed to contradict Indonesia's own policy toward China, which was still very much defined by suspicion toward the latter's intentions.

While it does appear on the surface that a fundamental contradiction existed with regard to the Indonesian and Malaysian positions on China, several issues are worth noting. First, it must be acknowledged that Malaysia's move to normalise ties with the People's Republic of China was defined more by a reaction to changing geopolitical circumstances than by a removal of suspicion of Peking<sup>120</sup>. In this, Indo-Malaysian perspectives of China did not essentially differ. Second, and perhaps of greater significance, was the fact that since 1971, the Malaysian government had consistently consulted with Jakarta on their intention to review policy towards China. This was done in order to mollify anticipated concerns from Indonesia<sup>121</sup>. In fact, Razak had consulted personally with Suharto prior to Malaysia's landmark vote at the 1971 UNGA to support the admission of the PRC into the UN<sup>122</sup>. As a result, while Jakarta may have initially felt slighted by Malaysian gestures toward China undertaken without prior consultation with them, after active consultation the Indonesian government declared publicly that Malaysia had the right to establish relations with China<sup>123</sup>. Consequently, the normalization of ties between Malaysia and China in May 1974 passed without much furore in Jakarta, owing to the fact that Indonesia was satisfied with the logic behind Malaysia's decision, and more importantly, that Kuala Lumpur had kept Jakarta well informed at every stage of Malaysia-China negotiations<sup>124</sup>. In a move that once again reflected the convergence of strategic perspective between Indonesia and Malaysia as well as Malaysia's own lingering concerns over Chinese

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<sup>120</sup> See Stephen Leong, "Malaysia and the People's Republic of China in the 1980s: Political Vigilance and Economic Pragmatism", *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXVII, No.10 (October 1987).

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Abdullah Ahmad, Singapore, 21 August 2000.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Abdullah Ahmad, Kuala Lumpur, 8 November 2001.

<sup>123</sup> *Antara Daily News Bulletin*, 7 December 1971 ; See also "Foreign Minister Adam Malik: Indonesia has no objections if ASEAN members open relations with China", *Suara Karya*, 8 December 1972.

objectives, the Kuala Lumpur government continued to publicly support Jakarta's position of suspicion toward Peking's intentions, despite having already normalised ties with China<sup>125</sup>.

### VIII. From Razak to Hussein Onn

From the above discussion, it can be certainly said that the change in Malaysian attitudes toward Indonesia owed much to Tun Abduk Razak and his approach to relations with Jakarta. Less suspicious of Indonesian, and especially Javanese, intentions than the Tunku, this permitted Razak and key Indonesia policy-makers in his administration to embrace the New Order government in Indonesia. After Razak's untimely death in January 1976, the baton was passed to Tun Hussein Onn, who immediately proclaimed that Malaysian foreign policy would continue along the lines plotted by his predecessor<sup>126</sup>. Malaysia's Indonesia policy under the Hussein Onn government certainly held true to this proclamation. As a manifestation of the continued emphasis given to ties with Indonesia, Hussein Onn made Jakarta his first foreign port-of-call during his premiership on 28 January 1976<sup>127</sup>. It was at this visit that Indo-Malaysian "brotherliness" was reaffirmed by Suharto and Hussein Onn<sup>128</sup>.

Subsequently, this tête-à-tête would become an annual event during the Hussein Onn administration, just as it was during Razak's. It was also during Hussein Onn's administration that Indonesia-Malaysia relations reached a new stage of amity with the expansion of military cooperation. Not only were the General Border Committee meetings and anti-communist offensives in Borneo continued, but military exercises between the Navies, Air Forces and Armies of Indonesia and Malaysia became regular events in the calendar of bilateral relations. *Malindo Samatha* (search and rescue exercises), *Malindo Jaya* and *Malindo Mini*

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<sup>124</sup> This point was reiterated by the two key architects of Malaysia's China policy of the time, Abdullah Ahmad and Ghazali Shafie, in the author's interviews with them, and was confirmed on the Indonesian side during an interview with Des Alwi, Jakarta, 21 January 2002..

<sup>125</sup> See SWB FE/5969/A3/7, 15 November 1978, "Indonesia regrets Teng's remarks on insurgents in Southeast Asia"; SWB FE/5969/A3/2, 15 November 1978, "Malaysia's foreign policy and Teng Hsiao-ping's visit".

<sup>126</sup> SWB FE/5118/A3/4, 27 January 1976, "Malaysia to continue Razak's policies".

<sup>127</sup> It is true that in fact, Onn had visited Bangkok prior to making his trip to Jakarta. This however, was in fulfilment of a promise made by Razak prior to his death that he would make an official visit to Thailand. Upon Razak's death, Hussein Onn took the initiative to fulfil this promise.

<sup>128</sup> SWB FE/5122/A3/2, 3 February 1976, "The Malaysian Prime Minister's Visit to Indonesia".

(naval exercises), *Elang Malindo* (air force exercises) and *Keris Kartika* (army exercises) were either instituted or continued with admirable regularity. *Keris Kartika* in particular, was a milestone for it marked the first incidence where the Indonesian army engaged in joint military exercises. Additionally, the Malaysian military was granted permission to train in Indonesia<sup>129</sup>. When Malaysia declared its 200-mile economic zone in July 1977 after the G-77 and UNCLOS meetings, it enjoyed staunch Indonesian support<sup>130</sup>. Both Hussein Onn and Suharto also made combined efforts to mediate between the Moro Liberation Front Islamic separatists and the Philippine government<sup>131</sup>. The Indonesian and Malaysian governments also shared similar positions in condemning the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and Israeli attacks against Iraq and Lebanon<sup>132</sup>. Collaboration also included the establishment of joint arms-production industry and satellite technology exchange<sup>133</sup>.

#### **IX. Strategic Convergence – The Kuantan Principle**

Shared strategic perspectives born of heightened sensitivities to kinship affiliation between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur also manifested themselves alongside events in Indochina. As early as 1970, Indonesia and Malaysia already evinced propensities toward shared perspectives over the Indochina crisis when Kuala Lumpur expressed enthusiasm over an initial Indonesian move to manage the regional crisis under the auspices of the Jakarta Conference on Cambodia<sup>134</sup>. Subsequently, the uncertain regional environment created after American withdrawal, the fall of Saigon, and the unification of Vietnam in 1976 in effect produced a security problem on the doorstep of ASEAN. The urgency which this event created among the ASEAN states resulted in the convening of the first ASEAN Summit in Bali in February 1976. It was at the Bali summit that the blueprint for the realization of ZOPFAN, which was in discussion since the Kuala

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<sup>129</sup> SWB FE/5816/A3/6, 18 May 1978, "Malaysian Armed Forces to train in Indonesia".

<sup>130</sup> SWB FE/5581/A3/9, 5 August 1977, "Indonesian support for Malaysia's proposed 200-mile limit".

<sup>131</sup> SWB FE/5821/A3/2, 34 May 1978, "Malaysian radio on Hussein-Suharto talks".

<sup>132</sup> SWB FE/6803/A3/5 17 August 1981, "Malaysian Prime Minister concludes Indonesian visit".

<sup>133</sup> "Arms: K.L.-Jakarta decision is to avoid duplication", *Straits Times*, 13 December 1976.

<sup>134</sup> It is also interesting to note that of all the ASEAN states, it was only Malaysia that "appeared to respond with any real enthusiasm to Indonesia's initiative". See Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of Southeast Asia*. [London: Routledge, 1989] 54.

Lumpur Declaration of 1971, was endorsed by the ASEAN heads of government in the form of the TAC (Treaty of Amity and Cooperation). ASEAN solidarity wrought of the TAC was to function as a basis through which dialogue with the Indochinese states, especially Vietnam, could be initiated. While attempts at engaging Vietnam intensified within ASEAN, so too did the difference strategic perspectives among its members towards developments in Indochina. Of especial significance was the direction Indonesia and Malaysia were moving on the issue.

Apprehension toward communism notwithstanding, Jakarta also took the view that Vietnam could be considered a potential regional partner and bulwark against increasing Chinese influence. This coincidence in strategic perspectives could be further built on the fact that both states also shared strongly nationalistic values that underpinned their respective foreign policies<sup>135</sup>. Largely as a result of this perception Jakarta's response to Vietnamese aggression against Cambodia was visibly muted. In fact, Jakarta policy makers construed that Vietnam's seemingly aggressive policies were above all else "a reaction away from Peking"<sup>136</sup>. This certainly was a reflection of Indonesian attitudes toward China, which was viewed in many circles in Jakarta as their main security threat. In a telling comparison of Vietnamese and Chinese attitudes, Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja intimated that "Indonesia should be continuously vigilant with regard to People's China because . . . it would not make such a statement like Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, that his country would not support subversive movements in other countries"<sup>137</sup>. What was in fact of greater interest however, was the position that Malaysia was taking on this issue. Indochina topped the agenda at the Suharto-Hussein Onn summit meeting in March 1979, where Indonesia appeared to sway Malaysian opinion on the crisis<sup>138</sup>. Given the lingering suspicions that both Indonesia and Malaysia had for Chinese expansion into the region (in the latter's case, despite the normalisation of ties in 1974), the Indo-Malaysian position that took shape was centred on the logic that the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea was in effect motivated by Hanoi's antipathy toward China, an antipathy that was partially justified in light of China's

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<sup>135</sup> Michael Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*, 161.

<sup>136</sup> SWB FE/4878/A3/10, 15 April 1975, "Impact of Indochina events in Malaysia: Indonesian views".

<sup>137</sup> SWB FE/5945/A3/3, 18 October 1975, "Indonesian Foreign Minister on relations with China".

<sup>138</sup> See "Hussein to meet Suharto for talks on Indochina war", *Straits Times*, 4 March 1979.

subsequent military reprisal<sup>139</sup>. What was of further significance in the Indo-Malaysian position on Indo-China was that it contradicted the stance taken by their ASEAN neighbours, who sought to take a stronger position against Vietnam.

In a bilateral meeting at Kuantan in May 1980 between Suharto and Hussein Onn, the Indonesian and Malaysian governments issued a statement in the spirit of ZOPFAN, declaring that for Southeast Asia to be a region of peace, Vietnam must be freed from Soviet and Chinese influence. The Kuantan Principle, as the statement came to be known, was a result of Indo-Malaysian diplomacy extended to Hanoi earlier in the year, and was motivated by four factors<sup>140</sup>. First, Vietnam's struggle against the US and subsequently China was perceived in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur as an essentially nationalist struggle. This coincided with Indonesia's longstanding conviction that such struggles be supported. Indeed, this remained a key thread of continuity between the Sukarno and Suharto regimes. Even for Malaysia, shifts in the shade of foreign policy after 1970 meant that more sympathy was accorded to nationalist struggles of such nature as well. Second, both (but in particular Indonesia) saw the value of Vietnam as a potential regional partner, if not strategic ally. This was important in view of their shared concerns for the creeping influence of China. Third, it seemed that the leadership in Indonesia and Malaysia saw the Kuantan Principle as an opportunity to lay a solid foundation for what ASEAN had sought to achieve since 1976 – the eventual acceptance of Vietnam and the Indochinese states into the organisation. Finally, the Kuantan Principle also provided an opportunity for both to re-assert the concept of ZOPFAN by making the call for the Soviet Union and China to exit Indochina<sup>141</sup>.

### **Concluding remarks**

Although the Kuantan Principle ultimately failed to prove a viable solution to the regional crisis as a result of Vietnam's ensuing aggression against Thailand (itself an ASEAN opponent of the Principle), it nevertheless was a significant

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<sup>139</sup> In fact, Malaysia had already been sharing the concerns of their Indonesian counterparts by 1978. See SWB FE/5969/A3/7, 15 November 1978, "Malaysia's foreign policy and Teng Hsiao-ping's visit".

<sup>140</sup> Malaysian foreign minister Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen and Indonesian envoy General Benni Murdani were dispatched at different times earlier that year to open discussions with Hanoi.

manifestation of converging perspectives driven by an awareness and politicisation of kinship ties that began with the advent of the Razak administration. This alignment of Malaysian policy with Jakarta's that covered the range of issues discussed above began when Malaysia followed the Indonesian lead in walking out of the August 1971 NAM Conference in Guyana to protest that the principle of consensus had been violated when the conference admitted the Vietcong and Sihanouk delegations to full membership. This move was poignantly described by one observer as "self-induced subordination" of Malaysian interests to Indonesia<sup>142</sup>. Reflecting this observation, Zainal Sulong reportedly opined that it "would not be in Malaysia's interest . . . by not showing (*sic*) some deference to the prestige of their (Indonesian's) government"<sup>143</sup>. In a resounding declaration pregnant with significance, Ghazali Shafie publicly declared at a GBC meeting in Jakarta:

It is a fact that whatever serves as a threat to any of the two countries (Indonesia and Malaysia) will also be regarded as so by the other. . . . Let the understanding and cooperation now closely binding the two countries serve as a warning to any power that has ill intentions towards us. We will act together to oppose this threat completely and we shall never tolerate any nonsense from anywhere. . . . Let this joint stand of ours be understood by all, particularly by those who have designs on us<sup>144</sup>.

It was also Ghazali Shafie who later related a specific instruction given by Suharto and Razak to Indonesian Security Minister Ali Moertopo and himself to take all the necessary steps to ensure that "*pisang jangan berbuah dua kali*" (never again should there be confrontation between the two people of the same stock)<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> "The Kuantan Principle", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4-10 April 1980, 12.

<sup>142</sup> Stephen Chee, "Malaysia and Singapore: Separate Identities, Different Priorities", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (February 1973) 157.

<sup>143</sup> Record of conversation between Eastman and Sulong, Kuala Lumpur, 23 September 1967, A1838 3006/4/9 Part 37, NAA.

<sup>144</sup> *Utusan Melayu*, 18 September 1979. This comment was made on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Malaysia-Indonesia General Border Committee meeting in Jakarta.

<sup>145</sup> See Ghazali Shafie, paper presented at the Second Malindo Dialogue, Bogor, Indonesia, January 1990.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 1981-2000 : The Indonesia-Malaysia “Prestige Dilemma”

#### Introduction

The Kuantan Principle of 1980 was formulated on the basis of shared strategic perception of regional developments and their impact on Indonesian and Malaysian security. While the case could no doubt be made that the Principle was issued in a reaction to strategic developments in Indochina, the fact that prior to Kuantan Indonesia and Malaysia had already shared a decade of harmony, and stability in bilateral relations certainly facilitated the building of consensus. In turn, the convergence of interest seems to have been underlined by the rejuvenation of relations on the basis of blood brotherhood that was liberally espoused by both the Indonesian and Malaysian leaderships since the termination of *Konfrontasi*.

As hinted in the previous chapter, relations during the 1970s were premised on Malaysia's willing acknowledgement of Indonesian primacy in this relationship, resulting in a noticeable congruence between kinship rhetoric and Malaysian foreign policy. It can be discerned from the politics of policy-making over the past decade that both the Razak and Hussein Onn administrations were ready first, to ensure that Jakarta was consulted on matters of foreign policy, and second, to align Malaysian foreign policy as closely as possible to Jakarta's position. The most glaring examples of this can be found in the two major policy initiatives in the 1970s – the formulation of ZOPFAN and the normalisation of ties towards China. The latter case was particularly telling. While the May 1974 normalization of ties with Peking could conceivably have been a source of tension for the two kin states given Indonesia's acute suspicions of China, the Razak government ensured that Jakarta was regularly consulted and sufficiently satisfied with Malaysian reasons for a policy shift prior to Razak's landmark visit to Peking to effect the change. In a move signifying Jakarta's interest in cementing

the upturn in relations of that decade, the Indonesian government made clear on the occasion of Tun Hussein Onn's deliberations over his choice of deputies that they preferred Ghazali Shafie for the sake of policy continuity on the part of Malaysia<sup>1</sup>. Indonesian preference for Ghazali was premised on his role as the prime Malaysian interlocutor in relations with Indonesia for the decade since *Konfrontasi*, and hence would represent a welcomed continuity in bilateral relations. Furthermore, the fact that Ghazali was himself of Sumatran (Mandailing) origin and related to former Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik probably endeared himself further to the Indonesians<sup>2</sup>. The eventual choice of the outspoken Malay nationalist Mahathir Mohamad however, elicited a different response from Jakarta. While the Indonesian leaders took easily to Razak and Ghazali, they greeted Mahathir's ascension with caution and reservation<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, their initial consternation would prove portentous of the future of relations.

With the advent of the Mahathir administration in Malaysia in 1981, observers were quick to suggest that a "new dimension" to bilateral relations was required<sup>4</sup>. What was significant about this period of bilateral ties was how the transformation of foreign policy dispositions that resulted from internal reconstruction of their respective national identities impacted on perceptions and interpretations of the kinship factor in Indonesia-Malaysia relations on the part of the political elite in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur. The Mahathir administration brought about a period in Malaysian history when Malaysian conceptions of national identity experienced a transformation that was manifested noticeably in foreign policy<sup>5</sup>. Likewise, the late 1980s witnessed a rejuvenation of Indonesian interest in international affairs as part of a political effort to regain a sense of national pride "lost" amidst the debacle of *Konfrontasi* and the failed communist coup of the mid-1960s. These developments had a direct impact on Indonesian

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Abdullah Ahmad, Kuala Lumpur, 7 November 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Wang Gungwu, Singapore, 2 February, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Abdullah Ahmad, Kuala Lumpur, 7 November 2001.

<sup>4</sup> "Hubungan Malaysia-Indonesia Perlukan Dimensi Baru", *Utusan Malaysia*, 5 September 1989.

<sup>5</sup> For the impact of Mahathir Mohamad on the Malaysian political culture, see Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: A Political Biography of Mahathir Mohamad*. [Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1993].

and Malaysian perceptions of their role and status in international society, and how both saw their position in the Indo-Malay World. Insofar as bilateral relations were concerned, the question that arose was whether the momentum gathered during the Razak and Hussein Onn periods would be sustained during the Mahathir administration.

Bilateral relations in the 1980s appeared to be a continuation of earlier traditions, with kinship emphasised in the language of diplomacy. Commenting on Indonesian reports of a visit made by Mahathir to Indonesia in 1988, Malaysia's Jakarta correspondent Yang Razali Kassim observed: "There is a particular line which the Indonesian media reserves for no visiting dignitary except a Malaysian – cultural affinity. . . . As the Indonesian press portrayed it, the encounter was like one between two members of the same family, embracing each other in mutual back-packing"<sup>6</sup>. The manner in which Suharto received Mahathir, Razali further noticed, was pregnant with significance. Suharto had insisted that the meeting be held in Jogjakarta, near to his birthplace and the site where he fought during the Indonesian revolution, and on his 67<sup>th</sup> birthday. Furthermore, he had arranged for Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX, the most respected of the remaining sultans in Indonesia and governor of Jogjakarta, to receive Mahathir at the airport and join in their deliberations<sup>7</sup>. No doubt these observations were telling of the persistence of the kinship factor in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, but the question remained as to whether the firebrand and nationalistic Mahathir would overstep the line separating amity and rivalry in this relationship.

#### **I. Foreign policy change and the advent of a "new stage" in relations**

It is a fact that the study of international politics needs to account for change and transformation. Illustrative of this, as colonial states evolve into sovereign political entities, more often than not foreign policy perspectives shift as a consequence. That is the case with Indonesia and Malaysia, two states that

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<sup>6</sup> "Behind the Suharto, Mahathir Meeting", Straits Times, 25 June 1988.

by the advent of the 1980s had consolidated into politically stable and economically dynamic political entities. This in turn was reflected in foreign policy outlooks that saw Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur engage each other as diplomatic rivals in a contest for political primacy in the region.

The impact of Mahathir himself on Malaysian foreign policy has been a crucial factor behind the shift in Malaysian dispositions toward Indonesia from the calculated deference of the Razak and Hussein Onn years to a diplomatic nonchalance that characterised much of his administration's policy toward Jakarta. Indeed, such is the pervasiveness of Mahathir Mohamad's imprint in the conduct of Malaysian foreign policy that studies on the latter subject cannot but focus on the impact of his role<sup>8</sup>. One overriding characteristic that defines Malaysian foreign policy under Mahathir would be diplomatic adventurism underscored by an enviable record of political stability and economic growth. Clive Kessler has explained the association between Malaysian nationalism, state-building, and the Mahathir factor in this manner:

Having ensured, by assuring Malay ascendancy, that completing the unfinished agenda of preindependence Malay nationalism would remain the core objective of postindependence Malaysia as a Malay-based "but-more-than-just-Malay" multiethnic nation, Dr. Mahathir then allied his domination of the state to consolidate Malay corporate economic power, enabling it . . . to play a significant, even strategic, international role; to be players of consequence not only throughout Southeast Asia but also the Pacific, Southern and West Africa, Central Asia, Latin America and even Europe. This, for him, was part of a larger world-historical agenda, one that was essential if the nationalist aspirations of countries such as Malaysia were to achieve adequate modern realization<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> See Murugesu Pathmanathan and David Lazarus (eds), *Winds of Change: The Mahathir Impact on Malaysia's Foreign Policy*. (Kuala Lumpur: Eastview Productions Sdn.Bhd, 1984); Johan Saravanamuttu, "Malaysia's Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Period, 1981-1995: An Iconoclast Come to Rule", *Asian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.4, No.1 (June 1996); Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*.

<sup>9</sup> Clive Kessler, "Malaysia and Mahathir: Region Builder or Barrier Builder?", *The Asia-Australia Papers*, No.1 (April 1999) 24.

Diplomatic adventurism found expression in policies such as Buy British Last and Look East, which carried significant symbolic weight insofar as Malaysia's emergence as a champion of Third World interests was concerned. Even if the policies failed to achieve any substantive results, their impact lay in the fact that Malaysia's standing in international affairs soared. This recognition, along with the increasing primacy given to Malaysia's role and example among states and governments in the developing world, initiated and contributed to a kind of ideological awakening within Malaysia. Mahathir's adoption and propagation of the ideology of developing world unity against what he portrayed as the oppressive and predatory western developed world brought about a substantial normative change in the belief system of Malaysians and a reconstruction of Malaysian identity, resulting in widespread support for Mahathir's nationalist slogan of "*Malaysia Boleh*" ("Malaysia is able").

Mahathir Mohamad paid especial attention to the Islamic dimension of Malaysia's foreign policy, a move that inadvertently slighted Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation. Partly as a result of the legacy of the Tunku's era (when Mahathir was a staunch and vocal critic of Tunku's overtly pro-West foreign policy), and partly in response to the heightened Islamic consciousness in Malaysian society at the time, Mahathir made it a point to publicize Malaysia's foreign policy towards its Muslim brethren<sup>10</sup>. Because of this, one could be forgiven for expecting relations with Indonesia, perceived as brethren in religion, to benefit from this Islamisation of foreign policy. Yet the substance of Mahathir's activism did not go down well in Jakarta. Malaysian attempts to project themselves as a member of consequence in international society clashed with Indonesia's own ambitions, and was viewed as a direct challenge to Indonesian primacy.

Indonesia, it might be recalled, had during the early years of the Suharto presidency shunned strident international political advocacy for the more pragmatic and realistic objective of national resilience, of which economic

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed analysis of how Malaysia's foreign policy towards the Islamic world has been driven by domestic political exigencies, see Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*. [London: Routledge, 1995].

development and internal political stability were primary pillars. Consequently, Jakarta deliberately adopted a much lower international profile. This move however, appeared to have been lamented in certain quarters within the Indonesian establishment. Indeed, many among the Indonesian political leadership felt the success of the national resilience program, which brought about vibrant economic development and stable internal politics, granted Indonesia “the right to assert a higher profile”<sup>11</sup>. To that effect, the observations of Dewi Fortuna Anwar, an advisor to former President B.J. Habibie, are worth quoting in full:

There was a discernible sense of national grandeur amongst some sections of the Indonesian political elite. Indonesian political elite members were very conscious of the fact that Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia and the world’s fifth most populous state and that it has the potential to become a middle power. Many still cherished the memory of Indonesia’s heavy concentration on foreign policy under Sukarno, which had resulted in rapidly increasing international interest in the country. A significant element within the Indonesian political elite, therefore, believed that Indonesian foreign policy should have a higher profile, and be more active and more focused on the common interests of the Third World or the South, than it hitherto had under the New Order government<sup>12</sup>.

To what extent this view was representative of key policy-makers in Indonesia will no doubt be difficult to discern. Be that as it may, it is true that these activist ideals never strayed far from the surface of Indonesian perceptions of their own identity and position in international society, and “although tempered by current realities, they remain potent among Indonesia’s contemporary intellectual establishment”<sup>13</sup>. Echoing these impressions, another scholar has intimated: “A Java-centric view of the regional standing and vulnerability of archipelagic Indonesia which was formed during the struggle for independence

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Vatikiotis, “Indonesia’s Foreign Policy in the 1990s”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 14, No.4 (March 1993) 357.

<sup>12</sup> Dewi Fortuna Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN: Foreign Policy and Regionalism*. [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994] 284.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Vatikiotis, “Indonesia’s Foreign Policy”, 357.

has been sustained since its attainment”<sup>14</sup>. Certainly, insofar as the “rightful” identity of Indonesia was concerned, domestic politicians were in consensus that Indonesia was a regional power.

This pressure for Indonesia to break out of its diplomatic dormancy subsequently led to a shift in international outlook among the political elite in Jakarta that was discernible in Indonesian foreign policy ventures during the mid to late 1980s. For example, some scholars view Jakarta’s decision to commemorate the 1955 Bandung Afro-Asian Conference in 1985 as a watershed in Indonesian foreign policy<sup>15</sup>. This led to various calls for Indonesia to take on a more proactive role in regional affairs<sup>16</sup>. Others have cited Indonesia’s Vietnam policy, which saw Jakarta take an active interest in resolving the Indochina crisis, as evidence of a shift in Jakarta’s once dormant foreign policy<sup>17</sup>. During Armed Forces Chief Benny Moerdani’s watershed visit to Vietnam in July 1984, Jusuf Wanandi observed: “We’re (Indonesia) emerging from a long period of dormancy in foreign affairs . . . . The world is going to be hearing a lot more from Indonesia now”<sup>18</sup>.

There have been suggestions that the rationale behind Indonesia’s diplomatic resurgence could be attributed to the emergence of a “Second Generation” in Indonesian nationalism<sup>19</sup>. While the nationalist spirit inherent in the Indonesian political psyche certainly accounted in some measure for this renewed impetus to activism, this rationale only reflected the fact that there probably has always been latent among the political elite in Indonesia a belief that Jakarta is an international player of consequence, and hence should re-assert its role to that effect. This drive for greater international prominence brought Indonesia into direct diplomatic conflict with Malaysia, which, as discussed

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Leifer, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy*. [London: Allen & Unwin, 1983] 173.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, Heath MacMichael, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy: Towards a New Assertive Style*. [Queensland: Griffiths University, Center for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, 1987].

<sup>16</sup> “R.I. urged to take assertive lead in SEA”, *Jakarta Post*, 31 August 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Ali Alatas, Jakarta, 24 January 2002.

<sup>18</sup> “Indonesia’s New Approach to Vietnam Shows Higher Profile on Foreign Policy”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 July 1984.

<sup>19</sup> See Gregory Hein, “Suharto’s Foreign Policy: Second Generation Nationalism in Indonesia”, Ph.D dissertation submitted to University of California-Berkeley, California, 1986.

above, itself was embarking on its own international activism driven by a rejuvenated Malaysian nationalism.

Malaysia's move towards increasing its international profile saw Mahathir fashion for himself a role as the unofficial spokesperson of the Third World. Under his administration, Malaysia's track record in international diplomacy has been impressive. Contradicting Indonesian preferences for enhanced North-South dialogue, Mahathir was instrumental in pushing South-South cooperation<sup>20</sup>. Malaysian leadership also extended to the political front, and has been manifested most strikingly in Mahathir's active politicking at the UN. Greater international prominence has seen Malaysia voted in as member of the UN Security Council for two terms, in 1988-1990 and 1998-1999. Further to that, Malaysia has held the rotational position of President of the UN General Assembly (51<sup>st</sup> Session), along with the chairs of the G-77 and the Commission on Sustainable Development<sup>21</sup>. Malaysian leadership has also been exemplified in its participation in UN peacekeeping, which has been unrivaled by any other Third World state (or for that matter most developed states as well). Mahathir has continued Malaysia's tradition of active support for and participation in UN peacekeeping operations, overseeing Malaysia's involvement in Namibia, Cambodia, Somalia, Kuwait, the Iran-Iraq border, and more recently, Bosnia and East Timor, and has made Malaysia a centre for peacekeeping training.

Mahathir was also among the first Third World leaders to call for the Non-Aligned Movement to take on a new, more active role in the post-Cold War new world order. This activism was particularly pronounced at the 1992 NAM conference in Jakarta, where he purportedly "stole the thunder" and "virtually became, as a Far Eastern Economic Review cover story described it, the 'new voice for the Third World' or even a 'little Sukarno', as some of the Indonesian media opined"<sup>22</sup>. This reference to the Indonesian legacy was profoundly ironic, for it codified opinions already-formulating in Jakarta that the Mahathir

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph Liow, "Mahathir's Foreign Policy" in James Chin and Ho Khai Leong (eds), The Mahathir Administration: Performance and Governance. [Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2001].

<sup>21</sup> For a full listing of Malaysia's accomplishments at the United Nations, refer to the homepage of the Permanent Mission of Malaysia to the United Nations, [www.undp.org/missions/malaysia](http://www.undp.org/missions/malaysia).

administration was out to undermine Indonesia's traditional role of regional primacy as the "first among equals", as well as its international political ambitions<sup>23</sup>. The context of Mahathir's implicit challenge to Indonesia's diplomatic position in regional and international affairs during the 1992 NAM Summit in Jakarta takes on further significance for another reason; the 1992 Summit marked the "return" to prominence of an Indonesian government which had for a long period shirked its natural propensity to leadership<sup>24</sup>. Not surprisingly, the Indonesian media was highly critical of what it perceived as Mahathir's attempt to upstage Suharto at an event seen in Jakarta circles as a landmark occasion for Indonesian foreign policy. Rumours later emerged that the Indonesian press was instructed to edit and blot out key elements of Mahathir's speeches to prevent him from outshining Suharto<sup>25</sup>. Tension was further exacerbated with the substantial and obvious distance between Indonesian and Malaysian positions on international affairs that came to the fore at the NAM Summit in Jakarta, where diplomatic maneuverings by both parties generated speculation that Indonesia-Malaysia relations were headed for another tailspin<sup>26</sup>. Whereas Suharto spoke as chairman of NAM of the need for non-aligned states to take on a more cooperative tone in relations with the developed world, Mahathir chose a confrontational approach, unleashing his characteristic diatribes against the West. This indeed, was frowned upon by Indonesia not only because it was clearly an implicit and disrespectful challenge to the chair, but also because Jakarta was aware that in actual practice, Malaysia was a close economic and military ally with the West<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim population, did not take too kindly to Malaysia's excessively strong pro-Islamic stance in support of Bosnia<sup>28</sup>. Predictably, the fact that it appeared as if it was Mahathir, not Suharto, who was completing in the late Twentieth Century "the

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<sup>22</sup> Saravanamuttu, "Malaysia's Foreign Policy", 6.

<sup>23</sup> "Jakarta-K.L. Relations Lukewarm Under Mahathir", *Jakarta Post*, 19 March 1991.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ali Alatas, Jakarta, 24 January 2002.

<sup>25</sup> See "Indonesia" in *Asia 1993: Yearbook*. [Hong Kong: Far Eastern Economic Review, 1993] 133.

<sup>26</sup> See "The NAM Summit: Reason and Rhetoric", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 September 1992.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, Jakarta, 23 January 2002.

<sup>28</sup> There was certainly a sense that Malaysia was out to make Indonesia "look bad".

victory of what President Sukarno used to refer as the ‘newly emerging forces’ over the ‘old established forces’” further fueled the flames of enmity between the two leaders and the two governments<sup>29</sup>. This in turn, was aggravated by the fact that many Indonesians privately welcomed Mahathir as the new champion of the Third World, a fact that Suharto himself was only too aware of<sup>30</sup>.

Differences in policy orientations between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur have further emerged at Track-Two conferences. In general, Malaysia has given little regard to Indonesian efforts at mediation over the contending claims for the South China Sea islands through the Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea run by the latter<sup>31</sup>. One such example was Malaysia’s open rejection of Indonesia’s proposed solutions to contending South China Sea territorial claims involving Kuala Lumpur and several other regional states<sup>32</sup>. In fact, Malaysia has challenged Indonesia’s neutrality in the South China Sea dispute in light of Jakarta’s own dispute with one of the South China Sea claimants, Vietnam, over the continental shelf of the Natuna Islands<sup>33</sup>.

The creeping resurgence of diplomatic tension notwithstanding, it was an awareness that historical and political circumstances were changing that brought leaders from both countries to launch a series of dialogues in the late 1980s and early 1990s in an attempt to relocate the kinship factor in a contemporary political context. These dialogues included the *Dialog Pemuda Indonesia-Malaysia* (Indonesia-Malaysia Youth Dialogue) and the Malaysia-Indonesia Conference series. The impetus for these exchanges was a concern that both kin states still held expectations of each other that neither appeared ready or willing to fulfil. This dichotomy was impressed upon in the following comments by then Malaysian Ambassador to Jakarta, Abdullah Zawawi:

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<sup>29</sup> See Clive Kessler, “Malaysia and Mahathir”, 24-25.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Jakarta, 18 January 2002.

<sup>31</sup> See Dino Djalal, “Indonesia and Preventive Diplomacy: A Study of the Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea”, Ph.D dissertation submitted to London School of Economics, 2000, 190-196.

<sup>32</sup> In his capacity as a participant in some of these Track-Two Conferences, the author has on several occasions personally witnessed the public disagreement between Malaysian and Indonesian representatives over this matter.

<sup>33</sup> Dino Djalal, “Indonesia and Preventive Diplomacy”, 191.

The question to ask ourselves is to what extent do we invoke the sentiments or (sic) our common heritage in the conduct of our bilateral relations. The dilemma is that so much is expected from it – each harbouring hopes that the other could be sympathetic because of the common heritage – more than we expect from others, including our immediate neighbours and friends. Unfortunately, while we understand if a favourable consideration is not forthcoming from these others, we do not feel the same way in a similar situation between us<sup>34</sup>.

What emerged from these exchanges is worthy of note. First, it was curious that while the main emphasis of these dialogue sessions was declared to be Indonesia-Malaysia relations, the vast majority of the panels and papers presented focused not on the aspects of this relationship, but to issues roundly classifiable as “ASEAN in the post Cold War”, signifying perhaps an inability or reluctance to discuss the profoundly complex yet fundamental causes of Indonesia-Malaysia problems. Second, in the panels and papers that did dwell on the Indonesia-Malaysia relationship, different perspectives and interpretations clearly emerged. Firdhaus Abdullah observed for instance that at the Youth Dialogue meetings the Malaysian representatives “made no effort to hide their enthusiasm or attachment to the *Serumpun* concept” while the Indonesian delegation had conspicuously lacked any empathy toward the cause<sup>35</sup>. Indeed, in a noticeable change from earlier attitudes, Indonesian representatives challenged the very notion that Malays and Indonesian emerged from a shared stock, arguing the point that “Malays” remained a small ethnic enclave in Eastern Sumatra and Riau. Similarly while Malaysian delegates took a forgiving outlook towards *Konfrontasi*, calling it an “aberration”, Indonesian attitudes were much more sober. This was reinforced by Benny Moerdani’s warning that “confrontation and

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<sup>34</sup> Abdullah Zawawi, speech entitled “Malaysia and Indonesia Bilateral Relations” delivered at Second Malaysia-Indonesia Conference, Penang, 11-14 December 1990.

<sup>35</sup> Firdaus Haji Abdullah, “The Rumpun Concept in Malaysia-Indonesia Relations”, The Indonesian Quarterly, Vol.XXI, No.2 (1993) 147.

hostility in those years is living proof that relations between the two countries cannot be taken for granted”<sup>36</sup>.

Lingering differences also impeded attempts at greater defence cooperation. While military exchanges sanctioned during the “golden age” of the Razak and Hussein Onn administrations continued, little further progress was made. In 1990 however, Indonesian Justice Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja proposed the formation of a defence pact between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore<sup>37</sup>. This proposal was presented to Malaysia as a possible replacement for the FPDA, which Jakarta had always suspected to betray a lingering distrust of Indonesia. With *Konfrontasi* long since forgotten (or so it seemed), Jakarta perceived that the time was ripe for ties with Malaysia to move beyond the mistrust of earlier years. This sentiment however, was not shared in Kuala Lumpur circles, and the proposal was roundly dismissed for the following reason: “A trilateral security arrangement is counter-productive for ASEAN security in the long run. It could . . . cause unnecessary alarm and it would therefore be wise for ASEAN to stay with the existing bilateral security arrangements”<sup>38</sup>.

Reflecting upon this proposal, one scholar has inferred that Mochtar’s suggestion for the formation of a trilateral defence pact was in fact just another manifestation of Indonesia’s latent desire to play a leadership role in regional affairs<sup>39</sup>. If this were so, the response from Kuala Lumpur was understandable. Yet the events surrounding the proposal were also telling of the lingering suspicions harboured in Kuala Lumpur over Jakarta’s intentions towards its immediate locale. Paradoxically, Malaysian authorities had earlier expressed reservations about Indonesia’s heightened military cooperation with Singapore, to which Malaysian media reports responded: “although Indonesia had the right to

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<sup>36</sup> Benny Moerdani, speech entitled “*Kerjasama, Masalah, dan Tantangan*” delivered at Dialog Pemuda Indonesia-Malaysia II, Bogor, 17-19 January 1990.

<sup>37</sup> See Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, “*Some Thoughts on ASEAN Security Cooperation: An Indonesian Perspective*”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.12, No.3 (1990).

<sup>38</sup> “Bilateral defence pact better, says armed forces chief”, *Straits Times*, 8 March 1992.

<sup>39</sup> See Bilver Singh, “Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia Triangular Defence Pact: Potentials and Perils”, *Asian Defence Journal*, December 1990.

establish relations with another country, it should take into account the special ties between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta which encompassed all aspects of life<sup>40</sup>.

While there was undoubtedly continuity in traditional apprehension towards Indonesian intentions during this period, there was also a notable change in the terms of relations. The transformation of the respective Indonesian and Malaysian foreign policy outlooks in accordance with national priorities has already been noted. It was this transformation in foreign policy orientations and outlooks that locked Indonesia and Malaysia in a game of diplomatic brinkmanship which, though driven by different impulses, was profoundly ironic for its uncanny similarity to events leading up to *Konfrontasi*. What this amounted to was a perceptible shift in strategic outlook which in fact contravened an declaratory position that “we (Indonesia and Malaysia) may say that between our two countries there is a common perception on the way we put ourselves in the international plane whether regional or globally”<sup>41</sup>.

Predictably, divergent strategic outlooks eventually led Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur to cross diplomatic swords on several issues in the 1990s. Three, in particular, captured the mood of this period of bilateral ties and manifested lucidly this contest for political primacy within the Indo-Malay archipelago. The first of these issues revolved around Malaysian proposals for the establishment of a new regional trade and economic body, the EAEG. Second was the diplomatic dispute that arose from the revival of territorial claims that had been held in abeyance during the 1970s. The final, and perhaps most complicated issue of all, was the problem of illegal immigration. These differences, while more symbolic than substantial, nevertheless exposed the frailties that continued to plague the bilateral relationship between two kin states gradually drifting apart.

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<sup>40</sup> See *Utusan Malaysia*, 10 February 1990.

<sup>41</sup> Soenarso Djajoesman, speech entitled “Malaysia and Indonesia Bilateral Relations” delivered at Second Malaysia-Indonesia Conference, Penang, 11-14 December 1990.

## II. EAEC

On the occasion of Chinese premier Li Peng's visit in December 1990, Mahathir announced that "the countries of the region should strengthen further their economic and market ties so that eventually an economic bloc would be formed to countervail the other economic blocs"<sup>42</sup>. Subsequently, it was reported in the media that Malaysia would "take the lead" in establishing this "trade bloc"<sup>43</sup>. This grouping was envisioned to include the members of ASEAN along with the major East Asian economies of China, Japan, and South Korea, with the US and Australia conspicuously omitted<sup>44</sup>. As an institution, it was to be modelled along the lines of the EEC (European Economic Community), where the free flow of goods underpinned and augmented collective power and shared interest. From a Malaysian perspective, the EAEG (East Asian Economic Grouping) proposal was rationalised as necessary as a response to the failure of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) talks in November and December 1990 (which entrenched Malaysian perceptions that global trade was being dictated by Western interests), as well as disappointment with ASEAN's inability to register any substantial advancement in trade and economic cooperation.

Mahathir's EAEG formula was a characteristically audacious diplomatic move in several ways. First, it was a direct challenge to American interests in the region, one of sufficient potential severity that US Secretary of State James Baker apparently responded through a specific memorandum to Japan that the latter not take part in the grouping<sup>45</sup>. More to the point, was the fact that the EAEG proposal was seen in Jakarta circles to be a deliberate affront to Indonesia. In the face of criticisms from numerous quarters (Japan, South Korea, and several ASEAN members were cautious in their response to the proposal), Malaysian authorities moved to avert a diplomatic imbroglio by elaborating that the original

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<sup>42</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech presented at state banquet for the visiting Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng, Kuala Lumpur, 10 December 1990.

<sup>43</sup> "PM calls for Asia Pacific trade bloc", *New Straits Times*, 11 December 1990.

<sup>44</sup> See Linda Low, "The East Asian Economic Grouping", *Pacific Review*, Vol.4, No.4 (1991).

<sup>45</sup> This was mentioned in Johan Saravanamuttu, "Malaysia's Foreign Policy", 5.

EAEG proposal was not meant to be a trade bloc, but merely a “consultative forum” to foster free trade<sup>46</sup>. Yet even when Kuala Lumpur moved to refine its proposition, Indonesian remained unwavering in opposition. Indonesia-Malaysia differences on this issue came to the fore at an ASEAN Senior Economic Officials Meeting in February 1991 when, despite earlier Malaysian assertions that ASEAN had endorsed its proposal, a Malaysian attempt to include the EAEG proposal on the agenda was blocked by the Indonesian delegation<sup>47</sup>. While the Malaysian delegation hoped to institute EAEG as an independent body outside the framework of existing organisations and institutions, the Indonesians were of the opinion that any East Asian economic grouping had to be linked to APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation), which Jakarta staunchly supported. As a result of concerns associated with the original proposal, the EAEG was subsequently renamed EAEC (East Asian Economic Caucus) at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in October 1991. The change in nomenclature that fronted the Malaysian proposal was noteworthy in one respect. As the definition of “caucus” would indicate, the EAEC would now have to be defined as a smaller grouping within a larger body or organisation. In that sense, the EAEC was now taking a form more akin to Jakarta’s counter-proposal of having the grouping operate within the larger APEC, rather than the original Malaysian vision. Beyond this significance however, this change in name did little to alter the shape of the Malaysian proposal nor its ultimate goal of creating a regional trade bloc. Indeed, Mahathir himself was of the opinion that the name-change would have little impact on his expectation of the region evolving into a trade bloc; nor did it transform Jakarta’s reading of and opposition to Malaysian intentions in any substantial way<sup>48</sup>.

Indonesian responses to the EAEG proposal reflected a fundamental opposition to it. In a veiled critique of the Malaysian proposal, former President Suharto opined that ASEAN needed to enhance intra-organisational cooperation

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<sup>46</sup> “PM: We’ll understand if EAEG’s not endorsed”, *The Star*, 8 October 1991.

<sup>47</sup> SWB FE/0989/A3/4, 6 February 1991, “All ASEAN countries endorse new economic grouping”; “ASEAN to hold more talks on KL’s trade group plan”, *Straits Times*, 18 March 1991.

<sup>48</sup> See Mahathir Mohamad, speech delivered at “ASEAN Countries and the World Economy: Challenge and Change” Conference, Bali, Indonesia, 5 March 1991.

as well as cooperation with its dialogue partners, but this should not entail the formation of a trading bloc<sup>49</sup>. Ironically, the Indonesian position was reiterated by Suharto and Foreign Minister Ali Alatas at the same regional conference in which Mahathir expressed his opinion that the EAEG was something of a stepping-stone to a regional trade bloc<sup>50</sup>. Instead, as mentioned earlier, Indonesia sought to alter the complexion to suit what Jakarta considered the appropriate purpose for such an organisation. This the Indonesians did by insisting that if the grouping was to come into being, it could only function within the rubric of APEC<sup>51</sup>. The outcome of these contested versions of the purpose and character of the EAEC reached a climax at the ASEAN Summit meeting in Singapore in January 1992. The endorsement Kuala Lumpur sought at the summit was not forthcoming as Jakarta once again proved to be a stumbling block, urging caution in implementing the EAEC and calling for “further refinements” to the concept<sup>52</sup>. The extent to which Indonesian opinions prevailed was made plain when the EAEC was placed beneath the AFTA (ASEAN Free Trade Agreement) and CEPT (Common Effective Preferential Tariffs) proposals on the summit agenda in terms of priority. The final straw came when the Summit Declaration gave only token mention to EAEC, specifying that it was an adjunct to APEC, and that it was only a forum that would meet “as and when the need arises”<sup>53</sup>. Indeed, Indonesia’s success in relegating the status of the EAEC to that of a caucus within APEC took on greater consequence in view of the fact that one of Malaysia’s rationales for proposing the grouping in the first place was to have it challenge APEC as the primary trade and economic organisation for the countries of East Asia<sup>54</sup>. In accomplishing what it did, Jakarta effectively pulled off a diplomatic counter-coup that bore superficial resemblance to Indonesian instigation of Malaysia’s

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<sup>49</sup> “Indonesia warns against setting up Asian trade bloc”, *Reuters News*, 3 March 1991.

<sup>50</sup> Both opinions were expressed at the “ASEAN Countries and the World Economy: Challenge and Change Conference” held at Bali, Indonesia, on 5 March 1991.

<sup>51</sup> “Indonesia to present new ideas on EAEC, Alatas says”, *Japan Economic Newswire*, 22 January 1992.

<sup>52</sup> “Crux of the matter: Major leaders differ on style, agenda”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16 January 1992.

<sup>53</sup> “ASEAN commitment on free trade area”, *South China Morning Post*, 29 January 1992.

capitulation of their original proposal on neutralisation of Southeast Asia two decades before<sup>55</sup>.

No doubt several factors explain Indonesia's rejection of the Malaysian plan. For one, the fact that the U.S. was Indonesia's largest trading partner and the second largest market for Indonesian products meant that any move to marginalize American interests in the region would not have been beneficial to Jakarta<sup>56</sup>. Further, the logic behind the original Malaysian proposal (that since the rest of the world was forming trade blocs, East Asia should also do so) was viewed in some quarters in Indonesia as unnecessarily hostile towards to international trade<sup>57</sup>. Beneath this economic logic however, lay more deep-seated reasons. Like the Tunku before him, Mahathir's proposal of the EAEG was made without prior consultation with Jakarta. Furthermore, Indonesians took issue with Mahathir's aggressive style in pushing diplomatic initiatives, which was antithetical to how Indonesian leaders conducted their own foreign policy. Ultimately, the fact of the matter was that Jakarta held the opinion that insofar as the issue of hierarchy was concerned, it was they who should rightfully be at the forefront of international affairs and pushing international initiatives<sup>58</sup>. Correspondingly, in a response pregnant with implications, the Malaysian media questioned if Indonesia's staunch opposition to the EAEC was not in fact a manifestation of a deeper desire to dominate ASEAN, or even Malaysia<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> It is well known that Malaysia had not been supportive of APEC at the time. Kuala Lumpur viewed the organization as a manifestation of Western interests, and suspected that the interests of the smaller states of ASEAN would be compromised accordingly.

<sup>55</sup> A fundamental difference between the two episodes though, was that in the case of the EAEC proposal Malaysia in effect relented to a change only. Unlike ZOPFAN, Kuala Lumpur continued to pursue their objectives for the grouping.

<sup>56</sup> See *Jakarta Post*, 5 March 1991.

<sup>57</sup> See Hadi Soesastro, *The EAEG Proposal and East Asian Concepts of the Pacific Basin*. [Jakarta: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1991].

<sup>58</sup> See "Stormy Weather: Tension behind the smiles at Mahathir-Suharto talks", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 July 1993.

### III. Re-emergence of territorial disputes

Territorial disputes have never been a prominent feature of bilateral friction between Indonesia and Malaysia. Even at the height of *Konfrontasi*, it is important to recognize that Jakarta never made any claims to the territories associated with the expansion of Malaya into the Malaysian Federation. While the issues surrounding *Konfrontasi* involved conceptions of sovereignty, it did not amount to a challenge to the territorial limits of the newly envisioned state of Malaysia. It is in this respect that the territorial dispute between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur over the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan takes on prominence not only because this was the first bilateral impasse centred on territorial counter-claims, but also for the timing behind both parties' enunciation of their respective claims. Indeed, the fact that it was only in the early 1990s that both parties made claims to the islands further emphasises the changes in the complexion of the relationship during this most recent phase in bilateral relations. The potential severity of this dispute was insinuated by then Indonesian Ambassador to Malaysia Soenarso Djajusman, who warned that "border problems have always been the most sensitive issue in a relationship between two neighbouring countries"<sup>60</sup>.

Sipadan and Ligitan are located off the Northeastern coast of the island of Borneo, in the Celebes Sea. Historical ownership of these two islands is not clearly documented. Indeed, it is this cartographical vagueness that has permitted both Indonesia and Malaysia to press their claims. During the colonial period of the region's history, the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan were administered as part of the Tirun district of islands and riverine states, and were the subject of competing claims by the Spanish and Dutch by the advent of the 19th Century<sup>61</sup>. Sovereignty over the two islands was later claimed by the British when the North Borneo Trading Company took over jurisdiction of the territory of North Borneo

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<sup>59</sup> "Indonesia's role as big brother", *The Star*, 25 January 1992; "Indonesia rocks the ASEAN boat", *Business Times Malaysia*, 28 January 1992.

<sup>60</sup> "Islands dispute an urgent matter for K.L., Jakarta", *Straits Times*, 2 March 1992.

<sup>61</sup> See Graham Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry*. [Singapore: Donald Moore, 1955] 153-154.

in 1877. Subsequently, as a result of Dutch interests and pressure, Britain and Holland signed a convention in 1891 which delimited the seas off the coast of North Borneo into separate British and Dutch spheres. This effectively placed Sipadan under Dutch jurisdiction and Ligitan within both Dutch and British spheres of influence<sup>62</sup>.

Following Indonesian independence in 1945, which saw Indonesia inherit the entire territorial expanse of the Dutch East Indies (*sans* West Irian), Jakarta claimed sovereignty over both Sipadan and Ligitan islands<sup>63</sup>. Indonesia's claims were later underscored by the December 1957 Djuanda Declaration of Indonesia's archipelago doctrine. To Kuala Lumpur however, the two islands were critical to the extension of their own continental shelf claims<sup>64</sup>. By this measure, the drawing of territorial basepoints on the basis of Malaysian sovereignty over Sipadan and Ligitan allows the Malaysian government to, among other things, lay claim to petroleum resources that might fall within this ambit<sup>65</sup>, not to mention offer up further maritime buffer space vis-à-vis Indonesia and the Philippines<sup>66</sup>. The extent to which legalistic maritime problems have arisen from Malaysian claims to these islands was summarized by Mark Valencia as follows:

Malaysia's inferred baseline, which links Malaysian territory on Sebatik Island with Pulau Sipadan does not connect islands fringing her coast nor does it enclose a coast which is deeply indented, and it deviates appreciably from the general direction of the coast. With respect to Indonesia, Malaysia has unilaterally drawn the common territorial sea boundary as a line which bisects the angle formed by Indonesia's archipelagic baseline and Malaysia's inferred baseline. . . .

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<sup>62</sup> See "Malaysia-Indonesia Bentuk Komite Gabungan" *Suara Karya*, 19 July 1991.

<sup>63</sup> "Havens in doubt", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 20 June 1990.

<sup>64</sup> B.A. Hamzah, *Malaysia's Exclusive Economic Zone: A Study in Legal Aspects*. [Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1988].

<sup>65</sup> See Mark Valencia, *Malaysia and the Law of the Sea*. [Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1991] 81.

<sup>66</sup> Sipadan and Ligitan were in fact used as a strategic front line by the Malaysian defence forces during *Konfrontasi*, when Malaysian troops were placed there in anticipation of Indonesian saboteurs and military expeditions passing by the islands into Sabah.

Even assuming that Malaysia owns Sipadan and Ligitan, Malaysia has claimed territorial seas and a section of the continental shelf which extends beyond a line of equidistance with these two neighbours<sup>67</sup>.

Given the potential for legal wrangling and diplomatic conflict as a result of these respective assertions of ownership over the two islands, it is interesting to note that prior to 1991, little was made of these contending claims. Sovereignty over the islands was omitted from the agenda of maritime matters discussed in a host of bilateral meetings that began in 1969<sup>68</sup>. Furthermore, then Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Tun Razak had allegedly expressed to Indonesian President Suharto during a tête-à-tête that Malaysia would not assert any claim to the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan<sup>69</sup>. Whether or not such an undertaking was in fact given by Razak, it is clear that maintaining the status quo for the most part defined the attitude of both parties to the contested claims<sup>70</sup>. Problems surfaced soon after the transfer of power in Malaysia from Hussein Onn to Mahathir. Tensions mounted in 1982 when rumours circulated in Indonesian circles that Malaysia had stationed troops on Sipadan, resulting in the mobilisation of the Indonesian military<sup>71</sup>. These rumours later proved unfounded<sup>72</sup>. Consequently, Indonesian Law Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja declared that the islands “belonged to both states”<sup>73</sup>. The issue was then transferred to the jurisdiction of the GBC, which had already been put in place to delineate the land borders in Borneo, and an accord signed to preserve the *status quo*.

The issue of the contested claims over the two islands re-emerged in June 1991 when Indonesia issued a “reminder” in response to heightened Malaysian

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<sup>67</sup> Valencia, *Malaysia and the Law of the SEA*, 83.

<sup>68</sup> According to some media reports later, this omission was made so as not to jeopardize the improving relations between the two states. See “Ghaffar holds bilateral talks with Suharto”, *New Straits Times*, 27 July 1991.

<sup>69</sup> This point was highlighted to me by the late Michael Leifer. This Malaysian “promise” was also hinted at in “Isle of Contention: Tiny Sipadan becomes an object of rival claims”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 March 1994.

<sup>70</sup> While there is no documented evidence of Razak’s “promise” as far as this author is aware of, its existence is not inconsistent with Razak’s proclivities towards Indonesia.

<sup>71</sup> “Sipadan: Mengapa Pihak Indonesia Dan Malaysia Tak Belajar Dari Mercuri”, *Sinar Harapan*, 4 October 1982.

<sup>72</sup> “Jakarta: Troops on isle report not true”, *Straits Times*, 8 July 1992.

<sup>73</sup> “Status P. Sipadan Dedang Dirundingkan R.I.-Malaysia”, *Sinar Harapan*, 26 October 1982.

tourism development activities on the islands<sup>74</sup>. While it was declared by both parties that the problem could be solved on the basis of “the spirit of ASEAN and brotherliness of the two countries”, this “reminder” also marked the beginning of deteriorating relations<sup>75</sup>. It was Indonesia’s case that by proceeding with development projects on the islands, Malaysia was deliberately violating the 1982 accord that maintained the status quo over ownership of the islands<sup>76</sup>. In response to these accusations, Kuala Lumpur despatched a government team to visit the islands, and officials retorted that the islands “are ours”, and that “for all intents and purposes, they are Malaysian islands”<sup>77</sup>. Tensions subsequently mounted with the appearance of Indonesian military forces around the islands, demonstrating not only the Indonesian claim, but also conveying the message that the use of force was being considered as an option in Jakarta<sup>78</sup>.

In a provocative act that further amplified an already precarious situation, the Indonesian navy detained a Sabah fishing boat for violating the Indonesian EEZ<sup>79</sup>. Although the Sabah fishing vessel was fined and released two days later, a private meeting initiated by then Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba with President Suharto to discuss the issue further aggravated the situation, when the Indonesian President emerged from that meeting apparently irritated and annoyed by Ghafar’s presumptuous attitude<sup>80</sup>. The swift deterioration of the situation drove home the point that existing levels of interaction and exchange were insufficient for the respective claimants to “agree to disagree”. Malaysia, in particular, was deeply concerned that Indonesian military activities around the island were resurrecting the ghost of *Konfrontasi*. This was evidenced in the repeated admonition, especially on the part of the Malaysian leadership, not to permit relations to revert back to the days of *Konfrontasi*. Correspondingly, Kuala

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<sup>74</sup> “Hentikan Pembangunan di Sipadan dan Ligitan”, *Kompas*, 6 June 1991; SWB FE/1101/A3/3, 18 June 1991, “Malaysia seeks resolution of dispute with Indonesia”.

<sup>75</sup> This language was reportedly used by Indonesian officials. See “Jakarta asks K.L. to stop developing disputed island”, *Straits Times*, 6 June 1991.

<sup>76</sup> “K.L.-Jakarta talks on disputed islands soon”, *The Star*, 6 June 1991.

<sup>77</sup> See “Islands are ours, says Abdullah”, *The Star*, 8 June 1991; “Panel will discuss Jakarta’s claim to disputed islands, says K.L. Minister”, *Straits Times*, 9 June 1991.

<sup>78</sup> “Pangab: Masalah Sipadan Jangan Merusak Hubungan”, *Suara Pembaruan*, 7 June 1991.

<sup>79</sup> “Sabah seeks help from Jakarta, K.L. for release of fishing boat”, *Straits Times*, 13 June 1991.

Lumpur mooted the creation of a joint commission to facilitate both ministerial talks and more specifically, to look into resolving the Sipadan and Ligitan dispute. In a telling re-appraisal of the vaunted “ASEAN way” of dealing with conflicts, Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Badawi openly expressed that “traditional methods of solving problems were no longer sufficient”<sup>81</sup>. Consequently, the first Malaysia-Indonesia Joint Commission met in Kuala Lumpur for their inaugural meeting from 7 to 11 October 1991, with both parties declaring their commitment to “intensify discussions” to resolve the dispute<sup>82</sup>. Although driven by the need to avert further deterioration in relations as a result of counter-claims, the Joint Commission was to present a forum for the comprehensive management of bilateral disputes, and its inauguration was publicised as the dawning of a new era in Indonesia-Malaysia cooperation<sup>83</sup>.

Public proclamations notwithstanding, problems did not abate. For example, the Indonesian military made it a point to engage in a subtle measure of gunboat diplomacy during periods when official negotiations were taking place. Illustrating the Indonesian military’s initiation of this game of brinkmanship, it was quoted in a report that “Indonesian air force planes usually make low passes over the island whenever senior Malaysian officials visit the islands”<sup>84</sup>. Similarly Indonesian and Malaysian naval vessels routinely circled the islands on the occasion of JCMs (Joint Committee Meeting) while Malaysia carried out its own military manoeuvres in the vicinity<sup>85</sup>. Suggestions that both states could engage in joint development projects on the islands were also roundly rejected by the Indonesian military.

While tensions were permitted to gradually blow over, the inability of six subsequent JCMs to find some sort of resolution to their differences demonstrated

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Ali Alatas, Jakarta, 24 January 2002. Apparently, the Indonesians were taken by surprise by this unscheduled meeting.

<sup>81</sup> “Let’s clear the air”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 August 1991.

<sup>82</sup> SWB FE/1137/A3/5, 30 July 1991, “Malaysia sets up group to resolve territorial dispute with Indonesia”; “Indonesia, Malaysia to discuss islands claims”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 October 1991.

<sup>83</sup> “Four joint panels with Indonesians set up”, *Straits Times*, 8 October 1991.

<sup>84</sup> “Isle of Contention: Tiny Sipadan becomes an object of rival claims”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 March 1994.

<sup>85</sup> “Bid to avert clashes over disputed isles off Sabah”, *Straits Times*, 29 January 1992.

not only the severity of the problem, but also the extent to which both states had drifted apart<sup>86</sup>. In February 1993, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas intimated that both states could eventually submit their respective claims to the International Court of Justice, “but this would be the last resort if bilateral ties between Indonesia and Malaysia broke down”<sup>87</sup>. His assessment was indeed prescient, for after much resistance to third party mediation, ironically enough particularly on the part of Jakarta, both parties finally agreed via Memorandum of Understanding to take the dispute to the ICJ in October 1996<sup>88</sup>.

While the contest for jurisdiction over Sipadan and Ligitan was undoubtedly the most prominent of territorial disputes between the two avowed kin states, it was by no means the only source of contested boundaries. Potential border problems such as claims over Sebatik Island and the Semantipal and Sinapad rivers that flow through Borneo, continue to persist<sup>89</sup>. Problems over the delineation of the Indonesia-Malaysia border, particularly in Borneo, came to light recently when members of the Indonesian armed forces seized five Malaysian employees of a logging company for crossing over into Indonesian territory, and allegedly demanded a ransom for their release<sup>90</sup>. Malaysia responded by accusing Indonesian security forces of having moved a Malaysian boundary marker. Third-party diplomatic sources confirmed that at the time, both militaries were put on alert along the Borneo border<sup>91</sup>. Border problems between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur also created another quandary for bilateral ties – that of illegal Indonesian migration into Malaysia.

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<sup>86</sup> Indeed, such was the severity that negotiations were upgraded to the level of “personal envoys” of the leaders of the two claimants.

<sup>87</sup> “Jakarta to defend claim to Sipadan and Ligitan Isles”, *Straits Times*, 8 February 1993.

<sup>88</sup> It was understood that Mahathir had made the suggestion to Suharto during a meeting in 1994, and it appeared that the latter had politely rejected it. See “Mahathir has four-eyes meeting with Suharto”, *Straits Times*, 17 September 1994.

<sup>89</sup> See “Indonesian MPs fear more border rows with KL”, *Straits Times*, 21 November 1996.

<sup>90</sup> “Border dispute heats up after four ‘abductions’”, *South China Morning Post*, 3 July 2000.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with a senior Singapore diplomat, Kuala Lumpur, 14 November 2001.

#### **IV. Immigration issues**

It has already been established earlier that migration within the Indo-Malay Archipelago has long been a feature of the interaction and exchange that defined the identity of the region, especially in the pre-colonial era. In the more recent colonial past, British and Malay authorities in the peninsula also encouraged the migration of workers from Indonesia. Because of shared racial and to some extent cultural traits, Indonesian immigrants were viewed by the Malay aristocracy and royalty in the nineteenth century as demographic buffers against the British-sanctioned influx of Chinese and Indian labour. Right up to the 1950s and early 1960s, Indonesian migration into Malaya was encouraged by Kuala Lumpur for political reasons, as it allowed “Malays” to maintain a numerical superiority over the Chinese and Indians.

That said, while Indonesians have historically migrated into the peninsula and played a critical role in shaping the culture that has evolved there, in more recent times Indonesian migration has been viewed in a markedly negative light, and have been blamed for a host of social problems that have plagued Malaysia. While the issue has yet to boil over into open diplomatic and military conflict, this relatively new character of Indonesian migration has been a thorn in the side of bilateral relations. The inability to find a satisfactory solution has also been something of an embarrassment to both governments, culminating in the mass expulsion of Indonesian illegal immigrants in July 2002.

The contemporary phenomenon of Indonesian economic migration into the peninsula is not new<sup>92</sup>. It began in the early 1970s, when the expansion of the Malaysian economy as a result of an industrialisation program undertaken on the back of the New Economic Policy demanded more labour than the local market could supply. In particular, the urban migration of Malay youths opened the door for Indonesian labour in the agricultural sector. Push factors included unemployment problems and over-population in Java, while the relatively higher wages found in the peninsula was a major pull factor. Added to that was the fact

that the easy assimilation of Indonesian migrants into Malay society sometimes also allowed the “guests” to benefit from the affirmative action programs of the NEP as well<sup>93</sup>. Even without such inducement, the fact that Malaysia was not only a location of close proximity but also a nation whose majority population shared much with the Indonesians in terms of language, culture and even ethnicity meant that the peninsula would be the obvious choice for Indonesian labour looking to relocate to greener pastures.

By the late 1980s, Indonesian labour had moved from agriculture to the construction and service sectors in tandem with the urbanisation of Malaysia. Numbers also rose substantially to meet increased demand. The increase in their numbers has raised alarm over their potential rupturing effect on the fabric of Malaysian society. This was because the influx of foreign, largely Indonesian, labour in Malaysia has evidently coincided with an increase in crime rates. Indeed, Indonesian labourers have been implicated and indicted in crimes ranging from petty theft to high profile robberies and murders<sup>94</sup>. Matters were further aggravated by the fact that a large proportion of Indonesian workers in Malaysia had entered the country illegally. In 1981 for example, it was estimated that there were 100 000 illegal Indonesian immigrants in Malaysia<sup>95</sup>. By 1987, this figure was estimated by the Malaysian Trade Union Congress to have surpassed one million. It was further estimated in 1987 that 36% of prison inmates throughout Malaysia were illegal Indonesian immigrants<sup>96</sup>. Clearly, the phenomenon of Indonesian illegal immigrants was fast becoming a security problem for Malaysia. It was not surprising that this was accompanied by a perceptible shift in Malaysian attitudes towards Indonesian immigrants, which also provided a telling insight into the changing nature of relations. An observer of this phenomenon

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<sup>92</sup> See Asisah Kassim, “The Unwelcome Guests: Indonesia Immigrants and Malaysian Public Responses”, *Tonan Ajia Kenkyu (Southeast Asian Studies)*, Vol.25, No.2 (September 1987).

<sup>93</sup> “Migrant workers spark resentment in Malaysia”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 January 1990.

<sup>94</sup> For a detailed discussion of some of these examples, see Firdaus Abdullah, “The Phenomenon of Illegal Immigrants”, *The Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol.XXI, No.2 (1993).

<sup>95</sup> See “Illegal migrant report for Jakarta”, *Straits Times*, 15 February 1981.

<sup>96</sup> “Malaysia acts to stem tide of illegal immigrants”, *Straits Times*, 29 January 1987.

had written that in the early years these immigrants were “silently welcomed” by the Malays, for:

The immigrants were then perceived as *bangsa serumpun* who would eventually assimilate with the local *bumiputra*. Thus, in the long run the Indonesian immigrants were regarded to have strengthened the Malays’ electoral power vis-à-vis the non-Malays because it was assumed that they will be assimilated with the local Malays<sup>97</sup>.

However, the increase in the number of these *bangsa serumpun* was leading to more intense competition for jobs, and especially those traditionally the preserve of Malay commerce. Furthermore, in more recent times it became apparent to Malaysian authorities that many of the Indonesian immigrants (illegal or otherwise) were in fact Christians who had begun using shared language and ethnicity as an avenue to proselytise among the Malay community<sup>98</sup>. Such was the severity of this problem that a Malaysian cabinet minister had considered the spreading of Christianity among the Malay population by their Indonesian cousins to be the “biggest threat facing Muslims in Malaysia today”<sup>99</sup>.

Several measures were undertaken at a bilateral level to stem the swelling tide of illegal immigration. For instance, an agreement was signed in 1984 in Medan, Sumatra, which stipulated that Indonesia would supply six specific categories of workers for two-year contracts whenever requested by Malaysia<sup>100</sup>. In 1988, Jakarta announced that Indonesians working illegally in Malaysia would be issued passports to provide them “protection and help them earn better pay”<sup>101</sup>. Correspondingly, Malaysia announced new laws in 1991 that stipulated stricter penalties for employers of illegal immigrant workers as well as a minimum wage and other terms to improve working conditions. Under this scheme, Indonesian illegals, when caught, would still be permitted to work provided they registered with the Malaysian immigration department and obtained valid travel documents

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<sup>97</sup> Firdaus Abdullah, “Issues in Malaysia-Indonesia Relations”, paper presented at the ASEAN Fellowship Seminar, Tokyo, Japan, 20 August 1992, 45-46.

<sup>98</sup> Non-Muslim proselytising among the Muslim community is prohibited by Malaysian federal law.

<sup>99</sup> “Illegals must go”, *The Star*, 9 August, 1987.

<sup>100</sup> “KL-Jakarta Labour Pact”, *Straits Times*, 20 June 1984.

<sup>101</sup> “Passports for illegal Indonesians in Malaysia”, *Straits Times*, 6 July 1988.

from the Indonesian embassy. While these efforts could be applauded, they have done little to stem the flow of illegals from Indonesia; nor has this cooperation been without its own obstacles and problems. The bureaucratic nature of the solutions meant a long and arduous, sometimes even expensive, process which was a burden for immigration departments and too complex for the potential Indonesian illegal migrant to comprehend. More importantly, there has been, in the minds of each party, the perception that the other has not been doing its part in the joint attempt to eradicate this problem of illegal immigrants. Malaysian authorities, for example, have continually highlighted Jakarta's apparent unwillingness to render maximum cooperation in repatriating Indonesian illegals who were caught or imprisoned for crimes. This lack of cooperation has led to overcrowding and deteriorating prison conditions, in turn resulting in problems such as the hostage siege in Kuantan Prison on 9 January 1987. On their part, certain quarters in Indonesia have criticised Malaysia for dramatizing the issue and portraying Indonesians in a "degrading and disparaging" manner<sup>102</sup>.

By early 2002, Malaysia's policy on Indonesian labour seemed primed for a shift when, in response to another all-too-familiar incident of rioting by Indonesian immigrant workers in Negri Sembilan, Law Minister Rais Yatim noted:

Besides defying authority, they (Indonesian immigrant workers) had the cheek to wave the Indonesian flag. They are not in Jakarta. They are in Malaysia. . . . Indonesia's Ambassador here need not say sorry anymore. We are going to take stern action. Malaysians in general cannot tolerate the violent behaviour of the Indonesians who are being too extreme and ungrateful<sup>103</sup>.

Following this, Prime Minister Mahathir expressed the opinion that it was time for Indonesian workers in Malaysia to be "replaced" by workers of other nationalities<sup>104</sup>. Not long after, in a reaction to spats of criminal incidents involving Indonesian workers, the Malaysian government embarked on a total shift from the traditional policy of welcoming the 'cousins' from the archipelago

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<sup>102</sup> "Jakarta paper raps Malaysian press over illegal immigrants", *Straits Times*, 10 March 1987.

<sup>103</sup> "Sorry is not enough", *Straits Times*, 22 January 2002.

to a large-scale repatriation of Indonesian illegals, the stipulation of severe penalties for those who continued to stay, and the closing of its doors to Indonesian labour via the implementation of a “Hire Indonesians Last” policy<sup>105</sup>. The Indonesian illegal immigrant problem was heavily “securitised” by a Malaysian press that repeatedly blamed them for a host of security problems involving riots and robberies<sup>106</sup>. These moves elicited a heated response from the Indonesian media. In an article bearing the provocative title “Remember *Konfrontasi*”, the Jakarta Post launched a stinging attack against Malaysia’s actions, arguing that the new policies were far too extreme, and that “there was a time, not so long ago, when Indonesia would not take such a belligerent act from a neighbouring country lying down”<sup>107</sup>.

A sidebar to the illegal immigration problem has been the issue of Acehnese immigrants and political refugees, which inadvertently involved a reluctant Malaysian government in the internal affairs of a Jakarta administration struggling to contain a politically-motivated separatist revolt in the northern tip of the island of Sumatra. Latent problems were compounded by the fact that the Aceh separatists enjoyed historically strong kin relations with peninsular Malays.

## V. The Problem of Aceh

Despite widespread speculation, the extent of Malaysian involvement in the Aceh problem remains unclear. Prime Minister Mahathir has often reiterated the Malaysian government’s non-involvement in what he claims is an Indonesian domestic affair. Likewise, Indonesian President Suharto has never publicly questioned Malaysian declarations of non-involvement, though on several occasions he did suggest “external sources” of interference. In point of fact, there remains little by way of concrete evidence to implicate government-sanctioned involvement on the part of Malaysia apart from knowledge that Acehnese rebels

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<sup>104</sup> “Too many, too much trouble”, *Straits Times*, 23 January 2002.

<sup>105</sup> It should be noted that the policy was quickly rescinded as a result of intense lobbying by the Malaysian construction industry, which relied heavily on Indonesian labour.

<sup>106</sup> See Joseph Liow, “Desecuritisng the ‘Illegal Indonesian Migrant Worker’ Problem in Malaysia’s Relations with Indonesia”, *IDSS Commentaries*, No.18 (September 2002).

are making their way to the peninsula either as asylum seekers or as illegal immigrants<sup>108</sup>. To such effect, the Aceh situation is an extension of the broader problem of illegal Indonesian immigration into Malaysia. This has created some problems for Malaysian authorities, who have had to choose between repatriation (which would probably lead to further prosecution) or asylum, which could potentially dampen ties with Indonesia. Such a dilemma was demonstrated in 1991, when 112 Acehnese asylum seekers who landed in Penang and Kedah were initially labelled illegal immigrants, and hence to be repatriated, but were eventually given the choice by the Malaysian government to stay on in Malaysia<sup>109</sup>. Further complicating matters was the fact that some of these Acehnese refugees in fact possessed dual nationalities.

Despite constant pledges by Malaysian government authorities that Malaysia did not support the cause of the GAM, the fact that among certain pockets of the Malay population in the peninsula there was more-than-passing interest in the Aceh situation has meant that relations between Indonesia and Malaysia have remained testy over Aceh. As hinted in an earlier chapter, in a number of ways Aceh is closer geographically and spiritually to Malaysia than it is to Jakarta. The economic and political interaction between Aceh and the Malay sultanates through the centuries has resulted in many Acehnese settling down in the peninsula, particularly in Kedah and Penang. Several top Malaysian government officials are known to have Acehnese roots as well<sup>110</sup>. Correspondingly on a diplomatic level, Malaysian consular officials in the Northern Sumatran capital of Medan have been kept at a distance by their Indonesian counterparts suspicious of their ties with Acehnese separatists<sup>111</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> "Remember 'Konfrontasi'", *Jakarta Post*, 1 February 2002.

<sup>108</sup> For example, Acehnese refugees fleeing the fighting between the secessionist *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement) and government forces regularly land on the peninsula seeking asylum. SWB FE/1106/A3/4, 24 June 1991, "Indonesian Foreign Minister seeks 'amicable' solutions with Malaysia".

<sup>109</sup> See "112 Acehnese who fled to Malaysia can stay if they want to, says envoy", *Straits Times*, 1 June 1991.

<sup>110</sup> Former Agriculture Minister and Kedah Chief Minister Sanusi Junid, for example, was related to the late Acehnese nationalist, Daud Beureueh.

<sup>111</sup> See "Aceh unrest leads to mounting death toll", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 January 1991.

While the Indonesian government has refrained from direct criticism of Kuala Lumpur, some in the military have been of the opinion that the Acehnese were permitted to “live freely in Malaysia despite being guilty of violent actions against the Indonesian military”. These comments were made by General Pramono, commander of the North Sumatra garrison, who further intimated (without providing details) that “certain quarters in Indonesia had accused specific groups and individuals in Malaysia of aiding the rebels directly”<sup>112</sup>. Suggestions have also been made by Jakarta authorities that armed Acehnese civilians were plying between Aceh and Malaysia without any problem<sup>113</sup>. Evidence in the form of pro-GAM material that quotes Acehnese sources in Malaysia and refers to rebels who have fled to Kuala Lumpur has apparently surfaced to justify the Jakarta government’s suspicions<sup>114</sup>. It has also come to light that the GAM leadership has on occasion operated out of Malaysia<sup>115</sup>. Concomitantly, GAM military commanders have publicly revealed that their militia have on occasion received training in Malaysia<sup>116</sup>.

The Aceh conundrum in Indonesia-Malaysia relations has brought to light once again the Islamic dimension to the kinship factor in the politics of the Malay World. Hundreds of Malaysian students venture to religious schools in Aceh for their education. This owes much to the perception mentioned earlier that Aceh has long been viewed as the “veranda of Mecca”. Religious co-identification was further strengthened during the Suharto years when Acehnese rejected the former president’s *Pancasila* democracy (which they viewed as un-Islamic) and sympathised with the staunch adherence to Islamic principles found in the state administrations of Kelantan and Kedah in Malaysia. Indeed, religious undercurrents to the Aceh issue in Indonesia-Malaysia problems provide an arresting sign of how politicised religion and kinship politics intertwine at a popular level. It is to this Islamic dimension, mentioned at the beginning as

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<sup>112</sup> “Aceh rebels ‘may use Malaysia as main hideout’”, *Straits Times*, 24 July 1992.

<sup>113</sup> FBIS-EAS-1999-1222, 23 December 1999, “Minister Says GAM Members Plying Between Aceh, Malaysia”.

<sup>114</sup> “Aceh unrest leads to mounting death toll”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 January 1991.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> FBIS-EAS-1999-114, 14 December 1999, “GAM Leader Confirms Military Trainings in Libya, Malaysia”.

among the earliest manifestations of politicised kinship, that the present work now returns.

## VI. Political Islam

Despite the status of Indonesia and Malaysia as co-religionists, in their post-independence histories Islam has never been utilised as a channel for bilateral cooperation or policy coherence in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, at least insofar as governmental interactions are concerned. Yet while Islam has all along been downplayed by the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia during the post-colonial era, it has never drifted far from the surface of popular politics<sup>117</sup>. This has become even more so in recent times, where the resurgence of political Islam can be witnessed in the domestic political arenas of both countries<sup>118</sup>.

It shall be recalled that the Islamic links between the peninsula and archipelago in the context of Islamic resurgence and anti-colonial struggle were particularly strong, built on the back of shared experience during their education in the Middle East and South Asia. Co-religious identification with Indonesia among Malay anti-colonialists however, stemmed not only from their Arab links. Here, it is important to note that the politicisation of Islam that was taking place in Indonesia played a crucial role in grafting Islam onto the political scene in colonial Malaya. The first Islamic political organisations and structures to be found in the *Dunia Melayu* were located in Indonesia, and they had a profound influence on the subsequent emergence of similar organisations in Malaya<sup>119</sup>. A brief survey of the birth of political Islam in Malaysia illustrates this point.

It was through the political struggle of the Islamic *Masjumi* Party (*Majlis Masyuarat Muslim Indonesia*) in Indonesia after the Pacific War that an overtly Islamic political spirit was injected into Malay politics in the Peninsula. *Masjumi* leaders were present as special guests at a Malay nationalist and religious leaders'

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<sup>117</sup> A scholar has suggested that Islam played a crucial role in the termination of *Konfrontasi*. See Muhammad Kamal Hassan, *Muslim Intellectual Responses to "New Order" Modernization in Indonesia*. [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1982] 120-121.

<sup>118</sup> "The Rise of the Muslim Militant", *Straits Times*, 16 December 2001.

conference (*Persidangan Ekonomi-Agama Sa-Malaysia*) held on March 1947 at Gunung Semanggol in Perak to discuss the role of Islam in Malayan politics. It was during this conference that the *Masjumi* representatives shared their conception of the Islamic struggle for sovereign nationhood with their counterparts in Malaya. Further to that, the Indonesian representatives, in their public address, suggestively articulated that “the greater Indonesian Empire will consist of equal autonomous states which will be free members of the Indonesian Commonwealth”<sup>120</sup>. The Gunung Semanggol event was to have a significant influence on the worldview of future Malay Islamic political leaders of PAS<sup>121</sup>. It was also via the experiences garnered from these meetings that Malay nationalists envisaged the formation of the *Lembaga Islam Se Malaya* (All-Malaya Islamic Council), later renamed MATA or *Majlis Agama Tertinggi Malaya* (Malayan Supreme Religious Council)<sup>122</sup>. This religious organisation was modelled after *Majlis Islam Al Indonesia* (Council of Muslim Parties of Indonesia) in Indonesia, the predecessor of *Masjumi*<sup>123</sup>. MATA itself was to undergo metamorphosis into an overt political organisation. To that effect, some have suggested that MATA itself was sufficiently politicised to be considered “the first institutionalisation of the Islamic reformist stream in Malay nationalism”<sup>124</sup>.

In their own response to Britain’s Malayan Union plan of 1946, MATA moved to call for a Malay Congress in March 1948 to discuss issues such as the formation of an Islamic political party, the establishment of an economic bureau to oversee Malay affairs, and the setting up of an Islamic University<sup>125</sup>. Aside from representatives from all quarters of Malay society (including UMNO and Malay elements of the communist party), the Congress also had in attendance

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<sup>119</sup> See William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1967].

<sup>120</sup> MSS/PIJ (Malay Security Service/Political Intelligence Journal), Serial No.5, 1947, Arkib Negara.

<sup>121</sup> John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS*. [Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980] 124.

<sup>122</sup> See Nabir bin Haji Abdullah, *Maahad Il-Ihya Assyariff Gunung Semanggol, 1934-1935*. [Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Sejarah, Universiti Malaya, 1976] 149.

<sup>123</sup> See Alias Mohamed, “PAS Platform: Development and Change, 1951-1986”, dissertation submitted to Universiti Malaya, Department of History, 1989, 6.

<sup>124</sup> John Funston, *Malay Politics*, 88.

<sup>125</sup> MSS/PIJ, Serial No.5, 1947.

three prominent Sumatran *Ulama* – Kiai Masyhur from West Sumatra, Tengku Osman from Medan, and Haji Shamsuddin Mustaffa from Siak. Notably, the Congress opened with the singing of the *Masjumi* song “*Selamat Masjumi*”<sup>126</sup>. It was at the Congress that the *Hizbul Muslimin* (“Muslim Party”) was initiated. Needless to say, the party was inspired by *Masjumi*, and its leaders such as Abu Bakar al Bakri and Mohammad Asri soon developed close relations with Indonesian *Ulama* and nationalists.

Because of the close association between its members and those of the nationalist party MNP, certain quarters have contended that *Hizbul Muslimin* can be considered the “Islamic wing” of Malay nationalism<sup>127</sup>. Not only did the *Hizbul Muslimin* take on the organisational structure of *Masjumi*, it also subscribed to a similar political and religious philosophy. In the spirit of the Indonesian revolution, and more specifically the Islamic revolts in Java and Sumatra that was ongoing at the time, party leaders unanimously called for active revolt against the forces of colonialism. This was reflected in the following excerpt from a speech of one of the party’s leaders: “Indonesia had achieved her independence by the sacrifice of many lives . . . Malays would not obtain their independence by just asking for it. Independence . . . could only be obtained by bloodshed”<sup>128</sup>. Indeed, it was the significance of this Islamic movement in the overall history of Malay politics that sparked UMNO founder Onn bin Jaafar to make his famous remark that “we saw the danger coming from the jungle in 1945 and today we see a similar danger descending from the mountain under the cloak of religion”<sup>129</sup>. The basis established during this period for religious and political collaboration between Islamic radicalism in Indonesia and Malaya was amplified by the formation of religious schools known as *Sekolah Rakyat* (People’s School) throughout the peninsula. Again, these schools, established after a decision taken

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<sup>126</sup> Alias Mohamed, “PAS Platform”, 18.

<sup>127</sup> See John Funston, *Malay Politics*, 87-88.

<sup>128</sup> MSS/PIJ, Serial No.5, 1947. Though this view was expressed before the formation of *Hizbul Muslimin*, it was nonetheless well-known that MATA members were automatic members of the party upon its formation. Hence it can be suggested that this view represented the view of the *Hizbul Muslimin* as well.

<sup>129</sup> Onn’s reference to the jungle relate to the communist movement in 1945. Similarly, his reference to the mountain implicated the radical Islamic movement that was born at Gunung Semangol (Gunung is the Malay word for mountain).

at a MATA meeting in September 1947 which witnessed the formation of LEPIR or *Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat* (People's Education Board), were to be modelled after the *Muhammadiyah* schools in Indonesia<sup>130</sup>. This was a significant development because at that time, *Muhammadiyah* was actively engaged in preaching and practising radical nationalism in Sumatra. For the first time also, religious students from the peninsula were sent not only to Aligarh, Medina or Al-Azhar, but also to Indonesia to further their education<sup>131</sup>.

What is significant in the discussion above is that the coalescing of political ideologies of *Hizbul Muslimin*, *Muhammadiyah*, and *Masyumi* would prove to have an incisive influence on the ideologies of later representations of Islamic reformism and nationalism in the MNP, and later PAS<sup>132</sup>. These early linkages also formed a firm basis for Islamic groups from Indonesia and Malaysia to maintain close relations despite the decline of Islam as a political factor in the post-colonial domestic politics of both countries. These links have also endured through the various stages and changing shape of relations at the government level, particularly during periods of tension. Indeed, it has been suggested that the *Dakwah* or Islamic revival that took place in Malaysia in the 1970s had benefited from precisely these longstanding relations with Indonesian religious organisations, for the Indonesians were the movement's "first influential international contact" and thus "provided an important stimulus to Islamic revivalism in Malaysia"<sup>133</sup>.

In recent years, both countries have witnessed a revival of Islamic discourse in their respective political arenas and in contrast to earlier trends, it has

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<sup>130</sup> See Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942*. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978] 311.

<sup>131</sup> There were also a substantial amount of African and Arab-trained Islamic scholars of Indonesian origin who either resided in or made frequent sojourns to the peninsula to teach. Some of these included Sjech Thaher Djalaluddin, founder of the Al-Imam journal, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah and Sjech Muhammad Chajjath.

<sup>132</sup> John Funston, *Malay Politics*, 140. That said, it should also be recognised that PAS has since developed their own strain of Islamic ideology in the deobandi tradition, and on the back of the thinking of Abd al-Wahhab and Maulanah Mawdudi. This is contrasted markedly by the case of Indonesia today, where Islamic ideology is largely "home-bred" through thinkers such as Sirajuddin Abbas, Harun Nasution, Nurcholish Masjid and Abdurrahman Wahid.

<sup>133</sup> A.B. Shamsul, "Identity Construction, Nation Formation, and Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia" in Robert Hefner and Patricia Horvatic (eds), *Islam in an Era of Nation-State: Politics and Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*. [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997] 214.

been Indonesian Islam which has been looking to learn from the Malaysian model of Islamic resurgence<sup>134</sup>. During the latter years of the Suharto administration, Islamic forces were once again gradually introduced back into Indonesia's mainstream political discourse as the president sought to balance the increasing influence of the military. Likewise in Malaysia, the resurgence of PAS has led to increasing Islamic consciousness within the dominant UMNO party as well, exemplified by the attempts of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to shore up the Islamic identity of the party. Ties between Islamic groups were given greater impetus via the exchanges between the IKD (*Institut Kajian Dasar*), a think-tank established by Anwar Ibrahim, and ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* or Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals' Association), established by B.J. Habibie<sup>135</sup>. At its prime, the IKD and ICMI network was instrumental in fostering bilateral harmony through their regular organisation of joint seminars and conferences on *Serumpun*, exploring ways and means to encourage closer relations and greater exchange on this basis<sup>136</sup>. It is also well-known that Anwar was especially popular among Indonesian Muslim circles, and had close links with several other Indonesian Muslim groups.

Of late, evidence has emerged that the Islamic linkages between the Indonesian and Malaysian *Ummah* have extended to radical and militant Islam as well<sup>137</sup>. Members of the Malaysia-based Islamic militant group KMM (*Kumpulan Militan Malaysia*<sup>138</sup>) have been travelling frequently to Indonesia, working closely with Indonesian counterparts in the *Laskar Jihad* and *Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia*. Malaysian and Singapore intelligence sources have indicated that KMM operations were in fact part of a larger movement involving the JI (*Jemaah Islamiyah*), a radical regional terrorist organisation "directed" by

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<sup>134</sup> William Liddle, *Leadership and Culture in Indonesian Politics*. [Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996] 273-274.

<sup>135</sup> The Anwar-Habibie link subsequently accounted for a minor bilateral dispute when Habibie, as Indonesian President, openly expressed support for Anwar after the latter was removed from power and incarcerated for alleged corruption and sexual impropriety.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Jakarta, 18 January 2002.

<sup>137</sup> See Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's interview with CNN, 9 February 2002, [www.gov.sg/singov/interviews/090202sm.htm](http://www.gov.sg/singov/interviews/090202sm.htm).

<sup>138</sup> Not to be confused with the Malayan pre-war nationalist organization, *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*, with which it shares the same abbreviations.

Indonesian leadership, most notably Abu Bakar Bashir and Hambali. While these militant elements thus far remain peripheral players in Indonesian and Malaysian politics, their stated objectives of forming a *Daulah Islamiyah* (Islamic state) comprising Indonesia and Malaysia, along with southern Philippines and southern Thailand, raises the spectre of previous attempts, such as *Indonesia Raya-Melayu Raya* and Maphilindo, to unify the Indo-Malay World on the basis of common identity. The plan for establishment of a *Daulah Islamiyah* itself was an intriguing and elaborate long-term strategy that involved the socialisation of young Muslims through religious training in Indonesia, who would later be integrated into state administrations and mainstream politics in order to transform Indonesia and Malaysia into part of a broader Islamic state via legitimate electoral processes<sup>139</sup>. In a recent intelligence report, it appears that another umbrella organisation, *Rabitatul Mujahideen*, has emerged to encompass Islamic radical groups (including the KMM and JI) and facilitate the realisation of this Indo-Malay Islamic state<sup>140</sup>.

### **Concluding remarks**

Given its relatively recent content, this chapter has had to rely on secondary resource material to sketch recent permutations of the Indonesia-Malaysia relationship given the unavailability of primary sources. Be that as it may, a comprehensive picture has still emerged of how the kinship factor has undergone further change as relations have evolved. Under the Mahathir administration, Malaysia has attempted to restructure the terms of relations with Indonesia that were established during the tenures of Tun Razak and Tun Hussein Onn. Mahathir seems to have departed from his predecessors' policy of "self-induced subordination" to Jakarta. The proactive and nationalistic foreign policy that the Mahathir administration has embarked upon, particularly since the late 1980s, has coincided with resurgence in Jakarta's own interest in resuming its

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<sup>139</sup> See "Malaysia knew terrorists had slipped through security dragnet", *Straits Times*, 17 October 2002.

position as a key mover of Third World politics. This has resulted in a clash of policy perspectives that threatens to unravel the efforts of an earlier generation of leaders who had sought to establish relations on a firmer footing provided by the conscious fulfilment of expectations and obligations as kin states.

In some ways, competition between Indonesia and Malaysia is understandable. Both had made quick strides in economic development by the 1990s. Furthermore, national identity building in both states has also advanced substantially. This has not only had an impact on the personal and cultural identities of the populations, but on their loyalties as well, as far as kinship sentiments were concerned. In this regard, attention is drawn to the fact that for both Indonesia and Malaysia, foreign policy has enjoyed a distinct role in the national identity-building project. During the 1980s and 1990s, not only were Indonesian and Malaysian foreign policies focused on regional and international activism, they were also distinctly nationalistic. The fallout of this phenomenon for bilateral relations however, stems from the fact that both competed for the same audience, on the same issues, with the same objectives in mind, but have nevertheless approached these issues from different and antagonistic angles. Consequently, the construction of national identities undertaken in these two kin states wrought foreign policies that in the end provoked each other.

Given the significance of the “Chinese factor” in framing kin relations during the Razak-Hussein Onn era of Malaysian relations with Indonesia, it is also notable that the weakening premises of kinship during the 1990s has further coincided with a marked reduction in Indo-Malay concerns for relations with Beijing, as well as with their own domestic ethnic Chinese communities. Indonesia normalised ties with China in 1990, and domestic factors were identified as drivers behind this policy shift<sup>141</sup>. In Malaysia’s case, relations with China have in fact improved substantially in the 1990s, as have inter-communal

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<sup>140</sup> See “Bashir had clear role in plotting terror attacks”, *Straits Times*, 18 October 2002. This was also confirmed in a discussion with Rohan Gunaratna, Singapore, 16 October 2002.

<sup>141</sup> See Rizal Sukma, *Indonesia and China: The Politics of a Troubled Relationship*. [London: Routledge, 1999].

relations within the country<sup>142</sup>. Consequently, while lingering concerns for the “Chinese factor” may have strengthened Indo-Malay co-identification in the 1970s, the diminution of these concerns as a result of transformations of Indo-Malay national identities to accommodate ethnic Chinese within a national multi-national framework at the domestic level, and improved relations with China at the international level, has led to the demise of this “anti-Chinese” impetus to kinship affiliations.

Whether the sense was that Malaysia suffered from a “small brother” syndrome in relation to Indonesia which compelled the Mahathir administration to overcompensate, as some Indonesian political circles are prone to believe<sup>143</sup>; or that Indonesia was peeved because the Mahathir government simply did not abide by the unwritten rule of deference set in place by Tun Razak for the conduct of Malaysia’s relations with Indonesia, as some Malaysians maintain<sup>144</sup>, the fact of the matter is that during the 1980s and especially 1990s, kinship amity which was established during the Razak-Ghazali Shafie and Suharto-Adam Malik era as a foundation for bilateral relations was put aside as both states engaged in a contest for primacy originating from divergent assumptions as to the fundamental basis of their relations. Moreover, there remained a latent sense that on the part of Indonesia in particular, the construction of kinship identity along ethnic (i.e Malay) lines, already a clearly tenuous exercise from an anthropological point of view, without adhering to the functional aspects to such relatedness, was becoming increasingly irrelevant. This opinion was expressed by Jusuf Wanandi, who noted:

Generally both Malaysia and Indonesia may be Malay nations . . . but they should not expect too much from Indonesia based on the ‘Malay stock’ factor . . . . The vast majority of Indonesians are Javanese, who do not regard themselves as Malay<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>142</sup> For changes in Malaysia’s China policy, see Joseph Liow, “Malaysia-China Relations in the 1990s: The Maturing of a Partnership”, *Asian Survey*, Vol.XL, No.4 (July/August 2000).

<sup>143</sup> Ali Alatas expressed to the author that “while this is an unexpressed feeling (on the Malaysian’s part), it was an undercurrent that manifested in attitude”. Interview with Ali Alatas, Jakarta, 24 January 2002.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Ghazali Shafie, Kuala Lumpur, 8 November 2001.

<sup>145</sup> “Towards stronger neighbourly links”, *Business Times*, 2 March 1988.

Given this opinion, and Indonesia's frustration at Kuala Lumpur's disregard for the tradition set by previous administrations of regular consultation with and deference to Jakarta on foreign and security policy matters during much of this period, it was clear that in Indonesian eyes, *rumpun* identity was being defined by Jakarta's expectations as to the functional aspects of kinship, namely to be consulted and deferred to on matters pertaining to Malaysian policy. Likewise, Malaysia's perceived lack of regard for these functional terms of kinship has led Indonesia to question Malaysian sincerity and its validity as a basis for political relations.

## CONCLUSION

This study began with three objectives, namely to understand the basis of kinship discourse in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, how kinship was politicised in terms of its conceptualisation and application, and why its dominant motif has been rivalry more than harmony despite its regular evocation. As a political phenomenon it has been determined that kinship operates at three inter-related levels: (1) at an anthropological level, where conceptions of race, culture, and ethnicity are seen to provide the premises for the construction of affinity; (2) at a sociological and functional level, where the construction of affinity is “politicised” by the perception and interpretation of expectations and obligations to frame political relations; and (3), at an abstract level, where kinship takes the form of an identity premised on exclusivity in relation to conceptions of “self” and “other”. It has been at all three levels of the kinship factor that Indonesia-Malaysia relations has been explored.

The study has uncovered a fundamental tension that underscores Indonesia-Malaysia relations. On the one hand, the dominant diplomatic discourse over the past 50 years has been that of kinship based on constructions of racial, ethnic, and cultural affinity, with little thought given (at least on the part of its advocates) for the conceptual and intellectual tensions that invariably follow such broad categorisations and constructions. This has been particularly so at the popular level, even though at various times it has also influenced policy decision-making among political leaders. Indeed, when expectations and obligations are fulfilled and co-identification strengthened in defence of *Pribumi* identity against common threats, as was the case in the 1970s, the kinship factor can generate harmony in bilateral relations.

On the other hand, despite the fact that there is a basis upon which to define Indonesia and Malaysia as kin states based on these broad conceptions of affinity and the persistence of kinship discourse, their “special relationship” has consistently been plagued with problems. This state of affairs has been a consequence both of contested interpretations of history and the terms of kin affinity that gave rise to these broad conceptions of kinship, most notably over the

ethno-cultural continuity of the region, and the perceived failure of Indonesia and Malaysia as kin states to fulfil the expectations and obligations of kinship. Both problems have been borne of fundamental differences in their respective historical experiences and the forging of their national identities. The manner in which conceptions of affinity have shaped and been shaped in the course of Indo-Malay political history testify to continuity and change behind the understanding of the kinship factor in Indonesia-Malaysia relations. In the study of Indonesia-Malaysia relations thence, it appears that tensions have as much to do with conflicts of identity as they do with conflicts of interests.

### **I. Race, ethnicity, and territory**

As suggested earlier, one reason why the kinship factor has been unable to provide a basis for harmony lies not so much in its absence, but more so in its contested meanings in terms of its historical premises and ethnic yardsticks. It is true that the cultural continuity of the Indo-Malay World, particularly in terms of shared language and religion, exists to foster common personal and cultural identity. The problem, as this study has highlighted, is how to translate romanticism into a political identity, particularly as a basis for post-colonial relations.

The politics of blood brotherhood can be traced to the anti-colonial struggle when kinship provided an avenue whereby *pribumi* identity was constructed against the common adversary Western imperialism<sup>1</sup>. Despite the apparent congruence in objectives however, there was a fundamental difference between respective conceptions of pan-identity held by the various political actors that diluted the psychological and nationalistic appeal of the singular Indo-Malay nation-state. Indonesian impressions of *Indonesia Raya* involved the adoption of pre-revolution conceptions based on historical mythology. Pan-nationalists such as Muhammad Yamin and Sukarno, motivated by the legacy of the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, claimed to be heirs of this ancient polity whose extent was interpreted, by their reading of history, to have included the Malay Peninsula.

Such a conceptualisation ultimately founded on a historiographical error, dictated the Indonesian anti-colonial vision of the territorial boundaries to the post-colonial state.

*Melayu Raya* was also conceptualised along the lines of the re-awakening of a historical identity based on another ancient kingdom, Srivijaya. In the same way Muhammad Yamin, the key ideologue behind *Indonesia Raya*, interpreted Indonesian history, Burhanuddin al-Helmy's exposition of *Melayu Raya* read from Malay history the extension of the great kingdom of Srivijaya into contemporary geopolitics. Unlike Yamin however, who conceptualised his pan identity based in the main on historical territorial claims, the authenticity of *Melayu Raya* derived primarily from racial, ethnic and cultural bases. These different frames of reference made it clear very early on in the history of the politics of kinship in the Indo-Malay World that there would be fundamental problems to the construction of pan-identity. Most Indonesians *are not* ethnic Malay, and attempts by pan-Malay nationalists at recasting history in this mould proved to be cavalier at best, counter-productive at worst. Hence in order to understand the construction of relatedness in this region it is critical, among other things, that one appreciates the distinction between Indonesian and Malay understandings of ethnicity and "Malayness", for this distinction lies at the heart of the identity of the Indo-Malay World. Nor did the champions of pan-unity on either side of the Melaka Straits give heed to the empirical record of tension between Malay and Javanese kingdoms that defined much of pre-colonial geopolitics in the Indo-Malay World. This fact lends further credence to the belief that kinship was constructed without due regard to historiographical complexities.

Complications arising from these contending interpretations of the historical and anthropological basis for pan-identity deepened as the anti-colonial struggle intensified. The Indonesian quest for modern statehood was advanced along civic and egalitarian, not ethnic or racial, lines. The 1928 Youth Pledge taken at Bandung, when leaders of the anti-Dutch movement from throughout the archipelago gathered and proclaimed their loyalty to one national identity,

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<sup>1</sup> The role of kinship myth-making in nationalism is discussed in David Brown, Contemporary

language and flag epitomised this. The making of Indonesia then, was a Batavia-centric, and not Java-centric, phenomenon<sup>2</sup>. Likewise despite Yamin's romanticism, it would eventually be Dutch colonial boundaries that served as the point of reference for Indonesian nationalism.

In contrast to Indonesia's violent egalitarian revolution, the transition from communal to national identity in Malaya was characterised not by issues of territorial boundaries and vulnerability, but by the peaceful imposition of a system of governance that preserved the rights of a dominant community, the Malays. Led eventually by the conservative elite bent on retaining their status, anti-colonialism in Malaya stood antithetic to the civic and egalitarian nationalism that defined Indonesia's process of self-determination, where the aristocracy and traditional elite were viewed as obstacles to, as opposed to facilitators of, decolonization. Within this ethnic framework it was Malay nationalism (as opposed to Malayan nationalism) that dominated, which had as its epicentre the competition between the traditional aristocratic ruling elite and the Indonesian-influenced radical Malay nationalists. Attempts to conceptualise relations with Indonesian kin in the post-war era was integral to the tension between these two groups. Some in Malaya, and in particular the conservative elite, harboured discomfort at the nature of Indonesian nationalism even as they applauded the spirit of Indonesian anti-colonialism. What compounded matters was the fact that during the course of the Indonesian revolution the traditional Malay elite, highly protective and conscious of their identities and social status as the privileged indigenous people, witnessed a wholesale restructuring of society in Indonesia via a bloodbath against traditional forces in Sumatra. This experience had a profound impact on the conservative Malay leadership of the peninsula which eventually inherited the colonial state.

Negative perceptions and complications stemming from events of the revolution were compounded by the close relationship between British Malaya and Sumatra. Sumatra was the bastion of traditional feudalistic society in

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Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural and Multicultural Politics. [London: Routledge, 2000] 40-42.

<sup>2</sup> It can be considered "Batavia-centric" in the sense that it was targeted at inheriting in its entirety the Dutch territories known as the Dutch East Indies, which had its capital at Batavia. This brand of nationalism did not privilege the Javanese, though they constituted up to 60% of the population of the archipelago.

Indonesia and shared much closer affinity with the state and societal structures in peninsular Malaya than Java or any other East Indies territories. Consequently, as it was the Sumatran feudal structure that was demolished by what appeared to be a Java-centred republican revolution, Malay suspicion of republican Indonesia was predictable. In the same vein, suspicions of Malay-Sumatran complicity in retaliation were never far from the minds of Indonesia's Javanese leaders.

These observations highlight the pertinence of Sumatra-peninsula ties in the context of Indonesia-Malaysia relations. Kinship links between the peninsula and Sumatra has previously been established. Likewise, much of the complications surrounding kinship politics in early Indonesia-Malaysia relations were related to questions of Sumatran loyalty to the Indonesian nation-state as opposed to narrow ethno-cultural identity, and Malaya's role in instigating or encouraging separatist tendencies. In turn, it is evident that these problems are associated with the fact that Malays from the peninsula share personal and cultural identity with Sumatrans to a much greater degree than they do with other Indonesian communities. On this basis, the subsequent formation of Malaysia was viewed as potentially divisive from an Indonesian perspective in that it might tempt Sumatran separatism<sup>3</sup>. The fact that the Malay political elite had close relations with the then-influential Sumatra-based *Masyumi* Party further heightened Javanese concerns. It was also telling how during the early years of relations Jakarta politicians were wary of Malay diplomats who cultivated Sumatran contacts<sup>4</sup>.

In many ways, much of this Sumatran-Malay dimension to Indonesia-Malaysia kinship remains in tact, and continues to be fostered via Malaysian students studying in religious and secular institutions in Sumatra. To the extent that personal and cultural affinity may or may not translate into political identity, it would be interesting to observe Malaysian responses should Sumatran discontent towards the central Javanese-dominated government structure in Indonesia re-emerge. The case of Aceh is telling, in this regard, of Malaysia's inability to distance itself completely from Java-Sumatra politics, even in this contemporary era when national identities are presumably less contested.

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<sup>3</sup> J.M. Gullick, *Malaysia and its Neighbours*. [London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1967] 110.

It appears then, that framing kinship in ethnic terms (as Malays are wont to do) would undoubtedly privilege Malay-Sumatran relations to an extent greater than what a Javanese-led government would be comfortable with. Consequently, Indonesians have at times registered their disapproval to the conceptualisation of kinship explicitly on ethnic grounds. Indeed, it was in response to such attempts that Benny Moerdani warned:

Communities in both countries have strong reasons to believe that they have similarities in various aspects of life. However, we must also be wise enough to say that there are a number of differences in both communities' socio-cultural and economic life. . . . These differences should not be overlooked as they can be the source of a split in perception<sup>5</sup>.

Some have made the observation that some Indonesians see “*rumpun*” as holding much more appeal to the Malays precisely because of the continued emphasis on racial and ethnic identity in contemporary Malaysian politics<sup>6</sup>.

It is hence clear from the permutations Indo-Malay nationalisms were undergoing that while both adhered to broad historical premises in their initial attempts to construct post-colonial identities, thus identifying them as kin states, these identities in fact were shaping up to be fundamentally different. One shunned ethnic logic to statehood while the other embraced it; one destroyed the feudal elements in society while the other elevated their status. These fundamental differences set up a clash of identities that would compound the problems surrounding the expectations and obligations both sides read into their post-colonial relationship.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Zainal Sulong, Kuala Lumpur, 14 August 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Benny Moerdani, speech entitled “*Kerjasama, Masalah, dan Tantangan*” delivered at Dialog Pemuda Indonesia-Malaysia II, Bogor, 17-19 January 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Firdhaus Abdullah, “The Rumpun Concept in Malaysia-Indonesia Relations”, *The Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol.XXI, No.2 (1993) 146.

## II. Historical process, identity construction, and the basis of expectations and obligations

While the identification of Indo-Malay affinity with ethno-cultural frames of reference constitute one side of the kinship puzzle, the functional aspects of relatedness, defined as the fulfilment of expectations and obligations read into a kinship relationship, also warrants consideration. In particular, this aspect of kinship takes on prominence in Indonesia-Malaysia relations in the post-colonial era, when political leaders were pressured by each other as well as their respective domestic audiences to translate historical “facts” and political rhetoric into coherent policies. It is when kinship is conceived of as a functional principle with attendant expectations and obligations that the correlation between the kinship factor and the process of national identity building comes into even greater relief.

Long-time observers of Indonesian foreign policy such as Michael Leifer and Franklin Weinstein have contended that an “aspiration to greatness” and “regional sense of entitlement”, borne of its revolutionary experiences during its anti-colonial struggle, lies at the heart of the Indonesian political psyche. This was certainly characteristic of the Indonesian worldview during the excesses of Sukarnoism, but also held true during the Suharto administration. No doubt, under Suharto, Indonesian foreign policy turned away from the grandiloquence of his predecessor. Yet this shift of focus from politics to economics was underlined by Suharto’s belief that powerful states had powerful economies, while Indonesia’s push for international recognition of its archipelagic regime during Suharto’s presidency was fashioned to give substance to aspirations to greatness. Moreover, ASEAN’s principle of regional resilience was grafted from Indonesian domestic political lexicon to provide the subtext to regional security, in so doing further institutionalising Jakarta’s sense of entitlement. Within ASEAN, Indonesia was widely recognised as *primus inter pares* and the prime manager of regional order<sup>7</sup>. As for relations with Malaysia, the kinship factor could not be

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<sup>7</sup> In considering the “absence” of any evidence of subtle Indonesian “benign hegemony” one should distinguish between self-restraint on the part of Jakarta, and Indonesia’s reluctance to assume a leadership role. Indeed, as this dissertation has shown, the fact that Indonesia was not consulted on matters pertaining to the security of Southeast Asia was more often than not interpreted as presumptuous by the Indonesians. This has been in evidence in Malaysian

divorced from Indonesian primacy. This is evident from the following comment in an Indonesian Armed Forces daily noted in the aftermath of *Konfrontasi*:

There is much we can note to prove that Malaysia and Indonesia are in fact brothers – eggs of the same nest . . . . It is not only in the cultural field that Malaysia feels itself our younger brother, but in other fields as well. We should respond to this, not arrogantly but as an elder brother<sup>8</sup>.

From Jakarta's perspective, the fact that Malayan de-colonization transpired not by revolution, but in cooperation with the colonial power contravened the ideologies of Indonesian leaders who had come to develop a worldview and culture of politics that based legitimacy of states primarily on the nature of their independence struggle. By this token the very fact that Malayan independence was born out of a collaborative effort between the Western-educated aristocratic and feudal elite and the British colonialists made it a travesty in Indonesian eyes. To them, a kindred relationship expressed in separate statehood and adhered to without revolution was something they found difficult to accept.

This travesty however, could perhaps be overlooked if post-independence Malaya had acknowledged Indonesian primacy and assumed a subsidiary, if not deferential, role towards its more established kin. Instead, independent Malaya was seen to have given little consideration for Jakarta in the formulation of their own foreign policy. This was apparent from the very outset when, to Jakarta, the kinship rhetoric preached by Malayan leaders did not synchronise with the policies they practiced. Tunku's pro-West inclinations were viewed suspiciously within Jakarta circles, as were his attempts to manage regional affairs through his SEAFET and ASA initiatives. Not only did Malaya not acknowledge Indonesia's leadership, its sympathies for rebels who perpetuated the rebellion of 1957-58 and ambivalence on Indonesia's West Irian claims further sharpened Indonesian impressions that far from fulfilling the functional aspects of kinship and providing unequivocal support for a kin state, Malaya had undermined the very sovereignty

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diplomatic initiatives as well as Thailand's apparent unilateral move in shifting its stand on Indochina in the late 1980s.

<sup>8</sup> "Wrong Key", A1838 3006/4/9 Pt 37, NAA.

and integrity of Indonesia, not to mention challenged Indonesia's conceptions of regional order and its "right" to dictate the pattern of regional security developments.

There is also a distinct cultural dimension in terms of kinship hierarchy in the Javanese mindset that, though difficult to grasp, should not be overlooked. M.C. Ricklefs has written that Javanese political culture emphasises a strict observance of hierarchy<sup>9</sup>. Considering that since the mid 1950s, and particularly during Suharto's New Order regime, a disproportionate number of Javanese have occupied the seats of Indonesian power, it is clear that in some respects the Javanese outlook and worldview has influenced how the Indonesian government perceives and interprets its relations with Malaysia<sup>10</sup>. Jakarta certainly viewed early Malayan policy during Tunku's administration as lacking the deference to Jakarta that should have underscored kin relations. Instead, the tone of Malayan policy in the early post-colonial period engendered a belief in Indonesia that far from acting as kin, Malaya was "an unrepresentative alien-inspired polity designed to perpetuate colonial economic and military interests in Southeast Asia which, by their nature, posed a threat to the viability and regional role of Indonesia"<sup>11</sup>. In Indonesian eyes, Malaya, while declaring its desire to associate with Indonesia on the basis of kinship, had in fact undermined Indonesia's national unity, territorial integrity, and claim to political primacy in the region. Subsequently, whatever its eventual domestic political rationale, the outbreak of *Konfrontasi* reinforces the perception that Indonesian aggression was rooted in their misgivings toward a perceived lack of respect on the part of Malaya.

Relations during the Razak administration, however, contrasted starkly to the enmity that marked Tunku's milieu. It was during this time that one finds the "golden age" of bilateral ties - when perspectives, outlooks, and policies converged to an extent never before (and never since) experienced as the key protagonists of the Razak administration (Razak himself, along with his

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<sup>9</sup> See M.C. Ricklefs, "Unity and Disunity in Javanese Political and Religious Thought of the Eighteenth Century", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.26, No.4 (1992).

<sup>10</sup> The Javanese basis to the Indonesian state during the Suharto administration is argued in Virginia Matheson Hooker (ed), *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*. [Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993] and Michael Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics Under Suharto*. [London: Routledge, 1993].

<sup>11</sup> Michael Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*. [London: Allen & Unwin, 1983] 75.

lieutenants Ghazali Shafie and Zainal Sulong) pursued an active policy of “self-induced subordination” toward Indonesia. A popular explanation for Malaysia’s *volte face* has been the observed need to facilitate the re-integration of post-*Konfrontasi* Indonesia into regional affairs, and to foster a new Indonesian government that was aware of the responsibilities that came with regional preponderance. Yet it was also clear from the complexion of Malaysia’s positions on issues such as the neutralisation of Southeast Asia, the Melaka Straits, Indonesia’s Archipelago Doctrine, and even China policy that Malaysia pro-actively sought to re-orientate relations with Indonesia on the basis of deference. Malaysia in effect surrendered the neutralisation initiative to Indonesia, when consideration for Indonesian sensitivities toward its original proposal led to the final adoption of the Indonesian, as opposed to Malaysian, draft. While the ZOPFAN initiative was Malaysian in name, it was Indonesian in principle. Likewise, Razak’s willingness to recognise Indonesia’s Archipelagic Doctrine without initial confirmation of Malaysian rights to free communication between East and West Malaysia further evinced this attitude of deference, and was in fact a matter of frustration for his own foreign policy officials.

Several years into the following administration of Mahathir Mohamad however, Indonesia-Malaysia relations seemed to return to earlier patterns of rivalry. In a profoundly ironic twist, Mahathir’s Malaysia posed a challenge to Indonesian regional leadership on the back of the same anti-Western crusade long identified with and espoused by Indonesia. To be sure, Mahathir came into office with an explicit pro-Malay and nationalist agenda. Nevertheless, his version of Malay nationalism paid little regard to affinity with Indonesia, certainly not with the Javanese who dominated the upper echelons of the Jakarta government. Furthermore, his explicit focus on foreign policy as an avenue through which to assert resurgent Malay nationalism brought Malaysia into direct conflict with Indonesia, for whom foreign policy was a matter of prestige.

Through the construction of a vocal and activist foreign policy, Mahathir sought to project Malaysia to the forefront of Third World international affairs. This locked Malaysia and Indonesia in a prestige dilemma defined by a contest for international prominence and regional primacy, while blood brotherhood was

increasingly breached as the policy of consultation and alignment with Jakarta that characterised the Razak and Hussein Onn administrations was jettisoned. As the Malaysian state matured in developmental terms, strengthening Malaysian national identity as a result, Kuala Lumpur more deliberately avoided toeing the Jakarta line. Just as it was during the administration of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's interests during this more recent period, insofar as Indonesia policy was concerned, was to break out of Jakarta's shadow.

This tension was acute in the 1990s, when Malaysian assertiveness in international affairs clashed with Indonesia's renewed interest in foreign policy matters. The incident at the 1992 NAM Summit, when Mahathir was referred to as a "Little Sukarno", particularly incensed Suharto<sup>12</sup>. Throughout the 1990s, several events further illustrated Malaysia's challenge to Indonesian conceptions of regional order and Jakarta's ambitions to dictate the pattern of regional developments. This included the controversy surrounding Mahathir's EAEG proposal, Malaysia's rejection of Indonesian attempts to play a mediatory role to facilitate the management of the South China Sea territorial claims, and the divergent positions taken by Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta as to the recognition of the coup by Hun Sen against Prince Ranariddh in Cambodia in 1997 in the build-up to ASEAN expansion.

Aside from the "prestige dilemma", the kinship factor has also generated a wave of problems during this era. While the Malaysian government has publicly disavowed any support for GAM, many segments of the Malay population in the peninsula have long been sympathetic to the cause of *Aceh Merdeka* (Acehnese independence). In addition, there seems to be evidence that some measure of material support and even military training had been given to the Aceh independence movement from sources in peninsular Malaysia. Paradoxically, the fact that Kuala Lumpur has seen the need to express regularly in public their non-support and non-recognition of the *Aceh Merdeka* cause is indicative of how complex and potentially divisive the problem of Aceh remains for Indonesia-Malaysia relations.

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<sup>12</sup> This was confirmed by most, if not all, Indonesian interviewees.

Malaysia's securitisation of the illegal immigration problem has been another example of the complications arising from the residual influence of the kinship factor. Malaysia's lack of understanding and indulgence on this issue, manifested in its demand for the immediate repatriation of Indonesian illegal workers and the provision of less-than-respectable holding accommodation for Indonesians awaiting repatriation, has not been taken well by Jakarta. In Indonesian eyes, Malaysia's "legalistic" pursuit of such policies was being undertaken with no consideration for the "special relationship" that Kuala Lumpur claims to exist between the two kin states. This in turn evoked Indonesian perceptions that Malaysia was not adhering to the functional requirements of the kinship factor. In other words, to Indonesian minds Malaysia's deeds certainly were not matching its words, and the perceived acts of arrogation of leadership on the part of the latter were difficult to endure for an Indonesian government that clearly viewed itself as *primus inter pares* in relations with Kuala Lumpur.

Indo-Malay disunity has also been exaggerated by Mahathir's own attitudes towards Indonesian leaders. Mahathir made little pretence of his disdain for previous practices of consultation and deference to Indonesia. In relation to Indonesia policy, Mahathir's brand of Malay nationalism was not only a deliberate attempt not to tow the Indonesian line, but in many ways to "out-do" Indonesia in regional and international affairs. This state of affairs elicited the following response from a former senior Indonesian foreign ministry official: "Malaysia suffers from a "little brother" complex and compensates by diplomatic activities to break out of Indonesian shadow. This has been an undercurrent to relations in the 80s and 90s"<sup>13</sup>.

It is quite evident then, that though Indonesia and Malaysia are kin states, the kinship factor has not been able to generate harmony in bilateral relations, except for the 1970s, when Malaysian administrations were clearly pro-active in consultation and deference to Jakarta on foreign policy and security matters. This is attributable to the contested perceptions and interpretations each has had towards the terms of kinship, the divergent and ultimately antagonistic paths that

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with former senior foreign ministry official, Jakarta, 24 January 2002.

national identities evolved along, and the consequent failure of one or the other to meet the “functional aspects of relatedness” that extended from their contested understandings (of kinship). Certainly, these problems are further suggestive of the unresolved tensions within the building of post-colonial identities, in particular the issue of how to re-conceptualise loyalties and re-frame post-colonial relations in the context of historical legacies.

### III. Constructing *Pribumi* (indigenous) identity

While there is anthropological, historiographical, and empirical evidence to suggest that the kinship factor has been a problematic basis upon which to organise Indonesia-Malaysia relations, there has nevertheless been avenues that illuminate the prescience of the phenomenon of kinship as a distinct cohesive force in Indonesia-Malaysia relations. This pertains to the apparent effectiveness of the kinship factor in fostering fraternity when defined and constructed in terms of the exclusivity of kin identity, in opposition to what both parties perceive as a shared threat.

As the study has indicated, kinship exclusivity first gained prominence as political logic in response to colonialism. Be that as it may, kinship has also been a persuasive and politically expedient factor in the context of Indo-Malay reaction to the perceived challenge posed by their respective Chinese communities, and to a lesser but no less significant extent the influence of China and Chinese-dominated Singapore on these communities, on their national identities premised on *Pribumi* primacy. This was a particularly pertinent feature of bilateral relations during the 1970s, when Malay interpretations of Malaysian national identity was perceived to be coming under threat from Chinese encroachment onto Malay political “space”. Domestically, the 13 May 1969 riots and ethnic Chinese challenge to Malay primacy re-ignited ethno-nationalist fervour among the Malay population and re-kindled suspicion of the Chinese community. On the international front, despite lingering concerns for the potential threat from Peking, Kuala Lumpur was forced to re-assess its China policy in the wake of Sino-U.S. détente. Malaysian concerns on these fronts were shared by Jakarta, which under

Suharto was harbouring suspicions of Peking and its own ethnic Chinese communities in the wake of the 1965 communist coup attempt. It was in this manner that the Chinese have been a “problem” for Indonesian and Malaysian national identity construction and nation formation, not to mention security. Hence, it was not surprising that developments in Malaysia after 13 May were followed with great interest in Jakarta, while many in the Malaysian government were looking to Indonesia for assurance and justification. The loyalties of the Chinese communities have been regularly questioned in both states, and their control of economic resources have caused anti-Chinese sentiments to fester. By the late 1960s, both Indonesia and Malaysia also shared the same concerns for the threat from Peking-inspired communist activities along the shared border in Borneo. In this regard, it is suggested that dealing with the “Chinese problem” overshadowed all else as a policy prerogative for both states during this period. Consequently, the need for policy convergence in relation to this problem was manifested in the creation of the General Border Committee, close consultation on the matter of normalisation of ties with Peking, and finally in the 1980 Kuantan statement.

Hence, while there was certainly a measure of belief among policy-makers in both governments during the late 1960s and the 1970s that Indo-Malay kinship could provide an avenue for strengthening ties, kinship was framed in terms of shared concerns towards communist China and the challenge to *Pribumi* primacy from domestic ethnic Chinese communities. More importantly for Malaysia, the improvement of relations with Indonesia in the 1970s can be viewed in tandem with the re-assertion of Malay dominance. To the Malay leadership, this could be conveniently accomplished by reinvigorating affinity with Indonesia along racial and ethnic lines. Put differently, Indonesia became an ally to Malaysia as it sought after May 1969 to accentuate Malay primacy over the Chinese in the reconstruction of Malaysian national identity. This has been verified by the fact that many Malays, including those in seats of power, looked to Indonesia at this time as a bastion of “Malay” identity, and in so doing re-affirmed the affinity that was built during the anti-colonial struggles. Such was the extent of these attempts at reviving affiliation that Malaysian Chinese, as well as the leadership of

Chinese-dominated Singapore, located in the heart of the Indo-Malay archipelago, were keenly aware of the threatening possibility of an Indo-Malay confederation taking shape with an anti-Chinese subtext. In other words, while the inclusiveness of kinship, in terms of the translation of cultural and ethnic affinities into political reality, or even the interpretation and fulfilment of expectations and obligations, has been a matter of contestation between Indonesia and Malaysia, kinship exclusivity has proven a more effective and persuasive logic behind Indo-Malay fraternity. This permutation of kinship also explains why political leaders and audiences continue to look to it for greater meaning and intelligibility to bilateral relations, despite all the hiccups that have accompanied it.

#### **IV. Kinship paradoxes: The continued search for meaning and intelligibility**

In a keynote address at the Second Malaysia-Indonesia Conference, then Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Badawi made the following assertion:

The five principles of peaceful co-existence which order relations between the family of nations alone *should not be* what relations between two countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia are founded upon. If relations between Malaysia and Indonesia are pegged at mere peaceful co-existence, then we pitch our relationship *on the lowest possible note in the relations between two nations*. Our ties would be no better, no worse than our ties with our most distant friends. *What we strive for and what we already have to a considerable degree, is relations at the fullest, relations suffused with maximum understanding, mutual empathy and reciprocal concern*<sup>14</sup>. (Emphasis added)

Implicit in Badawi's statement is his invocation of what John Baylis classifies as the "Evangelical" approach to international relations, where the Indonesia-Malaysia relationship is again portrayed as a fraternal association of peoples whose common culture, language, and religion "set them apart from 'normal'

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<sup>14</sup> See Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, keynote address delivered at Second Malaysia-Indonesia Conference, Penang, 11-14 December 1990.

relations between states in the international system”<sup>15</sup>. Consequently, this implies the hope that kinship affinity can still take on greater prominence in relations even after decades (or even centuries, if one considers pre-colonial relations) of bilateral rivalry. In a somewhat optimistic, if not altogether ironic, editorial, a prominent Malaysian commentator has also suggested that: “The Malaysian respect for Indonesia as the Big Brother, whatever the Big Brother’s shortcomings may be, continues unabated. On the other hand, Indonesia’s concern for Malaysia’s well being continues to underpin ties with Kuala Lumpur”<sup>16</sup>. These intimations fall in line with an ongoing tradition that has seen bilateral ties portrayed as a “special relationship” rendered in kinship terms.

Indeed, despite the recurrence of bilateral tension, the fact remains that the pull of kinship, particularly through public opinion and civil society interaction, has always been strong, and continues to be a source of intelligibility for Indonesia-Malaysia relations. Given the emergence of terminology such as “*Berkumpung*” (to come together as in a village or tribe), “*Diplomasi Serumpun*” (racial diplomacy), and “*Musyawaharah dan Muafakat*” (consultation and consensus) over the years, a “language of kinship” seems to have emerged in the lexicon of bilateral relations, and that hark back to pre-colonial notions of community and identity. The resilience of such ideas, along with the continued existence of avenues through which closer relations can be plotted, indicates that the phenomenon of kinship remains of some import in the affairs and identity of the Indo-Malay World. The impact of inter-marriage and migration that has given rise to a shared linguistic and cultural legacy, already emphasised earlier, continues to define much of the cross-border interchange in the Indo-Malay World today. Artistic and literary traditions of the peninsula continue to be traced back to Indonesia. In the early years of Malayan independence, the Malay education system was built around Indonesian teachers, and these educational exchanges remain a feature of relations today. The Indonesian revolution was

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<sup>15</sup> John Baylis, *Anglo-American Relations Since 1939*. [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997] 8-9.

<sup>16</sup> “Behind the Suharto, Mahathir Meeting”, *Straits Times*, 25 June 1988.

celebrated in many Malayan circles, and Indonesian anti-colonialists continue to be lauded as Malay heroes<sup>17</sup>.

It must be said however, that while the historical legacy of social-cultural exchange has continued into contemporary times, there is a sense within certain quarters that the relationship has not been conducted on an equal basis. This is so at least in Malaysian eyes, where cultural exchange continues to be viewed as a one-sided phenomenon:

In cultural exchanges . . . more Indonesian songs are aired in Malaysia, more films shown, more books and magazines available, to the Malaysian public than are Malaysian items available to the Indonesians. Similarly close to a thousand Malaysians are studying in Indonesia and very few Indonesia students are in Indonesia, whereas many Indonesian students do study abroad, including Singapore. Is the teaching in Bahasa Malaysia a problem? Are there no suitable institutions? Will Indonesian students not feel comfortable in Malaysia<sup>18</sup>?

In light of this, the issue was raised when Malaysian Ambassador Abdullah Zawawi shared his candid impression that “in the equation of our two countries’ present relations, Malaysia and Indonesia have not been equally committed in our efforts to give meaning to the ‘*rumpun*’ factor”<sup>19</sup>. Yet given the propensity among Malay popular opinion to view Indonesians as ethnic kin and Indonesia’s reluctance to be associated as such, this imbalance is hardly surprising. Not too long ago Indonesians too, sought to construct kinship along ethno-cultural lines, suggesting that:

Except for some minor differences wrought by history . . . the two nations could well be one. In the first place, Malaysia in the minds of Indonesians, is Malay – Brothers of the Malay race. This impression is hard to change, although Indonesians know that according to the statistics Malays actually make up only slightly more than half of the population of Malaysia. On their television sets, Indonesians watch

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<sup>17</sup> The recently released Malay television drama “*Embun*” portrays Ibrahim Yaacob, the pro-Indonesian architect of *Melayu Raya*, as a Malay hero and patriot.

<sup>18</sup> Abdullah Zawawi, speech entitled “*Malaysia and Indonesia Bilateral Relations*” delivered at Second Malaysia-Indonesia Conference, Penang, 11-14 December 1990.

<sup>19</sup> See *ibid.*

Malaysian artistes perform dances or play music that can hardly be distinguished from those of Indonesia's own regions. Indonesians can communicate with Malaysians as easily as Englishmen with Americans<sup>20</sup>.

In more recent Indonesian thinking however, concerns over the functional aspects of relatedness (i.e. the fulfilment of expectations and obligations) have superseded the ethno-cultural kinship discourse that was prevalent in the earlier years, and that is still regurgitated by many Malaysians today.

To be certain, while popular conceptions of kinship might have operated at a different level to that of high politics, it has nevertheless often exerted some influence on the latter, and hence one should exercise caution in describing the evocation of kinship *solely* as rhetorical commonplace. Research undertaken here has shown how this has been manifested in the fact that the rhetorical proclamations made by political leaders in fact often synchronize with their opinions expressed behind closed doors. For example, Tunku Abdul Rahman himself regularly expressed in private how, in making Malayan policy towards Indonesia, he felt compelled to take into account pro-Indonesia sentiments of many among the Malay community who still harboured sentimental loyalties toward Indonesia even after independence. As but one example, the discrepancy between Tunku's private and public positions on Indonesia's West Irian claims illustrate how his personal opposition to Indonesia's cause was checked by the fact that his Malay electorate supported it. Indeed, this pressure to emphasise kinship was all the more intriguing during Tunku's administration for the fact that of all Malaysia's leaders, he was the staunchest in his disdain for the Javanese-dominated Indonesian leadership. Indonesian leaders too, have admitted privately to popular pressure driving their interest in Malaysian affairs, particularly in the aftermath of the May 1969 race riots. These circumstances certainly conditioned relations during the Razak era, when relations were reinforced on the back of "people-to-people" ties.

Yet while popular opinion may have contributed to the politicisation of kinship in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, one should be mindful that its influence

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<sup>20</sup> Hari Hartojo, "Confrontation", A1838 3006/4/9 Part 39, NAA.

is also subject to transformation and change. More to the point, given the relationship between kinship and identity, one can see that in the context of the present study, as national identities take shape, so too the factor of kinship can be transformed as loyalties of populations and focus of the state (insofar as Indo-Malay kinship is concerned) begins to shift with the codification of nation-building projects and increase in popular confidence in the nation-state, in so doing losing the romanticism and sentimentality of kinship in the complex maze of nationhood. Rather than viewing each other as fellow kinsmen on the basis of shared language, religion, or even ethnicity, they now begin to view each other as nationals of a different state. Both begin also to define themselves more explicitly as separate and distinct from each other, and the level of polemics between the two may well increase as a result.

Interestingly, the close relation between kinship and national identity has also been manifested in the nature of bilateral disputes that have plagued relations. In a marked change from questions of identity and sovereignty that defined earlier periods of post-colonial relations, recent Indonesia-Malaysia contestations have centred on territorial disputes and a contest for primacy in the Indo-Malay World. The transition from kinship to national loyalties indicate that as national identities are forged, the extent to which the kinship factor can give intelligibility to international relations cannot be divorced from the state and nation-building context<sup>21</sup>.

## **V. Kinship perceptions and interpretations**

Dovetailing into the consideration of popular opinion and the paradoxes it generates are the perceptions of policy makers themselves. It is the case here that along with the evolution of the identities of the Indonesian and Malaysian states, leadership personalities and propensities have also contributed to perceptions and misinterpretations of the terms and basis of the kinship factor. While the extent of influence from such sources cannot realistically be determined quantitatively, it is nevertheless suggested that in many instances the twists and turns of the

politics of kinship in Indonesia-Malaysia relations have been driven as much by the perceptions and outlooks of individual leaders as by the prerogatives of national identity construction. Of the four Prime Ministers in Malaysian history for instance, only the Buginese Razak could claim pure Indonesian descent<sup>22</sup>. This could perhaps partially account for the “archipelagic orientation” of his worldview. In like manner, Presidents Sukarno and Suharto came from a Javanese tradition that has often perceived itself as culturally superior in the Indo-Malay World. One notes further how Indonesia-Malaya relations in the immediate post-colonial period were defined as much by the lack of rapport between Sukarno and Tunku Abdul Rahman as by other issues. J.M. Gullick summarises the tenuous relationship as follows:

President Sukarno and Tunku Abdul Rahman cordially dislike each other. The Indonesian President had climbed to power from humble origins by way of Dutch prisons and armed revolution. He despises the Malay prince as being . . . in the camp of the colonial power. The Tunku, disconcerted and displeased by the flamboyant demagoguery of Sukarno, distrusts his domestic alliance with Indonesian communism and despises his regime for the economic chaos which it has allowed to engulf a once prosperous country<sup>23</sup>.

Subsequently, as chief advisors to Suharto and Razak respectively, the blood ties between Adam Malik and Ghazali Shafie (both were distant cousins who grew up together) led to the perception among Indonesian and Malay leaders of that era that the kinship factor could and should in fact provide a viable basis for organising relations.

Likewise, Suharto’s relationship with Mahathir has been subjected to much scrutiny, and anecdotal evidence abound that attest to the distance between them. It is a known fact that Suharto’s relationship with Mahathir lacked the cordiality and affinity that characterised his rapport with Razak. In fact, Mahathir’s outlook towards Indonesia was antithetic to Razak’s willingness to align Malaysian policy positions with Jakarta on the basis of the kinship factor

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<sup>21</sup> See Michael Desch, “Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies”, *International Security*, Vol.23, No.1 (Summer 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Hussein Onn had Thai and English blood respectively while Mahathir’s father was of North Indian origin.

through active consultation on policy matters (prior to policy formulation, it must be added), and sometimes deference on matters of specific interest to the Indonesian cousins. Indeed, the prevailing opinion in Javanese-dominated Indonesian political circles was that Mahathir lacked respect for Suharto<sup>24</sup>. In private, Mahathir had on several occasions expressed sentiments that were critical of Suharto, while the latter, when considering Malaysia's "lack of regard" for Indonesian sensitivities, has always been mindful of Mahathir's Indian roots<sup>25</sup>.

As this study has hinted, bilateral tensions, be they military or diplomatic, do not necessarily arise *solely* out of clashes of calculated material interests. Differences in ideas, perceptions, or even personalities, also foment discord and rivalry. One such avenue with regards to Indonesia-Malaysia relations, this study has shown, is associated with the kinship factor, where perceptions and interpretations of its meaning and terms of references can influence the pattern of relations between kin states such as Indonesia and Malaysia. In this case, while both agree to varying degrees with the historical precedents behind their ties, both differ in their understanding of kin identity. Moreover, the expectations and obligations of kinship, and the extent to which perceptions and interpretations of these terms of fraternity have been fulfilled or not, have also been important in explaining harmony and discord. In this regard, it is important to note that while its prominence may have been diluted over time, the historical legacy of kinship has always featured in various aspects of Indonesia-Malaysia relations, and to dismiss it would be to misread the history, culture and politics of the Indo-Malay World. Nor should one consider kinship as nothing more than a rhetorical tool, for as this study has shown, the influence of the kinship factor in Indo-Malay politics is in fact much more complicated; defined by concerted attempts on the part of political leaders to foster coherence on kinship principles, the prevalence

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<sup>23</sup> J.M. Gullick, *Malaysia and its Neighbours*. [London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1967] 108.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mochtar Kusumamaatjaja, Jakarta, 23 January 2002.

<sup>25</sup> For example in a conversation with a guest at Mahathir's daughter's wedding in 1998, the Malaysian Prime Minister had expressed the opinion that he was "smarter than Suharto" in handling economic and political crises. On other occasions, Mahathir had apparently compared his sons, Malaysian businessmen Mirzan and Mokhzani Mahathir, favourably against Tommy Suharto. As for Suharto, he had always considered Mahathir's abrasive attitude as "un-Malay". Interview with an Indonesian source, Jakarta, 21 January 2002.

of popular opinions that pressure them to do so, and the consequential success or failure of such policies.

## VI. The future of the kinship factor

It is clear from the above observations that while it is evident that Indonesia-Malaysia relations have been characterised more by diplomatic discord than harmony as a result of clashes of national histories and identities, it remains a fact that the kinship factor continues to be looked to for meaning and intelligibility to bilateral relations, not only at a popular level, but occasionally among political leaders as well. This raises the issue of how dominant a role it might play in future. In assessing whether the kinship factor might continue to have relevance to the understanding of the politics of the Indo-Malay World, it is the exclusivity of kinship that again warrants especial attention.

Returning first to a hypothesis presented earlier, namely that the kinship factor performs exclusive as well as inclusive functions, one considers the possibility of shared perceptions of threats that might provide rallying points to invigorate affiliation. Indeed, as this study has shown, the suggestion that perceptions of kinship can be strengthened for a common cause is not foreign to Indonesia-Malaysia ties. It certainly inspired congruence in anti-colonial perspectives prior to the Pacific War, giving rise to a pan-Malay movement. It was also observed that lying behind the rhetoric of ethnic Malay blood brotherhood employed to justify reconciliation after *Konfrontasi* was an anti-Chinese agenda, which subsequently underpinned relations during the decade following the termination of Indonesian aggression. More recently, this seemed to be the case in relation to Singapore, the Chinese-dominated city-state sandwiched geographically between Indonesia and Malaysia. There was mention, for example, that in the buildup to the formation of ASEAN, ethno-religious kinship groupings sought initially to exclude Singapore from membership<sup>26</sup>. Similarly, when Suharto appealed for clemency for two Indonesian marines scheduled to be hanged in Singapore, his appeal was supported by Tunku Abdul

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with a senior Singapore diplomat, Singapore, 2 February 2002.

Rahman<sup>27</sup>. Malaysia's alignment with Indonesia on the issue of the status of the Melaka Straits, which resulted in attempts to block the internationalisation of the Straits, can also be construed as a move to strategically corner Singapore<sup>28</sup>. Indonesia shared Malaysian annoyance over a remark made in 1987 by Singapore minister Lee Hsien Loong questioning the loyalty of Singapore's minority Malay population in a time of crisis with its neighbours, as well as over the visit of Israeli President Chaim Herzog to the city-state<sup>29</sup>.

The argument that the Chinese issue is integral to conceptions of kin identity in the Indo-Malay World arises from the fact that the traditional political and economic influence of the ethnic Chinese communities in Indonesia and Malaysia, not to mention the presence of a Chinese-dominated Singapore at the heart of the archipelago, has historically been and continues to be an anomaly in the cultural and strategic milieu of the Indo-Malay World, if not altogether a political thorn in its side. The "Chinese" and "Singapore" issues have featured not only as a viable domestic political bogey for both Indonesia and Malaysia, but in some respects also as a motivation for policy congruence between the kin states.

The kinship factor could also potentially take on greater political consequence in the event of a resurgence of political Islam in both countries. This study has indicated that while Islam stood at the sidelines of political discourse in both Indonesia and Malaysia for long periods, one notices a recent resurgence in Islamic politics in the domestic sphere in both countries (more so in Malaysia, it must be added). Of course, the extent to which the abstract notion of Islamic brotherhood can provide a basis upon which state-to-state relations can be built, will depend on how deep the roots of political Islam lie in both societies. It does appear that its current prospects are dim owing to the largely secular nature of the Malaysian and Indonesian governments. Nevertheless, the emergence and increasing popularity of radical Islamic movements that are creeping into mainstream political discourse, not to mention the sudden re-emergence of Islam

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> This certainly was the prevailing opinion of the Singapore leadership at the time.

<sup>29</sup> Dewi Fortuna Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN: Foreign Policy and Regionalism*. [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994] 173. See also Tim Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia: A Precarious Balance?", *The Pacific Review*, Vol.4, No.3 (1991).

as a key factor in international politics, highlights the possibility that Islam might have the potential to succeed in giving deeper meaning to kinship discourse in the Indo-Malay World, and making the kinship factor an organising principle upon which Indonesia and Malaysia can build bilateral harmony and policy coherence.

In sum, this study has aimed at contributing to the study of Indonesia-Malaysia relations by introducing the kinship factor as a frame of reference to understand the Indonesia-Malaysia “special relationship”, and placing it in a historical framework that distinguishes different phases of development. This approach has illuminated the variance in perceptions and interpretations of kinship, the interaction of the kinship factor with prerogatives of identity, nation, and state construction, and the manner in which leaders have or have not employed the kinship factor in their understanding of how relations should be framed.

Without doubt, the shape of the kinship factor has been transformed over time as Indonesia-Malaysia relations have evolved. Kinship evidently featured more prominently in the early history of relations with the introduction of pan-Malayism, which itself is a concept that remains contested in academic circles<sup>30</sup>. Subsequently, attempts at organising relations on the factor of kinship have met with varied success. Four observations can be gleaned from this study that explain this. First, the genealogical and anthropological logic and evidence of kinship ties remains a matter of contested interpretation that has impeded open embrace of kinship. Second, notwithstanding the above observation, the successful mobilisation of the kinship factor has hinged on the fulfilment of perceived obligations and expectations, and Malaysian deference to Indonesia appears to be integral to this dynamic. Yet as this study has shown, Malaysia in particular has not taken the path of deference, save for the administrations of Razak and Hussein Onn. Rather, Kuala Lumpur has challenged Indonesian primacy in this relationship. This has in turn given rise to bilateral acrimony and what can be characterised as kin rivalry. Third, the kinship factor as a matter of identity construction has also seen its influence gradually curtailed as it confronts

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<sup>30</sup> See Angus MacIntyre, “The ‘Greater Indonesia’ Idea of Nationalism in Malaya and Indonesia”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.7, No.1 (1973), and Rustam Sani, “Melayu Raya as a Malay ‘Nation

the reality of national identity building in Indonesia and Malaysia, where over time loyalties have shifted away from kinship to nationhood. Finally however, it is also notable that the logic of exclusivity inherent in the meaning of kinship still makes it an easy rallying point for kin sentiments and the fostering of common identity when plotted against foreign influences and threats.

Despite the lack of a concrete anthropological basis or any semblance of empirical consistency insofar as the association between kinship and harmony is concerned, political leaders have always persisted in engaging in the discourse of kinship to give meaning and intelligibility to their relations, and this trend is likely to continue. Yet as national identities continue to take shape, Indonesia and Malaysia will also find additional terms of reference, beyond the kinship factor, through which to articulate bilateral ties. It seems then, that the essence of this relationship is best captured in the Malay/Indonesian metaphor that warns of the potential, if not inevitable, friction between two entities as close as “*gigi dan lidah*” (teeth and tongue) - they will remain close, and it is precisely for that reason that there will invariably be problems between Indonesia and Malaysia, their kinship notwithstanding.

The phenomenon of “special relationships” in international relations, as suggested, remains an understudied dimension in the field of international studies. Given the sense that such “special relationships” are premised on factors other than calculations of material interests, the study has attempted to unravel the terms of reference to such relationships. One permutation of “special relationships”, as has been argued, is kinship and relations between kin states, and the study has looked to chart alternative conceptual territory by suggesting that in “special relationships”, issues of harmony and discord can be dictated by expectations and obligations rooted in the sense of either shared histories, cultures, or ethnicities among states.

While no attempt has been made at grand theorising, some preliminary observations have been made, which might form the basis for future studies in foreign policy analysis and international relations theory in relation to “special relationships”. In particular, it has highlighted how a normative idea, that of

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of Intent” in Dahlan, H.M. (ed), *The Nascent Malaysian Society*. [Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan

kinship, can and has influenced decision-making processes. It has also suggested that the English School, with its emphasis on the idiographic and normative dimensions of international politics, is the best-equipped mode of inquiry to explore the kinship factor in international relations. While the English School does not explicitly evoke the kinship factor, the study has shown that its core epistemological and methodological assumptions, such as the normative character of statecraft and decision-making that open the way for detailed study on the manner in which political elites perceive and interpret ideas and institutions of international relations, dovetail with the kinship factor as an idea encompassing expectations and obligations that influence how kin states conceptualise the terms of their relationship. Likewise, the historical and contextual focus of the English School can also illuminate the shifting influence of the kinship factor in kin state relations, given that kinship as a phenomenon in international relations is, as this study has suggested, intimately linked to national identity formation, which itself is a historical and evolutionary process.

Yet the use of the kinship factor has also illuminated shortcomings of the English School that need to be taken into consideration. For example, while the English School remains state-centric in its assumptions, this study has suggested that in order to understand the nature of relations between states that share historical, cultural, and ethnic commonalities, one has inevitably to take into account how these states came into being, and what influence kinship had in this process. This is particularly so in the case of Third World states, another category in international relations that the English School tradition in its current Western-centric form is not equipped to explore, where post-colonial states have had to come to terms with the demands of nationhood and national identity formation whilst still having strong historical ties of race, culture, and ethnicity with other states<sup>31</sup>. Indeed, how people and political elite have conceptualised the terms of

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Antropologi dan Sosiologi, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1976].

<sup>31</sup> There has, however, been increasing interest in the English School tradition in studies on the international politics of East Asia. See for example, Christopher Hughes, Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism: National Identity and Status in International Society. [London: Routledge, 1997]; Liselotte Odgaard, Maritime Security Between China and Southeast Asia: Conflict and Cooperation in the Making of Regional Order. [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002]. There has also been an increasing presence of the English School within the Chinese International Relations community. See, for example, papers by Chen Zhimin, Ni Shixiong, Su Changhe and Wang

relations with fellow kin states given this dichotomy is critical to the understanding of the nature and shape of kin state relations. Ultimately, this study is interested in how borders came about and what impact this process has had on relations between states, particularly those states that share common histories, and where kinship and co-identification stands as a central component of this process. In this regard, it suggests that in order to understand the motivations behind foreign policies of kin states in relation to each other, rather than take sovereign territorial state as the point of entry, the very manner in which these kin states came into existence as independent entities, and concomitantly how identity formation has influenced kin states' perceptions of each other and the terms of their relationship over time, is of equal, if not more, import insofar as one strives to have a better understanding of how and why the leaders and population of kin states look to the kinship factor for intelligibility and meaning to their bilateral relations.

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