

THE INDONESIA-MALAYSIA CULTURAL HERITAGE DISPUTES: A CASE STUDY OF THE *PENDET* DANCE AND RASA *SAYANGE* FOLK SONG

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Abstract This article analyses the role of nationalism and power politics (external/domestic) in shaping Indonesia's relations with Malaysia during the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY). More specifically, it examines how nationalism, namely domestic nationalist pressure interacts with other external-domestic determinants in shaping Indonesia's external behaviour and options towards Malaysia when managing the cultural heritage disputes, with particular attention given to Malaysia's alleged claims of proprietorship over the *Pendet* dance and *Rasa Sayange* folk song. By adopting a neoclassical realist construct, this study seeks to address the pertinent questions of why, how, when and to what extent nationalism affects the perceptions and calculation of the SBY administration and Jakarta's policy options during their altercations over the two cultural heritage debacles. Special attention is given to examining the interactions between domestic nationalist pressure and the related external-domestic determinants influencing Indonesia's foreign policy towards Malaysia, to assess the extent to which nationalism constrained the SBY administration's handling of the related episodes of the cultural heritage disputes. This study found the salience of nationalism and/or domestic nationalist pressure in constraining/affecting SBY administration's management of the cultural heritage disputes affecting the Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral ties to be dependent on the Indonesian state-elites' perceptions/calculation of the external-domestic conditions, namely their domestic political resolve vis-à-vis nationalist forces and Indonesia's relative power position compared with Malaysia, which predisposed specific foreign policy-options during the given time period and context.

Keywords: Indonesia-Malaysia relations, nationalism, power politics, cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

The nascent period of Indonesia-Malaysia relations (1957–1963) had been predominantly characterised by major political and diplomatic differences between the two neighbours and kin states, which served as the principal reason for their antagonistic and conflictual relationship (Ruhanas, 2006: 52). The seeds of conflict have been sown since 1958 when the Indonesian President, Sukarno accused the then-Federation of Malaya for interfering in Indonesia's domestic affairs by allegedly supporting the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia that wanted to declare a new Republic of Indonesia (Ruhanas, 2006: 52; Kahin, 1964). The dismal state of the bilateral relationship was also influenced by a number of other problems, in the likes of cross-border crimes such as smuggling, the sovereignty dispute over West Irian, and regional security as well as communist-related issues (Liow, 2005; Kahin, 1964; Kunaseelan, 1996). The bad-blood and simmering bilateral tension between the two countries reached boiling point in 1963 when Indonesia launched an undeclared war against its neighbour. Popularly known as the 'Confrontation,' the limited armed conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia was triggered following the formation of the Federation of Malaysia which was not recognised by President Sukarno and his Filipino counterpart, President Macapagal (see Kahin, 1964). Indeed, the confrontation was seen as the culmination of a seriously flawed relationship between these two relatively new nation-states that was induced by as much the problems of history, culture and identity as by the inevitable consequence of great power politics during the Cold War (Liow, 2005: 98). Indonesia-Malaysia relations began to thaw and recover from 1966 onwards, following the end of the confrontation period. However, the atmosphere of the bilateral relationship has continued to fluctuate, with its traditional 'ups-and downs' becoming even more pronounced, especially since the 1980's due to shifting power dynamics juxtaposed against rising nationalism and identity politics which have contributed to heightening bilateral competition involving national security, territorial integrity, economic strength and political influence

(Ruhanas, 2006: 49; Liow, 2005; Khadijah Md. Khalid & Shakila Yacob, 2012). The inability of the two so-called brethren-states to promote a genuinely stable, matured and progressive relationship is due to multiple unresolved bilateral issues, ranging from the influx of (illegal) Indonesian labour (*Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* - TKI) and the Sipadan-Ligitan-Sebatik and Ambalat/Sulawesi Sea maritime-territorial disputes to new challenges such as the cultural heritage debacle, which have continued to erode the 'political will' of both governments and peoples to maintain amiable ties.

This study analyses the role of nationalism and power politics (external/domestic) in shaping Indonesia's relations with Malaysia during the President SBY administration. More specifically, it examines how nationalism, namely domestic nationalist pressure interacts with other external-domestic determinants in shaping Indonesia's external behaviour/policy-options towards Malaysia when managing the cultural heritage disputes. Particular attention is given to the issues of Malaysia's alleged claims of proprietorship over the *Pendet* dance and *Rasa Sayange* folk song, which manifested between 2007 and 2009. By adopting a neoclassical realist model of Nationalism and State Behaviour (Lai, 2014; Lai & Chrisnandi, 2013; Lai & Chrisnandi, 2015), this chapter seeks to address the pertinent questions of why, how, when and to what extent nationalism affects the perceptions and calculation of the SBY administration and Jakarta's policy options during their altercations over the two cultural heritage debacles. Special attention is given to examining the interactions between domestic nationalist pressure and the related external-internal determinants influencing Indonesia's Malaysia policy, to assess the extent to which nationalism constrains the SBY administration's handling of the related episodes of the cultural heritage disputes.

Neoclassical Realism and Indonesian Foreign Policy Analysis

This study advocates Neoclassical Realism (NCR), which is hospitable to both mainstream and constructivist variables, as the central analytical framework. NCR is a variant of IR realism that emerged in the late 1990's, which posits the role of domestic politics in international relations and foreign policy analysis. It has gained scholarly acknowledgement as a

realist theory of foreign policy that generally shares the basic tenets of the theoretical tradition, only to separate itself from its systemic-focused brethren by explicitly underlining and theorising the ‘intervening’ role of domestic variables in producing foreign policy behaviour. Indeed, NCR stresses the integration of both external and domestic variables to produce more accurate foreign policy analysis. Proponents of neoclassical realism, i.e. Rose (1998), Taliaferro (2006), Schweller (2004), Lai (2014), and Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro (2009), among others, generally share the standard realist assumption that ‘the scope and ambition’ of a country’s foreign policy and external interests are driven primarily by systemic pressures and its relative power position. However, the effects of these imperatives are subjective, as they must be translated through peculiar domestic political process and situations (Schweller, 2004: 164), which stand to affect a particular state’s response to the external environment. NCR advocates see the existence of an ‘imperfect transmission belt’ (Rose, 1998: 146–7) linking systemic imperatives to foreign policy behaviour, and concur that external constraints/opportunities must be mediated by unit-level ‘intervening’ variables such as decision-makers’ perception and other domestic political processes, which can induce states to behave similarly under different conditions, or differently under similar situations (Rose, 1998; Schweller, 2004; Lai, 2014).

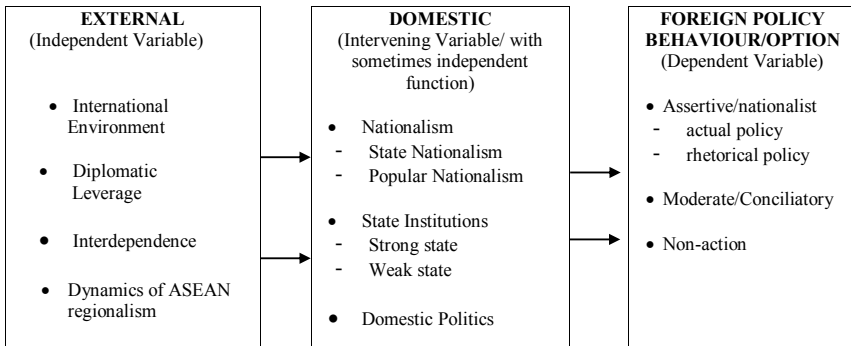


FIGURE 1 NCR Framework of Nationalism and State Behaviour/Preferences

Source: Adapted from Lai (2014); Lai and Chrisnandi (2013; 2015)

NCR's 'middle-ground' position of favouring domestic-level/constructivist reasoning allows this study to problematise and operationalize nationalism as a variable that mediates the external environment and influences the domestic political process and perceptions of Indonesian policy-makers. This, in turn, shapes Indonesia's particular foreign policy behaviour that either exacerbates or assuages the bilateral altercations over cultural heritage and proprietorship vis-à-vis Malaysia. For a start, the basic NCR framework comprises two sets of interactive variables (see Figure 1). Whereas external factors are primarily 'independent' variables, domestic determinants serve as 'intervening' variables (with sometimes, independent function) that mediate and interact with the former, and with one another to produce particular foreign policy options, or the 'dependent' variable. The external variables identified for this study are the: 1) international (security/strategic) environment; 2) diplomatic leverage vis-à-vis disputant-state; 3) interdependence (bilateral/multilateral); and 4) dynamics of ASEAN regionalism, which ascertain the parameter of Indonesia's policy options vis-à-vis Malaysia. Meanwhile, the domestic variables include: 1) nationalism (state/popular manifestations); 2) state institutions (strong/weak state); and 3) domestic politics (power competition between state elites/parties/bureaucracies). Specifically, to this study, nationalism is assumed to interact with these other determinants in affecting Indonesian state-elite's perceptions/calculations of the external-domestic conditions, namely Indonesia's relative power position vis-à-vis Malaysia, and their domestic political resolve vis-à-vis 'nationalist' forces, which then define their specific policy options, when dealing with the Malaysian over the two cases of cultural heritage debacle.

Building on the framework, this section operationalises nationalism within an interactive 'macro-micro' model to explicate how, when, and under what condition it prevails in Indonesia's Malaysia policy-making. NCR stresses that domestic influence on foreign policy depends on the constraints/opportunities imposed by the international system. This is coherent with the realist tradition's basic assumption, which emphasises the primacy of systemic imperatives in conditioning the environment in which nation-states function and operate. Nonetheless, NCR goes further by assuming that the environment primarily serves to limit, but not govern a state's specific

foreign policy choices, leaving such processes to domestic factors/actors, i.e. nationalism and state-elites' perception/calculation (Sterling-Folker, 1997; Dessler, 1989; as cited in Lai, 2014). When international pressures are low, or when the probability of conflict is relatively obscure, NCR assumes that states can exercise a wider range of policy options, thus giving nationalism and other domestic factors a bigger impact on foreign policy-making (Desch, 1998). Under such conditions where domestic political bargaining enjoys greater saliency in the decision-making process, nationalist pressures (i.e. nationalist politicians, popular nationalist sentiments, etc.) may prevail and force, or even encourage states to adopt nationalist over prudent foreign policy options. Likewise, state-elites fostering, or are dependent on, nationalism for domestic political expediency, may allow it a more affective role in shaping state behaviour, under a low-pressure international environment. Conversely, when external pressures are high and the likelihood of threat becomes imminent, state preferences are bound to be curtailed, thus reducing the leverage of domestic imperatives on foreign policy-making (Desch, 1998). This implies that nationalist forces have lesser bargaining power in policy-making. Instead, state-elites as 'rational' actors are expected to respond to systemic imperatives, rather than domestic nationalist pressures, or nationalistic convictions, when determining policy options (Lai, 2014).

Based on the stipulated assumptions, an NCR model can be constructed by juxtaposing the external (independent) and the domestic (intervening/independent) variables within an external-domestic matrix to represent their interactions which produce foreign policy outcomes (dependent variable). The NCR hypotheses on Indonesia's behaviour vis-à-vis Malaysia as represented in Table 1 are generated based on the Indonesia's relative power position vis-à-vis the disputant-state, Malaysia (as perceived by Indonesian state-elites), and Indonesian state elite's domestic political resolve, specifically against domestic nationalist pressure.

TABLE 1 NCR Hypotheses on State Behaviour/Preferences

Hypothesis/ (Quadrant)	External-Domestic Conditions and Expected Foreign Policy Options
H1	When the relative power position vis-à-vis the disputant-state is decisively/ determinately favourable (strategic environment + diplomatic leverage + interdependence + dynamics of ASEAN regionalism), the Indonesian state tends to adopt assertive-nationalist foreign policies (domestic-ideational factors gain FP salience under low-pressure external-structural environment, hence the opportunity for state-elites to advance state/popular nationalist agendas to realise personal nationalist convictions and/or political expedience). Conversely, maintaining a moderate-conciliatory/non-action policy is the likelihood, when a state faces unfavourable relative power position (state-elites expected to respond to external-structural constraints and suppress domestic-ideational goals).
H2	Indonesian state-elites suffering from a decisively unfavourable domestic political resolve (vis-à-vis nationalist pressure), <i>ceteris paribus</i> , are compelled to adopt assertive-nationalist policies, when managing sensitive bilateral issues. Conversely, moderate-conciliatory policies are likely, when they enjoy favourable domestic political resolve (vis-à-vis nationalist pressure).
H3 (A)	When Indonesian state-elites perceive a unfavourable relative power position vis-à-vis the disputant-state, Malaysia, but enjoy favourable domestic political resolve, the tendency is to adopt moderate-conciliatory policies.
H4 (B)	When Indonesia encounters an advantageous relative power position vis-à-vis the disputant-state, Malaysia, while the domestic political resolve of its state-elites is favourable, they will enjoy flexibility in terms of policy choices.
H5 (C)	Indonesian state-elites perceiving a favourable relative power position vis-à-vis the disputant-state, Malaysia, but feeling vulnerable towards domestic nationalist pressure, may be inclined towards assertive-nationalist foreign policy option.
H6 (D)	State-elites perceiving their state's relative power position and domestic political resolve to be decisively disadvantageous are constrained to opt for non-action, cloaked in nationalist rhetoric/symbolic gesture as a means to circumvent the problem of contradictory foreign policy goals posited by the international environment and domestic processes (external pressure supersedes domestic constraints).

Sources: Adapted from Lai (2014); Lai and Chrisnandi (2013; 2015).

These policy options (H3-H6) are primarily hypothesised on the condition of the respective external-internal domains being either determinately favourable, or otherwise. In the event where state-elites face an ambiguous domestic political resolve, NCR’s first-order systemic argument assumes that the preferred policy option would largely depend on the perceived relative power position vis-à-vis the disputant-state. Conversely, an ambiguous relative power position would make a combination of assertive-cum-conciliatory measures the favoured policy option, irrespective of the prevailing domestic condition (see Table 2) (Lai, 2014).

TABLE 2 Expected State Behaviour/Preferences-of-action

Relative Power Position (vis-à-vis disputant-state) Domestic Political Resolve (vis-à-vis nationalist pressure)	Favourable (H1)	Ambiguous	Unfavourable (H1)
Favourable (H2)	Flexible policy option (H4)	Assertive-cum-conciliatory policy options	Moderate-conciliatory policy option (H3)
Ambiguous	Assertive-nationalist policy options	Assertive-cum-conciliatory policy options	Moderate-conciliatory policy options
Unfavourable (H2)	Assertive-nationalist policy option (H5)	Assertive-cum-conciliatory policy options	Non-action (H6)

Source: Lai (2014); Lai and Chrisnandi (2013; 2015)

By problematising nationalism, which under specific external and domestic conditions, can cause variations in state behaviour/policy options, this NCR model enables its impact to be systematically assessed, and helps explicate the conditions in which it does, or does not prevail in Indonesian (or Malaysian) policy-making, when managing their bilateral affairs. More significantly, it can contribute to a better understanding of

other dynamics involved, while simultaneously answering questions on nationalism's role in Indonesia-Malaysia relations that traditional IR theories and constructivism have not adequately explained.

The Cultural Heritage Disputes between Indonesia and Malaysia

Since the late 1960's, the Southeast Asian region has been typically plagued by 'ideational' problems associated with cultural and identity disputes (Chong, 2012: 4; Liow, 2005; Clark, 2013). The crux of the matter has essentially to do with the reliance of most countries in the region to elements of culture as part of their nation-building and national development agenda. Thus, culture-based conflicts often occur not only between Indonesia and Malaysia, but also involve other countries, such as the dispute involving the ownership claims of the *Jeeb* dance and *Preah Vihear* temple between Cambodia and Thailand. Malaysia and Singapore also have had their trivial spats on the proprietorship over traditional foods like *Mee Laksa*, claypot *Bakuteh* and Hainan Chicken Rice, and by extension the 'street-food/hawker' culture (Chong, 2012: 4; see also Adriani, 2014; *The New York Times*, 2018).

The existence of cultural similarities between Indonesia and Malaysia has been the result of their 'shared' historiography and ethno-cultural traits/identities that derived predominantly from the Indo-Malay world or popularly known as *Nusantara* (Chong, 2012: 7; see also Ireland & Clark, 2012; Clark, 2013; Clark, 2014; Clark & Pietch, 2014; Collins, 2009; Ho, 2018). This traditional relationship was also based on commonly 'shared' values advocated by the related national groups, cultures and religions (Rohani & Zulhilmi, 2010: 224; Suhardjono, 2012). Such similarities have led to the imagination of kinship and the concept of *bangsa serumpun* by both peoples, where 'blood-brotherhood' (Liow, 2005: 24, Musafir Kelana & Abu Bakar Ebi Hara, 2009: 99) and 'sibling ties' have been commonly used to refer to their 'special relationship' (Rohani & Zulhilmi, 2010; Musafir Kelana & Abu Bakar Ebi Hara, 2009; Ruhanas, 2006; Ho, 2018). This special bond between Indonesia and Malaysia has certainly brought a sense of camaraderie and togetherness, but it has also occasionally led to disputes and arguments particularly when it came to both countries' efforts

to advance their respective, but potentially conflicting national interests in the domestic and international arenas (Ruhanas, 2006: 49; see also Ho, 2018, Chapter 7). The dynamics of this so-called ‘sibling’ or ‘brethren relationship’ (Liow, 2005) has also led to observers commonly deeming Indonesia-Malaysia ties as a ‘love-hate relationship’ (Lai & Chrisnandi, 2013; Clark 2014; Clark & Pietch, 2014).

According to former Indonesian Defence Minister, Juwono Sudarsono, “*Justru itu karena saling berdekatan maka ada persaingan, perseteruan yang lahir dari kedekatan.*”

¹This means that the inherited cultural similarities and shared history between the two peoples prior to the establishment of the nation-states of Indonesia and Malaysia have the tendency to lead the greater competition and culture-oriented hostilities between the two countries. This sense of competition is due to none other than their divergent nationalisms and national identities as separate nation-states, which were, ironically fostered upon their shared traditions and cultures (De Silva & Lai, 2013). Meanwhile, Jusuf Kalla states that “*Jadi bangsa Indonesia dimana-mana, kita harus bangga dong bahwa kita diaspora, kenapa kita harus komplein terus menerus.*”² By this the former Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia concurs that the apparent culture clash between Indonesia and Malaysia is not merely about the problem of cultural diaspora. This is because diaspora happens not only to cultures but also to race, which also means the people of Indonesia are found everywhere, including Malaysia. The concept of ‘race’ should therefore be understood precisely as a ‘race’ and ‘nation’, and should not be conflated with the concept of ‘state’ (Gellner, 1983; Smith, 2001). In this regard, the term *budaya bangsa* or nation’s culture would connote the ‘nation’ serving as the conduit or vehicle that brings their culture together to new places to be observed and practiced. Kalla also emphasised that culture is ‘borderless’ in nature and has no administrative boundaries. According to him, this phenomenon should be seen in a positive light, as it occurs mainly because Indonesia is a great nation.³

Chong (2012) uses the term ‘culture war’ in describing the culture-based conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia, while others deemed this bilateral dispute as ‘cultural contestations’ (Clark, 2013) and ‘battling for shared culture’ (Suhardjono, 2012). This so-called ‘cultural heritage dispute’ can be generally divided into two major episodes. The first episode erupted in late 2007, following the screening of the folk song *Rasa Sayange* as the theme song for Malaysia’s official tourism campaign, ‘Malaysia: Truly Asia’ (*Utusan Malaysia*, 2007; *Tempo Interaktif*, 2007). Its appropriation by the Malaysian authorities triggered Indonesian anger because they believed the song was of Indonesian origin, and that Malaysia had used it without the permission of the Indonesian government. The folk song is said to be Indonesia’s national heritage from Maluku and has been sung by the Indonesian people for ages (Handayani, 2010: 93). Malaysia’s actions through its tourism campaign prompted members of the Indonesian parliament to urge the Yudhoyono administration to take legal actions against the Malaysian government for misusing their traditional song.

Meanwhile, the ‘mistaken’ screening of the *Pendet* dance as part of the Malaysian tourism campaign in 2009 triggered what was to be the second episode of the Malaysia-Indonesia ‘culture war’. The *Pendet* dance debacle began with the airing of the ‘Enigmatic Malaysia’ documentary produced by the Malaysian-owned KRU Studios, which was the company responsible for the production of the mentioned documentary series. The ‘promo’ for the documentary was edited by the Discovery Networks Asia-Pacific and the broadcasting rights in over 21 countries was given to the Discovery Channel (*The Malaysian Insider*, 2009a). Unfortunately, the ‘promo’ was found to have erroneously uploaded pictures of the *Pendet* dance from Bali, Indonesia. As expected, the episode aroused Indonesian anger, especially among the media and segments of the Indonesian populace who accused Malaysia of ‘stealing’ one of their cultural heritage (Chong, 2012: 2; Prathivi & Wardany, 2009). In response, the Malaysian Tourism Minister issued an apology to the people of Indonesia through the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Indonesia (*MStar*, 2009). However, the action was not accepted as an apology. The explanation received from the Discovery’s Singapore office emphasised that the video was not officially released by the Malaysian government, and the *Pendet* dance

shown in the video was actually obtained by the Discovery Channel from a third party rather than from the KRU Studios (Sagita, 2009; Kandasamy, 2009). General Manager Kevin Dickie from Discovery Southeast Asia in writing stated that the Malaysian government was not involved in the production process of the promotional video (Malau, 2009; Kandasamy, 2009). Nonetheless, the *Pendet* dance issue became the cultural heritage dispute that received the most vociferous protest from Indonesians, especially those living abroad and those in cyberspace (Chong, 2012: 3–4; Prathivi & Wardany, 2009).

Apart from the two cases, there were several other cultural disputes that equally sparked controversy. Among them include some types of traditional foods, songs, musical instruments and dance, as well as cultural products, such as *batik*, *keris* and shadowgraph or *wayang kulit* (Saiman, 2009: 60–2; Ireland & Clark, 2012). In chronological order, the controversies over the proprietorship of cultural heritage between Indonesia and Malaysia began with a dispute over the ownership of the *Parang Rusak batik* motif, which was then followed in quick succession by rows over the *Gamelan*, *wayang kulit* and *Angklung* in August 2007. These earlier disputes set the tone for the eruption of the *Rasa Sayange* and *Indang Bariang* songs in October 2007. There were also claims over the right of ownership for the *Reog Ponorogo* dance on 21 November 2007, and the language issue of *Bahasa Indonesia* as the authentic Malay language on 25 November 2007. The *Rasa Sayange* controversy was thus very much the culmination of a multitude of cultural disputes that had occurred throughout 2007. Meanwhile, the second episode of the Indonesia-Malaysia cultural heritage spat was preceded by a sequence of events that led to the dispute over the rights of *batik* featured in June 2008. This was followed by their protracted ownership claims over the traditional motif and other demands such as *keris* and *wayang kulit* in March 2009. The screening of the *Pendet* dance in August 2009 was the culmination of the second episode of the so-called ‘culture war.’ There were further periodic recurrences of the cultural heritage row such as the recent controversy over the famous *Tor-tor* dance and the musical instruments called *Gordang Sembilan* (Lubis, 2012). Issues of ownership disputes and claims on cultural heritage have received a variety of reactions from the people of Indonesia as a way of showing

their dissatisfaction. According to Agung Laksono⁴ and Devianti Faridz,⁵ a handful of Indonesians do not deny that cultural sharing and borrowing may occur due to their cultural similarities. However, when it comes to the right of proprietorship, it should be ethically and morally owned by the country of origin. All in all, the proliferation of cultural heritage disputes had further exacerbated their worsening diplomatic relationship during the periods of investigation.

Reactions of the Indonesian Masses on the Cultural Heritage Dispute

A dispute over cultural heritage is an issue that is often considered trivial but could potentially lead to protracted conflicts between the disputant-states, if it is not handled properly. As stated in the preceding discussion, the *Pendet* dance was arguably the most controversial issue in the overall culture-based conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia (Chong, 2012: 3–4; Juniarta, 2009). Specifically, popular demonstrations took place in Bali on 25 August 2009, as the Balinese people took to the streets to register their protest regarding the matter. A demonstration was also held by students of the Indonesian Arts Institute (ISI). Consequently, on 29 August 2009, the Indonesian government via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted an apology to the people of Indonesia, in general, and the people of Bali, specifically, following what was perceived to be a lack of systematic effort and conviction on the part of the Indonesian authorities to protect their national cultural heritage (Handayani, 2010: 93–4). To address this apparent weakness, the Indonesian Ministry of Culture and Tourism signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights to jointly protect the rights of the country's intellectual and artistic cultural products (Prathivi & Wardany, 2009).

Meanwhile, 'anti-Malaysian' rhetoric prevalent over the Indonesian media prompted protesters who called themselves *Benteng Demokrasi Rakyat (Bendera)* to demonstrate by taking to the streets and raiding the houses of Malaysian residents in Jakarta (Chong, 2012: 3). They also opened a registration post for communities who want to join the vigilante group *Laskar Ganyang Malaysia* in their quest 'sweep Malaysia' (Santosa *et al.*, 2009: 223). With bamboo spears as their weapon, they

handed out small Indonesian flags and demanded identification cards from public transport operators. Despite the Indonesian police's relative success in getting rid of them from the streets, the punitive measures taken by the Indonesian authorities failed to deter the protesters from resuming their intention to declare war against Peninsular Malaysia. Apparently, *Bendera* managed to recruit more than 1,500 military volunteers from diverse backgrounds to prepare for war with Malaysia (Mardiyati, 2009). They also prepared the volunteers with training in self-defense and black magic, as well as supplying food, medicine and weapons, including *samurai* swords and ninja *shuriken* (throwing star).

In addition to such provocative actions, the *Bendera* army also lodged a number of 'nationalist' demands on the Indonesian government, such as decommissioning the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta and, vice versa, the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, repatriating all Indonesian citizens currently residing or working in Malaysia, and declaring war against Malaysia. The group also expressed their ill-intentions to eliminate/sweep Malaysian citizens in Indonesia (Mardiyati, 2009). Although the Indonesian state-elites viewed these motions as amounting to a show of irrational behaviour, such provocative motions were apparently instigated and supported by specific individuals within the Indonesian political landscape (Chong, 2012: 3). The increasingly tensed bilateral atmosphere prompted the Secretary of the Malaysian Security Council, Datuk Mohamed Tajudeen Abdul Wahab to order the tightening of security measures at all Malaysian borders, to prepare for the possibility of the related 'nationalist' group members infiltrating Malaysian shores (*New Straits Times*, 2009; Chong, 2012: 3).

The dissatisfaction of the Indonesian public continued to rumble right up to Malaysia's Independence Day on 31 August 2009, which saw Indonesians using the occasion to launch nationalistic protests against Malaysia. This included the inflammatory act of burning the Malaysian flag (*Jalur Gemilang*) which was conducted openly by the protesters and university students from various campuses in Indonesia (*Kompas*, 2009). The protesters also gathered in the compound of the Malaysian embassy in Jakarta, shouting the slogan '*Ganyang Malaysia*' which

means, ‘Crush Malaysia’ while throwing stones and rotten eggs onto the embassy building (Belford, 2009). At the same time, the official website of government departments in Malaysia also fell victim to the attacks by Indonesian hackers or ‘cybertroopers’. The contents in more than a hundred websites of the Malaysian government were replaced with pro-Indonesian slogans (see Farish Noor, 2009; Mardiyati, 2009; Prathivi & Wardany, 2009; Chong, 2012; Muhammad Badri, 2012).

Indonesian protests continued in the cyberspace with various titles given to Malaysia such as ‘*Maling-sia*’ which means ‘thief’ in a local Indonesian dialect (*The Malaysian Insider*, 2009b; Khadijah Md. Khalid & Shakila Yacob, 2012). Websites full of hate and contempt messages were likewise created, as with the social media platform, Facebook, which had more than 300 anti-Malaysia groups formed with network pages such as ‘We Hate Malaysia’ featuring the logo of one man standing on the Malaysian flag. In fact, this Facebook page managed to recruit more than 400,000 members among the Indonesian masses (Chong, 2012: 3; *Malaysia Today*, 2009). Another popular Facebook group was named ‘Anti-Malaysia’, which boasted 318,000 followers, with its wall featuring an image of a skeleton in the middle of a disfigured Malaysian flag (*Malaysia Today*, 2009). Based on the instances of cultural heritage dispute, it is clear that Indonesia is more aggressive than Malaysia in dealing with the issues. This aggressiveness could be traced from the actions of the Indonesian people expressing their objections and their dissatisfaction towards Malaysia.

A Neoclassical Realist Interpretation of Indonesia’s Malaysia Policy Option in the Cultural Heritage Disputes

There is, indeed, abundant literature on the cultural contestations between Indonesia and Malaysia, as elaborated and cited in the previous section. Whereas most of these works utilise historical as well as anthropological and sociological/cultural approaches to explaining this phenomenon in their contemporary bilateral relations (see Ireland & Clark, 2012; Chong, 2012), there are also a number of studies that scrutinise the subject matter from other disciplinary perspectives, such as media and political communication (see Suhardjono, 2012) and International Relations

(IR). Specifically, IR-oriented works examining the cultural heritage dispute in Indonesia-Malaysia relations such as those by Clark (2013), Clark and Pietsch (2014), and Adriani (2014), tend to explain it from a constructivist lens, where non-material, cultural-ideational variables are emphasised as the preferred sources of reasoning. For instance, Adriani (2014) incorporated the constructivist-based Hoftstede's theory of Cultural Dilemma indicators to explain why ASEAN's diplomatic style has failed to prevent the numerous cultural debacles involving member-states, including that of Indonesia and Malaysia. Meanwhile, Clark and Peitsch (2014) drew inspiration from postcolonial literary discourse to explain the genesis of the clashing nationalisms and national identities as well as socio-cultural divergence between the supposedly kin-states of Indonesia and Malaysia, which are responsible for the manifestation of their cultural heritage contestations. Likewise, Clark (2013) provided what was, essentially a constructivist interpretation of the politicisation of the cultural heritage debacle in Indonesia's relations with Malaysia, by using the cultural spats during the 2011 SEA Games and subsequent UNESCO's recognition of *Batik* as Indonesian heritage as case studies. Although most of these IR Constructivist-oriented works have been able to adequately explain the phenomenon by emphasising on domestic-ideational reasoning, most if not all, have not paid sufficient attention to the workings of structural-material variables in the guise of power politics in both the external and domestic realms, in affecting state behaviour and preferences-of-action, when dealing with such ideational issues. It is due to the presence of such a 'research gap' that this paper seeks to address the analytical limitations of previous studies by adopting the mid-ranged NCR theoretical framework to provide a more balanced and less-myopic interpretation of this bilateral altercation. The NCR framework posits a role to both external and domestic variables in explaining foreign policy, which allows it to bridge the various levels-of-analysis, thus making it amenable to both external-domestic and material-ideational reasonings.

Indeed, the culture-based disputes between Indonesia and Malaysia showed the influence of nationalism and the workings of power politics among external and domestic actors in shaping Indonesia's behaviour and preference-of-action. Therefore, when analysing and understanding

the foreign policy options taken by Indonesia towards Malaysia, the interaction of both determinants should be given adequate attention and treatment. Based on the neoclassical realist construct, there are two variables that must be given due consideration. The external determinants shape Indonesia's 'Relative Power Position' that acts as the independent variable, while domestic factors serve to influence state-elites' perceptions and calculation of their 'Domestic Political Resolve', which act as the 'intervening' variable, but with some independent functions depending on the external conditions. The interaction between these two variables will produce Indonesia's foreign policy option, which is the dependent variable. The assessment of Indonesia's relative power position vis-à-vis Malaysia would depend on the SBY administration's perceptions/calculation of the prevailing external environment, Indonesia's diplomatic leverage and degree of socio-economic interdependence over the disputant-state (in this case, Malaysia), and the dynamics of regionalisation via the ASEAN. Meanwhile, an assessment of the domestic political resolve of Indonesian state-elites (especially vis-à-vis domestic nationalist pressure/political competition) would include elements of nationalism/domestic nationalist pressure, be it official or popular manifestations, and the strength or weakness of the Yudhoyono government, as well as domestic political developments at a given time period. All these components are evaluated to infer the perceptions and calculation of Indonesian state-elites on Indonesia's relative power position and the SBY administration's domestic political resolve, in order to interpret the policy options towards Malaysia, during the specific instances of dispute.

The influence of external factors on Indonesia's relative power position vis-à-vis Malaysia during the cultural heritage disputes (2007–2009)

Non-traditional security is a new dimension in the security agenda as a result of changes in the international system that witnessed a structural transformation from one of bipolar order during the Cold War, to a unipolar or potentially multipolar order in the post-Cold War era. The end of the conflict between the US and the Soviet Union has changed the debate in the security agenda, making it much more complex and diverse. In the late 1970's and 1980's, for example, an increase in world economic

growth and the occurrence of various issues concerning the effects of environmental changes have triggered the advent of non-traditional ideas or conceptualisations of security that criticise the traditional view, which tended to exclusively relate to traditional security threats in the guise of the use of force and military means (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998). The traditional view has since been thought to be too narrow in its definition of the concept of security because non-traditional security does not only refer to purely military security, but also includes non-military issues, such as migration, economics, environment, transnational crime and identity (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998: 2).

The phenomenon of globalisation has likewise affected the pattern of relationship between states in the international system. It has led countries to cooperate in order to protect and/or advance the common interests, including the addressing of security matters. These changing dynamics have resulted in the growing need to sustain good relations between countries (Ruhanas, 2009: 17). Although ASEAN countries do not face serious threats from the traditional security dimension, such as nuclear threat, wars and other military conflicts, this does not mean that the ASEAN member-states are free from such threats at all, let alone the non-traditional security challenges. Since the end of the Cold War, an increasingly varied ASEAN security agenda has taken shape, with the advent of other non-traditional threats, such as the proliferation of piracy, illegal immigrants, weapons smuggling, human trafficking, and trans/cross-border crimes (Ruhanas, 2009: 18; see also Ganesan, 1999).

In an effort to advocate their common interests, ASEAN member-states have demonstrated a relatively good spirit of cooperation among them. As a regional leader and the largest country in the ASEAN region, contemporary Indonesia is in a favourable position to raise its international profile (Anwar, 1994). Through ASEAN, Indonesia has not only maintained good relations with the ASEAN countries, including Malaysia, but also managed to establish amiable relations with the countries of East Asia, namely Japan, China and South Korea via the ASEAN+3 platform. Likewise, multilateral cooperation through the East Asia Summit (EAS) has had Indonesia enjoying progressive bilateral

relationships with India, the US, and Russia. On a more specific note, relations between Indonesia and the US also grew closer following President Yudhoyono's state visit to the US at the end of May 2005, which led to the establishment of the Indonesia-US Security Dialogue and the Bilateral Defense Dialogue (Inayati, 2005: 42-43). Indonesia thus can be considered to be in a favourable international position during the SBY era because of good cooperation and relations with foreign countries. The perceptions of a favourable international environment, *ceteris paribus*, would have given Indonesia the flexibility of foreign policy-making in terms of choosing the policy options towards Malaysia.

Meanwhile, ASEAN regionalism has always been an important dynamic in the context of Indonesia-Malaysia relations as both are members of the regional organisation. Indeed, most Indonesian observers acknowledge the importance of ASEAN's influence on the formation of Indonesian foreign policy.⁶ ASEAN was established as a mechanism to promote regional cooperation and collaboration. However, it is essentially a region filled with differences in economic, political and social terms. Such diversity has resulted in the need for foreign policy decision-making that are cautious, pragmatic and consensual in nature. In the context of Indonesia-Malaysia relations, the prevailing ASEAN mechanisms have thus far been relatively capable of inducing the formation of good relations between the two important state-actors of the regional organisation (Ganesan & Amer, 2010). Hence, the importance of the Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral relationship in strengthening ASEAN unity and solidarity would require Indonesia to adopt a moderate-conciliatory and gentle diplomacy in handling its bilateral disputes with Malaysia, including that of the cultural disputes.

With regard to the level of socio-economic interdependence, the pace of economic growth in Malaysia following its recovery from the global economic downturn in the 1980's has led to the rapid development of the manufacturing and plantation sectors, which in turn, have offered various job opportunities (Liow, 2003; Ruhana, 2006: 67). In this regard, Indonesia's interdependence on the Malaysian economy can be detected in the labour sector. The abundant job opportunities made available in

Malaysia have been aptly filled by TKI, and such interdependence has not only assisted Malaysia in fulfilling its development agenda, but also help Indonesia in reducing its unemployment rate. More importantly, the offering of job not filled by Malaysians in certain economic sectors to TKI has created a 'win-win' situation between the two countries (see Anggraeni, 2006; Liow, 2003).

The interdependence between Indonesia and Malaysia also exists in terms of bilateral trade as well as through sizeable investments by Malaysian companies in Indonesia especially in the agriculture sector. For instance, Malaysia has partnered with South Sulawesi regarding the purchase of rice to replace rice supply from Vietnam. Meanwhile, in the oil palm plantation sector, the two countries have agreed to mutually strengthen the market, by increasing the capacity of trade, fair trade practice and taking part in joint trade and investment missions (Bagus, 2007). Such favourable interdependence and cooperation have had and would certainly continue to work well to advance not only the economic development agenda of both countries, but equally serve as a key consideration and constraint on Indonesian foreign policy-making, when it comes to managing disputes with Malaysia.

In addition to the economic realm, there has also been a tendency for the two countries to collaborate and mutually depend on each other in terms of regional security, particularly in their mutual interests to improve on the border security of both states. Indeed, various efforts have been made by the *Tentera Nasional Indonesia* (TNI) and the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF), including joint military drills and coordinated patrols to enhance their cooperation, including joint military trainings in Kalimantan and the Malaysia-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (MALINDO CORPAT) of the Malacca Strait (see Lai, 2015). Similarly, the two countries have agreed to mutually interact by providing information and conducting joint operations in their border areas to address non-traditional security threats, such as new forms of terrorist activities (*Kompas*, 2004).

The significance of interdependence as an external determinant affecting the foreign policy of Indonesia towards Malaysia is therefore undeniable. Although in most situations, both countries would need each other constantly, it has been argued by most observers that Indonesia appears to have a higher level of dependence on Malaysia than vice versa, in terms of economic relations. According to Jusuf Kalla, the current conditions of interdependence have helped both Indonesia and Malaysia to ease bilateral tensions from festering and exacerbating into major conflicts. However, the apparent lopsidedness of their interdependence has also caused Indonesia to almost always choose the moderate policy option, when taking action/reaction against Malaysia. It could therefore be credible to infer that Indonesian administrators would have had taken a similar approach in dealing with the cultural heritage controversies for the sake of protecting its dependence on Malaysia.

In terms of diplomacy, the Indonesia-Malaysia diplomatic relationship is generally tense but still under control. Although diplomatic ties have often been affected by various conflicts, from TKI-related issues to their struggles for territorial sovereignty and proprietorship of cultural heritage, they still remain manageable. For certain, tensions that occur in their bilateral relations do not always trigger major conflicts, or even lead to the severance of diplomatic ties, as had occurred before in 1963, as a consequence of the formation of 'Malaysia'. Moreover, since 1967, both governments have always exercised diplomatic prudence by seeking to resolve conflicts bilaterally or via international arbitrations, such as their dispute over Sipadan and Ligitan islands.

Conversely, the TKI-related issues and illegal immigrants are amongst the never-ending problems between Indonesia and Malaysia. Since 2002, there has been an influx of Indonesians in Malaysia, both legal and illegal. Statistics in 2006 from the Home Ministry (Malaysia) shows a drastic increase in the number of Indonesians in Malaysia, with an estimated 1,221,409 TKI representing 64.4 per cent of the overall total number of foreign workers in this country. Meanwhile, approximately 1.5 million Indonesian citizens are in the illegal category (Rohani & Zulhilmi, 2010: 241). This influx resulted in a turning point for Malaysia, which had begun

to act in order to reduce the presence of TKI in the country. To curb the problem of influx of foreign (illegal) workers, the Malaysian government has implemented several programmes since the 1990s. Among them included *OPS Nyah* in 1992 and 2001; ‘*Pemutihan*’ or ‘The Bleaching’ operation in 1996; an amnesty in 1997 and 2004; amendment to the Immigration Act in 1998, which involved three main clauses 55A, 55B and 55D. These programmes have basically managed to reduce the influx of foreign labour in Malaysia. However, their allegedly ‘punitive’ nature offended the Indonesians, which indirectly worsened relations between the two countries (Nor, 2005; *The Star*, 2005; see also Lai, 2015: Chapter 31).

Additionally, incidents involving the welfare of Indonesian domestic workers in Malaysia have periodically affected diplomatic relations. The deterioration of relationship based on these factors has, indeed, become more pronounced in 2009 when there were claims of Indonesian maids not being treated fairly or ‘humanely’ by their employers in Malaysia. Accusations of welfare deprivation include workers not being paid wages accordingly, lack of provision of a weekly holiday, and physical and mental abuses by employers (Liow, 2003; Ruhanas, 2006). One such abuse case involving an Indonesian maid named Nirmala Bonat made a huge impact on the negative perceptions of Indonesian towards Malaysia (see *The Star*, 2008), triggering a response from Indonesia to frozen the export of Indonesian domestic workers to Malaysia in 2009 (see *Utusan Malaysia*, 2011).

Indonesia-Malaysia relations have been likewise besieged by maritime-territorial issues with several overlapping sovereignty claims affecting the diplomatic relations between the two neighbours. Although the arbitration and ruling by the ICJ in December 2002 managed to resolve their sovereignty dispute over Sipadan-Ligitan-Sebatik, the fateful event has failed to prevent the deterioration of their bilateral ties. Instead, the ICJ’s decision has ironically and unwittingly triggered what was to become a new series of overlapping maritime claims and disputes over the adjacent Ambalat waters/Sulawesi Sea that further aggravate their somewhat turbulent relationship (Lai & Chrisnandi, 2013: 2015). Indeed, it was the psychological and emotional impact of these ‘back-to-back’ maritime-territorial issues that has transformed bilateral issues previously considered

as trivial (*non-issue*) such as the ‘cultural heritage disputes’ to becoming a problematic and highly-emotional issue, due to the increasing sensitivity especially among the Indonesian people.

That said, despite the various problems that have plagued and negatively affected Indonesia-Malaysia relations, their diplomatic relations have demonstrated commendable ‘resilience’ and has yet to easily fall apart. Malaysia, on its part, often adopts a ‘cool’ reaction or what could be called as ‘stay calm approach’ in the face of Indonesian vitriols and virulently nationalistic reactions that tend to ‘heat up’ to a point which suggests that ‘war’ may not be unimaginable (Inayati, 2007: 59). Moreover, mutual efforts to strengthen diplomatic relations have continued amid the tense and conflictual bilateral atmosphere, such as what had transpired following the inaugural episode of the Ambalat dispute in 2005, where both governments demonstrated their ‘cool-headedness’ and political will to bring the dispute to the negotiation table (Inayati, 2007: 59–60; see also Lai & Chrisnandi, 2013). This indicates that even in the event of a dispute, both Indonesia and Malaysia are still willing to utilise the power of diplomacy in reducing tension.

The Influence of Domestic Factors on Indonesian State-Elites’ Domestic Political Resolve (Vis-À-Vis Nationalist Pressure) During the Cultural Heritage Disputes

The ideas and ethos of the nation-state Indonesia are fundamentally based on the national values and norms that have been enshrined in the *Pancasila* and the 1945 Fundamental Law, which serve as a guiding principle and cultural resource of the Indonesian people (Swasono, 2003: 1). Among those included in the national culture of Indonesia are the values to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity in the name of national sense of belonging to and pride towards the homeland and its sustainability; the value of togetherness, mutual respect, mutual love and mutual assistance among fellow citizens; and coming together to protect the sovereignty and dignity of the nation (Swasono, 2003: 2). It is indeed, a very important factor in generating the spirit of nationalism among the peoples of Indonesia.

The Indonesian national culture plays an important role in shaping the mindset, manners and the ability of the Indonesian people to strive towards developing their nation. The idea of an Indonesian National Culture, which is associated with a consciousness and identity as a nation has been planned before the country gained independence (Swasono, 2003: 2). This can be duly translated via the national motto of '*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*' which is capable of fostering a national consensus that transcends ethnicity, religion and race (Chrisnandi, 2008: 10). Indeed, the Indonesian national consciousness had been nurtured through the *Budi Utomo* political manifesto in 1925, which set forth three tenets, namely people's sovereignty, independence, and a united Indonesia. These ideas became popular and were subsequently adopted in high spirits by the *Sumpah Pemuda* in 1928 (Chrisnandi, 2008: 9). According to Swasono (2003: 2), there are two aspects fundamental in shaping the national culture of Indonesia, namely national identity and national consciousness. Strategies are very important in shaping the culture of Indonesian people as a united nation. National consciousness can be nurtured by fostering the idea of nationalism and patriotism within the people themselves (Swasono, 2003: 2). National consciousness would then form the basis of confidence for the people regarding the need to preserve and develop their self-esteem, honour and dignity as a nation, in their quest towards achieving civilisation, apart from serving to release the Indonesian nation from subordination (dependency, deference, contemptibility) of foreign powers (Swasono, 2003: 2).

In order to achieve national culture formation, the mass media is seen to play an important role in providing the internal and external stimulator to foster national identity and awareness (Swasono, 2003: 2). According to Irfan Junaidi, a mass media that is critical, assertive and that displays a strong nationalistic attitude has a major influence in forming the national character of the Indonesian people, which is portrayed by assertiveness when confronting issues involving the bilateral relationship of two countries.⁷ This implies the salient influence of the mass media in shaping Indonesia-Malaysia relations.

From an ideological viewpoint, the ‘loss’ of a presumed cultural element is assumed to be very much similar to ‘freedom being revoked’ despite the gaining of independence (Rezasyah, 2011: 55). Indonesia’s national ethos *Pancasila* educates the Indonesian public on championing culture through independence. However, what happened over the years has been that Indonesia has developed a national community based on material interests, but has forgotten about the importance of cultural values. The significance of culture was only realised following the proliferation of culture-based controversies vis-à-vis Malaysia (Rezasyah, 2011: 56). According to Rezasyah (2011: 56), cultural similarities that sparked the mentioned controversies have made Indonesia no longer seen as unique in terms of culture because it has been challenged by Malaysia. If such cultural elements can be found in Malaysia, visitors presumably, would prefer to visit Malaysia rather than Indonesia due to the sustained peace and stability of the country.

The occurrence of the cultural heritage disputes has also witnessed the correlating rise of nationalist sentiments in the domestic political milieu of Indonesia. The rising nationalist pressure has been translated through the motions submitted to push the SBY government to adopt assertive measures against Malaysia, including reviving the slogan of ‘*Ganyang Malaysia*’ during the popular ‘anti-Malaysian’ demonstration that took place in front of the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta, which saw the building being targeted with rocks and rotten eggs (Chong, 2012: 3). Before the Ambalat maritime-territorial disputes, many of Indonesia’s younger generation apparently lacked awareness regarding the history of Indonesia-Malaysia relations. However, when emotional slogans like ‘*Ganyang Malaysia*’ started to reverberate across the country, many young people who did not understand began to find more information and this inadvertently resulted in a higher sense of national consciousness and nationalism within themselves. For example, the younger generation has begun to gain awareness of what transpired between their country and Malaysia during the 1960’s, and as to why Sukarno had to stand firm and took aggressive actions such as launching the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation, and chanting slogans like ‘*Ganyang Malaysia*’. Therefore, by associating the legacy of history with current events, the younger

generation of Indonesians easily became engrossed with and consumed by nationalistic 'anti-Malaysian' sentiments.

In addition, there was public pressure on Malaysia to issue an apology to Indonesia (Chusna, 2009a). Not only that, hundreds of students in Bali also took to the streets to urge the SBY administration to sever bilateral relations with Malaysia (Chusna, 2009b). Meanwhile, Saifullah (2009) reported that the Embassy of Malaysia in Jakarta received a bomb threat. A handful of Indonesians opined that the cultural disputes occurred due to the lack of national attention given to preserving their culture and traditional knowledge (Rezasyah, 2011: 59). According to this group, these disputes served as a reminder, and a warning to Indonesia to protect the cultural heritage of the nation. Hence, there were growing calls by the Indonesian public for the patenting of all Indonesian cultural assets. All in all, it could be credibly inferred that these manifestations of domestic nationalist pressure had created a volatile and unfavourable domestic political situation for the government of SBY.

From a legal standpoint, there is no available law at the international level, which covers cultural disputes (*Forum Keadilan*, 2009). The right to patent a culture can only be applied related to copyright or industrial technology, but it is still subjected to a 20-year period, after which the patented culture will be free again (*Forum Keadilan*, 2009). This shows that culture is something which is difficult to be patented. If the 20 year-period is taken into account, most of the disputed cultural heritage, which have existed for a long time, makes the accusation of their misappropriation by Malaysia legally untenable. This situation has thus created a dilemma for the SBY government.

At the domestic level, the Indonesian economy during the said periods of contention had limitations in overcoming the global economic crisis that brought a rise in social and political problems. Although Indonesia's overall macroeconomic growth appeared optimistic, the microeconomic dimension remained somewhat sluggish and ridden with endemic problems. Furthermore, the lacklustre economic conditions were exacerbated by perceptions of Indonesia as a potential terrorist haven

following the incidents of terrorist attacks that occurred back in 2002 and 2003. According to Inayati (2005: 36), this condition made many foreign investors withdraw their investments in Indonesia due to concerns for the safety and survival of their investments. Additionally, the fuel price hike (BBM) in Indonesia also contributed to protest from various parties (Sugiarto, 2007: 1). *Fraksi Kebangkitan Bangsa*, for example, staged a walkout from a meeting in the DP when BBM issue was debated (Sugiarto, 2007: 2). Such an unfavourable domestic condition would have had encouraged the SBY government to divert attention to the international realm by taking assertive action against Malaysia in addressing the issues of cultural heritage.

The SBY era has also shown that the domestic political environment could become a key driver for the President to act decisively on implementing what is perceived to be the necessary foreign policy towards Malaysia. This is because SBY is the first president elected directly by the people of Indonesia (Suwarta & Hermawan, 2012: 148). Thus, the voice and aspirations of the people cannot be ignored, as they greatly influence the formation of government policy. In some cases, political policies taken by Jakarta have been the direct result of domestic political pressure. However, in the context of the ‘cultural heritage’ disputes, Jusuf Kalla⁸ acknowledges that the Indonesian government even considered it to be a ‘soft’ issue when compared to the Ambalat case. The opinion was, likewise, shared by Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar,⁹ the former foreign minister of Malaysia who said, ‘It was a non-issue’. However, this does not mean that the cultural issues were taken lightly by SBY. According to Tamam Achda,¹⁰ financial constraints had caused the issues of cultural heritage to be given less attention by the SBY administration because priority had to be given to national issues that are more important. This is also associated with government responsibility in making decisions based on limited resources. Therefore, despite fervent domestic nationalist pressure, the cultural issues were not discussed in the Cabinet. As a result, the Indonesian government did not appear to have acted on the issue of the cultural heritage conflict.

President SBY's background and personality are factors that also influenced his leadership and decision-making. SBY is seen as a highly educated leader who has a doctorate in Agricultural Economics from Bogor Agricultural Institute. He was born and socialised in a military family. Prior to his election as President, SBY was a senior military officer in TNI. Most of his family members were involved in the military. The military in Indonesia has been traditionally reputed as 'knights' and were not only adept at using weapons, but also in many ways served as enforcers (Suwirta & Hermawan, 2012: 147). Due to his military background and education, SBY's insightfulness, rational thinking, and competence have been the reason that enabled him to be elected as President of Indonesia in 2004 and again in 2009, for a second term (Suwirta & Hermawan, 2012: 148). Such personality and characteristics have also been the reason why SBY has had the inclination toward approaches, which are moderate in nature, when facing controversial matters with Malaysia. For example, SBY advised the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Nur Hasan Wirajuda, to amicably resolve the dispute regarding cultural heritage for the sake of protecting the purity of good bilateral relations with Malaysia (Hasan, 2009).

SBY's Policy Options in Dealing with the Cultural Heritage Disputes

Overall, based on the external factors highlighted, it could be inferred that the SBY administration was facing a favourable international environment due to its generally amicable external relations with the rest of the world. However, the level of diplomatic leverage with Malaysia was possibly anticipated to be 'ambiguous' because of the variety of bilateral issues that have yet to be resolved during the period of contention (2007–2009). This coupled with the lopsided Indonesian economic dependency on Malaysia as well as Indonesia's commitment to the principles and norms of ASEAN would have been factors that could curtail Indonesia's policy options. Overall, it would be credible to infer the SBY administration as perceiving Indonesia's relative power position vis-à-vis Malaysia to be 'ambiguous' at the given time and context.

Meanwhile, at the domestic front, strong domestic nationalist pressure has also created an ‘unfavourable’ domestic political resolve for the SBY government. The huge economic challenges faced by Indonesia to some extent affected its socio-political stability, causing SBY to comply with the Indonesian nationalist demands to a certain extent, although he and most of the Indonesian leaders/state-elites chose to act rationally and often maintained harmony with Malaysia.

In view of the prevailing external-domestic conditions during the periods of investigation (2007–2009), it could be concluded that the SBY administration was facing a perceptively ambiguous relative power position and somewhat unfavourable domestic political resolve when dealing with the two cases of cultural heritage dispute vis-à-vis Malaysia. Such prevailing conditions would have concurred with the related hypotheses on Indonesia’s Relative Power Position and Domestic Political Resolve found in the matrix of Expected State Behaviour/Preferences-of-action (see Table 3), which required Indonesia to opt for a combination of assertive-cum-conciliatory policy option (as highlighted), when dealing with Malaysia over the two cases of cultural disputes.

TABLE 3 Expected State Behaviour/Preferences-of-action

Relative Power Position (vis-à-vis disputant-state) Domestic Political Resolve (vis-à-vis nationalist pressure)	Favourable (H1)	Ambiguous	Unfavourable (H1)
Favourable (H2)	Flexible policy option (H4)	Assertive-cum-conciliatory policy options	Moderate-conciliatory policy option (H3)
Ambiguous	Assertive-nationalist policy options	Assertive-cum-conciliatory policy options	Moderate-conciliatory policy options
Unfavourable (H2)	Assertive-nationalist policy option (H5)	Assertive-cum-conciliatory policy options	Non-action (H6)

CONCLUSION

The volatility in Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral relations since 1957 has been influenced by many factors, which have to varying degrees, affected their problematic ties periodically. Maritime-territorial sovereignty disputes are generally thought to have huge potentials in triggering traditional security challenges vis-à-vis Malaysia. Meanwhile, the issue of cultural conflict is usually categorised as ‘soft’, but could still emerge as a potential challenge to national security and strategic interests, if not addressed with appropriate measures, since it carries direct implications on the country’s development assets. Moreover, failure to address the emotionally-charged cultural heritage debacle and its related manifestations could further damage their already acrimonious bilateral relations, to the detriment of both neighbours and so-called kin-states. However, based on the findings of this study, Indonesia’s Malaysia policy options, when dealing with nationalistic-nuanced bilateral issues such as the cultural heritage disputes are not necessarily and predominantly driven by domestic nationalist pressure, or

their personal nationalistic impulses/inclination. Instead, Indonesian state-elites as ‘rational’ decision-makers, are expected to calculate Indonesia’s external power position vis-à-vis Malaysia (the disputant-state), as well as their own political resolve/power position vis-à-vis domestic political (nationalist) forces, to determine the optimal policy options that advance both their domestic agenda and Indonesia’s national interests in the international realm. Such foreign policy pragmatism is required since both Indonesia and Malaysia have traditionally co-existed and depended on each other, due to their cultural similarities, shared history and geographical proximity. Indeed, this bilateral relationship, which is often considered as a cornerstone of ASEAN regionalism, must be maintained and further improved, so that the two neighbouring countries can continue complementing, protecting and helping each other in facing new threats, especially in the advent of resurgent nationalistic tendencies that could undermine rational state behaviour.

NOTA

- ¹ Juwono Sudarsono is Indonesia’s former Minister of Defense from the United Indonesia Cabinet (2004–2009) (Interview, Jakarta, 27 August 2012).
- ² Jusuf Kalla is the former Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia (Interview, Jakarta, 24 August 2012).
- ³ Jusuf Kalla (Interview, Jakarta, 24 August 2012).
- ⁴ Agung Laksono was a former leader from the House of Representatives of Indonesia (DPR RI) beginning from the year of 2004 to 2009 (Interview, Jakarta, 1 August 2012).
- ⁵ Devianti Faridz, Producer, MetroTV (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 30 May 2011).
- ⁶ Jusuf Kalla (Interview, Jakarta, 24 August 2012); Triyono Wibowo (Interview, Jakarta, 23 July 2012); and Hasjim Djalal (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 30 May 2011).
- ⁷ Irfan Junaidi, Deputy Executive Editor, *Republika* (Interview, Jakarta, 9 April 2012).
- ⁸ Jusuf Kalla (Interview).
- ⁹ Syed Hamid Albar, former Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs (2005-2009). (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 7 August 2012).
- ¹⁰ Prof. Drs. B. Tamam Achda is the Dean of the Faculty of Social Science and Politics (FISIP), Universitas Nasional (UNAS), Indonesia (Interview, Jakarta, 9 April 2012).

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