

## **An Analysis on ASEAN Print Media Coverage: A Case Study on the phenomenon of strife between Malaysia and Indonesia**

**Dr. Siti Zabedah Mohd Shariff**

**Associate Profesor Hajah Amelia Abdul Aziz**

**Noraini Yusof**

**Baby Anusha Nur Mohamed Thaheer**

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies  
Universiti Teknologi MARA UiTM)  
40450 Shah Alam, Selangor'  
Malaysia

### **Abstract**

*This study seeks to explore the news content on print media in Indonesia and Malaysia in relation to its news reporting regarding both countries in terms of bilateral relationship. The agenda of the news media has become a principal focus that seems to have leverage in affecting this bilateral relationship between both countries. The media is also seen as a medium that is often accused of focusing more on negative news and less on positive news. Thus the media has a role in intensifying and aggravating the resentment related to this entire phenomenon. Among the objectives of this research are to study the issues of news coverage made by the newspapers in Malaysia and Indonesia; to examine the influence of the cooperative environment in determining the form and genre of news reporting in both countries as well as to analyze the reflection of the news makers from both countries. The methodology used for the purpose of this research is qualitative content analysis involving four news print organizations: two in Malaysia which are the Star and BERNAMA while in Indonesia, the research concentrates on the KOMPAS and ANTARA. These four news organizations are mainstream media and relevant due to their influential role in providing insights and shaping the perception of the readers. The study is significant befitting the fact that Indonesia and Malaysia have love-hate relationships which unfortunately sometimes ignite fury among the people of both nations.*

**Keywords:** ASEAN, print media coverage, strife, bilateral relation, Malaysia, Indonesia

### **Introduction**

C.R. Wright (1964) defines mass communication as a social process which patterned and repetitively conveyed phenomenon in many contemporary societies. Thus, mass media is a significant force in the continuously developing culture including the modern culture. Sociologists refer to this as a mediated culture where media reflects and creates the culture (Cliff note Articles, 2012). Consequently, Rickert (2011) asserted that people use media to know what is going on in their communities, to check on and oversee what happens in government and corporations, and to play active, informed roles as citizens. Coronel (2011) on the other hand, found that today, despite the mass media's propensity for sleaze, sensationalism and superficiality, the notion of the media as watchdog, as guardian of the public interest, and as a conduit between governors and the governed remains deeply ingrained. For instance, news reporting on the friction of bilateral relationship between two countries spurs more hatred among citizens of each country rather than help solve the problem. Negative insights of such situation might result in the increasing problematic and complex relationship between the two countries. This is the scenario faced by Malaysia-Indonesia ties.

Khadijah Md Khalid and Shakila Yaacob (2012) wrote that the unequal pace of the democratization pattern in both countries has largely contributed to this state of affairs. They (ibid.) also asserted that four key 'transnational' variables or determinants such as migrant labor, mass media, non-governmental organizations and the Anwar factor have significantly impacted on Malaysia's ties with Indonesia against the backdrop of the unequal domestic political changes. These four variables also have over the years become more prominent in bilateral relations – often in negative terms. More specifically, they represent the dynamics of the people-to-people dimension in bilateral ties. As such, the deterioration in people-to-people relations threatens to significantly reshape government-to-government diplomacy. Bilateral relations could yet face their severest contradictions when official diplomacy is incapable of reflecting accurately popular sentiments. In effect, the roles of state and non-state actors have been instrumental in influencing recent developments of Malaysia–Indonesia relations. Thus media role in disseminating information is found crucial

### **Background**

When Tun Abdul Razak becomes Prime Minister of Malaysia (1967-1976), and General Suharto became President (1967-1998), the relations between Malaysia and Indonesia improved in a large scale. President Suharto changed his foreign policy and focus more to the importance of Indonesia's domestic and regional stability and economic growth. The foreign policy of Malaysia also changed to be neutral and impartial.

Since then, harmonious relations between Malaysia and Indonesia were evident. In this period, Malaysia always held consultations with Jakarta on important issues especially in relation to the stability of the region. Indonesia in ASEAN was considered a major country, *primus inter pares* by Malaysia (Linda Sunarti in Musni Umar, 2011)

The formation of ASEAN which consisted of five countries that is Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines is to strengthen the relationship between the neighbourhood countries especially Malaysia and Indonesia. Malaysia's willingness to practice the political policy of "self induced subordination," which recognizes the supremacy of neighbouring countries as a hegemonic power has been smoothed relations particularly between Malaysia and Indonesia. To be more precise, Malaysia accepted the concept of the "status of Malaysia as sister and Indonesia as brother" (Abdul Ghapa in Musni Umar, 2011).

Mutual cooperation between ASEAN nations is multifaceted and it covers numerous aspects of issues in this region which require extensive and empirical research. Although there are hiccups and disputes between some ASEAN countries with Malaysia, these countries continuously worked together with Malaysia to enhance multiple dimensions including foreign relations, education, politics, technology, environment, defence, science, culture, economy, sports and communication. These ASEAN cross-border communities possess shared historical links, characteristics, interest interactions, networks and imaginings (Abdul Rahman, 2009). Clear example of cross borders communities in ASEAN region include the sea border between Malaysia and Indonesia which is linked by the Straits of Malacca.

The collaboration recorded by the media is extensive. For instance, at the 10th ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (2010) the delegates successfully identified key matters for future cooperation in the region. One significant area is in traditional medicine with the aid of China. Recognizing the challenges in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the countries' representatives agreed to strengthen collaboration in health policy with specific focus on maternal care, child care, HIV and AIDS.

The complexity of maritime issues in the Southeast Asia region is also regarded as one of the region's major concerns and this led to the establishment of the 1st ASEAN Maritime Forum Convention (2010). The Forum reiterated that maritime issues and concerns are trans-boundary in nature, and therefore shall be addressed regionally in a holistic, integrated and comprehensive manner. Furthermore, the forum acknowledged the multi-dimensional nature of maritime aspects, such as the protection of the environment, security, navigation, and other security-related challenges consequently necessary to further enhance efforts to address maritime issues urgently in a comprehensive manner.

Additionally, a plan for individuals from ASEAN countries studying and doing research in the fields of chemistry, physics and medicine/physiology was initiated to provide a platform to meet, discuss and exchange views with over 60 Nobel-prize winners from the three science disciplines from all over the world (News Bulletin, 2010). The participants from ASEAN countries felt very inspired and motivated and took the opportunity to link with other young scientists for collaborative projects.

The structural design sector also expressed hope that ASEAN would continue to play a central role in the emerging regional architecture and the reaffirmation by ASEAN's Dialogue Partners (2010) was a clear signal that more countries appreciate ASEAN's leading role in the regional architecture.

A note on the collaboration in humanitarian matters, the Foreign Ministers from ASEAN countries unanimously agreed that the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force for the Victims of Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2010 was an example of ASEAN support for each other. In acknowledging the importance to institutionalize the experience and knowledge gained, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management in ASEAN is established in Jakarta in the first half of 2011. Furthermore, in keeping with the changing utilities environment, ASEAN energy sector has been urged to centre on providing support for greener economic activities to maintain sustainable development in the region. This includes the region's flagship projects on electricity, gas and oil pipelines, energy efficiency, renewable energy and clean development mechanism. ASEAN is heaved in to focus on Green Energy as the ASEAN Ministers agreed to work together on five priority areas, namely finance, energy, education, avian flu prevention and disaster management. They also agreed to work further on the initiative to convene an East Asia Forum on Climate Change as proposed by Vietnam (Green Energy News Bulletin, 2010). The Plus Three Foreign Ministers reaffirmed the importance of ensuring food and energy security and in this regard welcomed the decision to create Emergency Rice Reserve as a permanent mechanism to ensure rice security in the region and intention to develop a comprehensive strategy on sustainable and integrated food and bio-fuels production and consumption. Over all ASEAN countries collaboration includes cooperation in regulatory reforms, investment policies and economic monitoring. They also acknowledged mutual interests in other areas, such as competitiveness and sustainable economic development. Other bilateral relationships between Malaysia-Indonesia comprised of agreement to protect and promote migrant workers right, ASEAN branding and coordination of ASEAN Political-Security Community.

Though there are hiccups and disputes between these two countries, they continuously worked together. And all the blue prints commence show cohesiveness in the bilateral relationships between Malaysia and Indonesia. Historically, Malaysia through its former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed had initiated talks with the Indonesian's former President Abdurrahman Wahid with the intention to help pull Indonesia out of its economic crisis in 1997-2000. On the other hand, the velocity of Malaysia's development depends much on the contribution of the steady flow of labour forces from Indonesia.

### **Problem Statement**

Indonesia-Malaysia has a love-hate relationship. Both neighboring countries have been referred to as *rumpun Melayu* (common Malay ethnic), yet some conflicts are severe resulted in street demonstrations, embassy attacks, burning of flags and pictures of country leaders, words lashing in the media and threats on innocent lives.

In history there were conflicts and frictions that lasted for 30 decades recorded in the South-East Asia history. The first border dispute and one of the biggest tests on the close bilateral ties was during a confrontation between the two countries over the areas of Borneo Island (Sabah and Sarawak) which the countries shared. The tense situation that Malaysia shared with Indonesia between 1957 and 1962 had been chronicled. Several scholars were drawn to the role of individual leaders played in fomenting bilateral friction, noting particularly on the tension between Malaysian's first Prime Minister Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Indonesia President Sukarno. For almost three decades Indonesia and Malaysia went head to head over territorial claims in the Straits of Malacca.

Another universally known dispute was in 2002. However it was eventually resolved by international adjudication over the control of Sipadan and Ligitan, two small rocky outcrops off the east coast of Borneo. Reports stated that both had no intrinsic commercial value to Indonesia but only strong nationalist underpinnings-the argument that they had was that historically it had been part of the sprawling archipelago of 17,000 islands (Salim, March 2005).

The following dispute has more than the sovereignty of both countries at stake. The disputed region, off the coast of Malaysia's Sabah state and Indonesia's East Kalimantan province, are rich in oil deposits. It covers production-sharing contracts for deep-water oil exploration in these two blocks. The oil blocks Ambalat and East Ambalat are near the Sipadan and Ligitan islands, disputed for years between Malaysia and Indonesia (Guerin, March, 2005).

Finally the International Court of Justice (CIJ) at Hague handed Malaysia the sovereignty over the islands in 2002. Before that both Indonesia and Malaysia had send warships and fighter planes to safeguard what each considers its fundamental interest. The boundary issue is being played out against a backdrop of other nagging issues that had led to a cooling of bilateral ties (Gerard, Graham, The New Straits Times Sept., 2005).

The significance of Sebatik Island, which is approximately 215 nautical miles north-east of the Ambalat blocks is apparently an area that has become a temporary shelter for Indonesians fleeing a Malaysian crackdown against illegal workers. This and also the Malaysia's repatriation of illegal Indonesian immigrants are intertwined and have to be dealt with simultaneously (CSIS, March 2005). In sum, both quarrelled as well as collaborated in various aspects. Hamidon, one of Malaysia's top diplomats who worked as an ambassador to Indonesia from June 2003 to July 2005, referred to the disputes: like immigrant labour issues, haze from the forest fires in Sumatra and Kalimantan, illegal logging, human trafficking, border disputes—including the volatile Ambalat issue and terrorism, as hiccups in the bilateral relations (Veeramalia, World News, 2005). And on all occasions, the Indonesian media had fanned the emotion of the people in the republic (Rusdihardjo, Time Net News, March 2005).

In spite of this, the researchers feel that an empirical study is necessary to identify the issues communicated in the print media from both countries. The study classifies the frequency of news of 'cooperation' or 'disputes' carried by the print media and whether they carry more negative rather than positive news. The study is far-reaching as the researchers are prompted to comprehend who are the news makers and whether they intentionally or subconsciously fuelled the emotion of the readers, consequently damaging the healthy partnership that existed between Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Objectives of this research are:

1. To study the issues in news coverage by the newspapers in Malaysia and Indonesia;
2. To examine the bilateral cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia and its role in determining the form and genre of news in the newspapers;
3. To analyze the reflections of the news makers in the print media;
4. To identify the news makers who tarnished the bilateral relations of Malaysia and Indonesia.

Research Questions

- RQ1 What are the issues in print news coverage in Malaysia and Indonesia;
- RQ2 What is the role of the bilateral cooperation in determining the news in print media;
- RQ3 What are the reflections of the news makers in the print media;
- RQ4 Who are the news makers that ruined the working relationship between the two countries.

### **Significance of the Research**

In the present delicate state of affair, the media has leverage in affecting the bilateral relationship between Malaysia and its ASEAN neighbours. In this context, university research on news coverage on this affair has become increasingly significant for the prosperity and well-being of both countries.

On top of the peace and harmony benefits they bring to the communities in this region, this research also tells about the urgency of the crisis situation, provide insight on how to react, and develop strategies to insulate ourselves and also to help promote healthier bilateral collaboration with Indonesia and Malaysia. In fact both countries will benefit from the aspect of: foreign relations, education, politics, technology, environment, defence, science, culture, economy and finance, sports and communication.

Again the knowledge and intelligence assembled through this exploration can further develop and enhance the literature on news treatment on regional issues, news values on the collaboration, and as a final point, who are the news makers or the news informer that fuelled the conflicts or alliance between them.

### ***Literature Review***

A book written by Joseph Chiyong Liow (2008) provides a comprehensive overview of the relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia, focusing especially on how the relationship has developed in the last fifty years. It argues that the political relationship between the two countries has been largely defined by rivalry, despite the fact that the processes of national self-determination began by emphasizing Indo-Malay fraternity. It shows how the two countries have different, contested interpretations of Indo-Malay history, and how the continuing suspicion of Javanese hegemony which defined much of the history of the Indo-Malay world is also a key factor in the relationship.

Earlier, a study by Liow (2004), on Malaysia's approach to its illegal Indonesia Migrant labor problem reveal that laws dealing with the problem of illegal immigration have in fact, been in place for a long time in Malaysia. Yet the problem of illegal immigrants, as the Malaysian government itself has admitted, remains a persistent problem. This is the case because laws have not been enforced diligently. At the heart of this problem lies the problem of double standards, where illegals are penalized but not their abettors. Many domestic quarters in Malaysia, including government officials, have long been guilty of complicity in facilitating the transportation of illegal Indonesian workers over to Malaysia, and of providing them with accommodation and jobs. Indeed, as a local newspaper surmised, the more measures against illegal migrants are enforced, the greater the opportunity created for syndicates engaged in manufacturing and distribution of fake documents such as passports, identity cards, and work permits.

On the issue of inter-connectedness between Malaysia and Indonesia, a journalist in *The New Straits Times*, Farish M. Noor (2012) in his article entitled *Indonesia-Malaysia relations : One Kin, One Nations* wrote that there are many similarities between the peoples of Indonesia and Malaysia and they should celebrate their inter-connected past. Farish continued in the article by saying that t as ASEAN inches closer to the ASEAN Charter in 2015; it is hope that the peoples and governments of the region would choose to reconnect with the existed inter-connected past instead of emphasizing the differences all the time. Indonesia on the other hand should see this as testimony to its long and deep cultural outreach across the archipelago, and something it can be justifiably proud of. Nationalism does not have to be of the exclusive, bellicose variety: Sometimes accepting that others appreciate you can also pay dividends.

Meanwhile, the former Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar (2010) wrote that Malaysia/Indonesia bilateral relation has gone through many phases with its own ups and downs. Today it cannot be taken for granted. Previously Malaysia/Indonesia resilient relationship was grounded on 'nusantara' and 'serumpun' sentiment. This is only true when the bilateral relation is not in crisis mode, like the confrontation in 1963, the spat on Ambalat/Sulawesi Sea, and when there are cases of mistreatment of Indonesian maids. Malaysia needs to make the necessary adjustments when confronted with such situations. Another assertion by Syed Albar (ibid.) is that, political and diplomatic initiatives would have to come into play in order to manage the problems. Syed Albar added that the Indonesian media has the tendency to sensationalize whatever issues that surfaced which could generate a strong anti-Malaysian sentiment. It is believe that Malaysia should move away from harping continuously on the 'nusantara' and 'serumpun' factor, as this is not sustainable.

Another study concerning the bilateral ties between Malaysia and Indonesia done by Khadijah Md Khalid and Shakila Yaakob (2012) found that Malaysia-Indonesia relations have become increasingly problematic and complex to manage in a post-Mahathir/Suharto era. According to them the unequal pace of the democratization pattern in both countries has largely contributed to this state of affairs. The four key 'transnational' variables or determinants such as migrant labor, mass media, non-governmental organizations and the Anwar factor have significantly impacted on Malaysia's ties with Indonesia against the backdrop of the unequal domestic political changes.

## **Methodology**

This study is primarily a qualitative content analysis. This research analysis involves two concepts out of three concepts suggested by Kerlinger (in Wimmer and Dominick, 1997) that require elaboration. Firstly, content analysis is a systematic process that analyses selected content explicitly and consistently. The sample selection follows proper procedures, and each item projects an equal chance of being included in the analysis. The evaluation process is systematic where all contents under consideration are similarly treated in exactly the same manner. Secondly, the content analysis is objective and unbiased. That is, the researcher's personal idiosyncrasies and predispositions are not entered into the findings. If replicated by another researcher, the analysis would yield the same results. The goal of content analysis is the accurate representation of a body of messages. Therefore quantification is important in fulfilling that objective.

Ello S. and Kyngas H (2008), define qualitative content analysis as a research method is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomenon

In addition, Bryman (2004) asserts that qualitative content analysis is “probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents “and that it “comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed” (p.392). Being a little bit more specific he defines qualitative content analysis in the following way:

“An approach to documents the emphasises on the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analyzed (and the categories derived from it) appeared (Bryman, 2004, p.542 )

For this study, news content on print media in Malaysia and Indonesia on both negative and positive reporting appearing in news stories are examine. This research involves four news print organizations. Two newsprint organizations are chosen in Malaysia namely the STAR and BERNAMA, while in Indonesia, the KOMPAS and ANTARA. The justification for the choices of these organizations is because they are mainstream print media that frequently reports events on the two nations especially on bilateral relationships.

The probability sampling method adopted for the study is from 1st January to 31 August 2012. During that period treatment of issues in news about Indonesia and Malaysia covered were examined. It analyses the influences of cooperative environment in determining the genre of the news. It also explores the reflection of the news sources in the print media; and at the same time examined the approach and style of reporting by these print organizations. News reports in newspapers are considered very important due to their role in informing the public about politics (Comstock and Scharrer, 1999) as well as for the potential for elite newspapers to set the agenda for other publications (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

## **Conceptualization**

**ASEAN:** The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a geo-political, economic and socio-cultural organization of 10 countries located in Southeast Asia. ASEAN was formed on 8 August 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The objective for the formation of ASEAN is to unite and work as a single entity in the region. Since then, membership has expanded to include Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Its aims include accelerating economic growth, social progress, and cultural development among its members, protection of regional peace and stability, and opportunities for member countries to discuss differences peacefully.

**Print media coverage:** The means of communication that reach large numbers of people through newspapers as it plays a very important role in generating awareness among the general public and increasing pressure on pertinent issues for the development of nation. The print media can also be very effective in terms of reporting bilateral understanding among countries objectively. In the context of this study, there is an urgent need to monitor the information and issues that arise between the countries concerned covered by the media.

**Strife:** A violent conflict or dissension of political disputes or an act of contention.

**Bilateral relations:** Having or form of two sides. Affecting or undertaken by two sides equally; binding on both parties. In other words, a working relationship and networking environment that binds an understanding between two or more countries.

**Malaysia:** Malaysia is a federal constitutional monarchy in Southeast Asia. It has a total landmass of 329,847 square kilometres separated by the South China Sea into two similarly sized regions, Peninsular Malaysia and Malaysian Borneo. Land borders are shared with Thailand, Indonesia, and Brunei, and maritime borders exist with Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The country is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural, which plays a large role in politics.

**Indonesia:** Indonesia is the fourth largest nation in the world with the population over 238 million people. The Republic of Indonesia is situated in Southeast Asia and is an archipelago comprising of approximately 17,508 islands with 33 provinces.

## Findings

Attacks against Malaysian interests in Jakarta appeared to be seasonal and happened each time some Indonesians had an issue with Malaysia or vice versa. Nevertheless, it is seen that the attack would not affect Malaysia-Indonesia ties for Malaysia and Indonesia had a lot in common in their cultural heritage.

For instance, the Mandailing culture that caused the tensed up relations between people of the two countries. This issue on the dance and the beating of the drums popular among the north Sumatran Mandailing community in Indonesia and in parts of Malaysia were a tradition belonging exclusively to Indonesia. Nevertheless, the acts of violence against Malaysian interests in Indonesia over the cultural elements do not reflect the stand of the Indonesian government and the 240 million people of Indonesia, an Indonesian leader said.

On the Star news reports, it is found that there are a total of 42 items of Malaysian – Indonesian events covered from the month of January till August 2012. The Star reports on both conflict and collaboration perspectives of news between both countries. The table below shows the qualitative analysis news collected during that period:

## THE STAR (COLLABORATION)

THE STAR 20/1/2010	- Higher CPO output in 2012. Malaysia, Indonesia target improve production on projected firm prices (ind)
THE STAR 23/1/2012	- Malaysia and Indonesia boost marine and coastal ties (govt)
THE STAR 27/1/2012	- Nazir named as Niaga President Commissioner (ind)
THE STAR 30.1.2012	- Sime's timely move. Analysts praise its foray into rubber plantation in Indonesia (ind)
THE STAR 4/2/2012	- Positive views on PTPN merger. The industry will see a big worthy player in agro-commodity sector (ind)
THE STAR 3/3/2012	- To better Nusantara ties Rais: Younger generation enhancing Malaysia-Indonesia relations (govt)
THE STAR 5/4/2012	- Pharmaniaga unveils capex It includes spending RM30m to buy plant in Indonesia (ind)
THE STAR 17/4/2012	-Affin awaits Indonesian central bank nod (ind)
THE STAR 18/4/2012	-Kurnia Asia near deal (ind)
THE STAR 9/5/2012	- Still keen on Indonesia Bank Islam remains interested in buying a stake in an Islamic bank there
THE STAR 19/5/2012	-Muslim burial for Boo Soo. Conversion to Islam confirmed with certificate from Indonesia (govt)
THE STAR 25/5/2012	-Bina Puri to diversify. It eyes Indonesian power plant and mining (ind)
THE STAR 18/6/2012	-CBI P eyes bigger order. Palm oil mill expert to bank on current interest to cultivate oil palm (ind)
THE STAR 26/6/2012	- Speaker: Ignorant Indonesians behind protest against Malaysia (govt)
THE STAR 2/7/2012	- Workers in demand. Land expansion to meet the high global demand for palm oil creates 1.2 million new jobs (ind)
THE STAR 20/7/2012	- Maybank welcomes Indonesia's new shareholding requirement (ind)
THE STAR 31/7/2012	- BII stake to stay Maybank optimistic or qualifying for waiver from Bank Indonesia (govt)

## Summary on Collaboration

	Theme	Frequency	Industry/ NGO	Public	Government
	Cooperation: Cultivation Industry Banking industry Marine ties, PTPTN, Education, Pharmacy, Protest, Insurance, Mining and individual.	(18%) 3 (29%) 5 (47%) or (6%) 1	12		5
		(100%) 17			

Data shows that about 44% of the report is on collaboration and about 56% is on disputes between both countries. There are altogether 17 news items that touches on the working partnership between the two countries studied. Most of the collaboration between Malaysia and Indonesia is in the Banking Industry (29%) and 18% from the cultivation industry such as palm oil and rubber. The others make up 47% of news on the collaboration between Indonesia and Malaysia. The findings reveal that 71% of the news was initiated by the people in the industry and only 29% of the news makers were from the government.

#### THE STAR (DISPUTE)

- THE STAR 7/2/2012 - Mystery over Batam detainee. Selangor government on defensive over alleged links to suspect (govt)
- THE STAR 11/2/2012 - CPO exports seen losing ground. Analyst says Indonesia exports taking away share from Malaysia's traditional market (ind)
- THE STAR 5/3/2012 - Maid woes may go on longer. Mama and Papa on tenterhooks after embassy advises Indonesia to continue ban (govt)
- THE STAR 7/3/2012 - Subra: Agreement on maid stays. No indication 'from Indonesia of a roadmap to stop sending maids abroad by 2017 (govt)
- THE STAR 17/03/2012 - 'It has become a chore'. Employers: Let's forget Indonesia and look for maids elsewhere (public)
- THE STAR 19/3/2012 - Task force angers Papa. Maid negotiator rapped over 'unfair' selection of agencies (govt.)
- THE STAR 20.3.2012 - M'sia, Indonesia agreed to MoU. But 'one maid, one task' ruling was not part of the deal, says minister (govt)
- THE STAR 21/3/2012 - Long-term plan needed. Maids made in Indonesia are going to set a world record of sorts if the ridiculous, ludicrous arrangement suggested by a senior Indonesian official comes to pass (ind)
- THE STAR 21/3/2012 - New ruling to hit banks Minimum down payment on loans will impact CIMB, May bank in Indonesia (journalist)
- THE STAR 21/3/2012 - The one task for us to do now is to put family first (journalist)
- THE STAR 5/4/2012 - MSC up despite worries over Indonesia's tax hike plan (journalist)
- THE STAR 5/4/2012 - Solve it" fast, Jakarta told Najib wants an end to maids issue as soon as possible (govt)
- THE STAR 17/4/2012 - Malaysian dilemma on biodiesel exports. Malaysia is now losing out to latecomers like Indonesia, Thailand and Colombia, which in turn are competitive players (ind)
- THE STAR 26/4/2012 - Organ harvest claims not true (journalist)
- THE STAR 26/4/2012 - Kenny: BAM did not approach Joko . Speculation is rife that BAM have asked former world champion Joko Suprianto of Indonesia to join the national coaching team (ind)
- THE STAR 28/4/2012 - Proven no organs harvested. Indonesia debunks claims after second autopsy on bodies of three men (govt)
- THE STAR 30/5/2012 - ASTRO says it will challenge defamatory allegations against Marshall alleged criminal wrongdoings in a commercial dispute with Indonesia's Lippo Group (journalist)
- THE STAR 8/5/2012 - Facing nothing except trouble Tenaganita: Undocumented migrant workers constantly exploited in M'sia (Indonesian NGO)
- THE STAR 8/6/2012 - Palm oil proposals to be presented soon to address concerns in the Malaysian palm oil industry, including the impact of the low palm oil tax structure by Indonesia (govt)
- THE STAR 21/6/2012 - Illicit ciggies from Indonesia look the same as legal brands (ind)
- THE STAR 23/5/2012 - Illicit cigs worry makers (ind)
- THE STAR 1/7/2012 - Life was hell with step mum in Lampung (journalist)

\*Indicators ind = industry. NGO= Non-government organization

News items on strife between Malaysia and Indonesia are 22 and out of that 45% (10) is about maid, 14% (3) about the palm oil industry, 9% (2) is about organ harvest, and 9% (2) about illegal cigarettes smuggling. Another 14% (3) are news about individuals. On tax heights in Indonesia, 5% (1) on detainee, 5% (1) and issue on the banking industry (5%) 1. The most glaring dispute during the period chosen for the research is issue on Indonesian maids, followed by problem in the oil palm industry. Other news items just as prominent are accusation of organ harvesting and cigarettes smuggling. The majority of the newsmakers (36%) 8 are representatives from the government agencies generally involved in the strife on behalf of the people Malaysia. Analysis shows that 27 % (6) news items are sourced from the industry and surprisingly 27% (6) news are from the journalists from The Star and 5% (1) from NGO. All these are the news makers for the disputes between the two countries. Only 5% (1) is voice from the public.

The research sees that the maid issue which is domain in this study is seasonal. As there was and still exist issue about maid followed by Oil Palm issues. The strong participation of the government in the strife was insignificant as most of the disputes concern Malaysia as a country. The examples above indicate that The Star play its role of balance and unbiased reporting in an effort to attain good relationship between the two countries. This shows that the Malaysian press strived to report news that does not tarnish the strong bonding between Malaysia and Indonesia.

#### Summary on Disputes

Theme	Frequency	Industry/ NGO	Public	Government
Indonesia maids dispute	(45% ) 10	27% (6) =ind.	5% (1)	36% (8)
Oil Palm problem	(14%) 3	27% (6)		government
Organ harvesting	(9%) 2	journalist		
Cigarettes smuggling	(9%) 2	5% (1) NGO		
Individual news	(14%) 3			
Tax height, detainee and banking problem	(14%) 3			

\*Indicators govt. = government, ind = industry, NGO = Non government organization

#### BERNAMA

On BERNAMA news reporting, the number of BERNAMA news reports on Malaysia and Indonesia between the months of January till August 2012 is 15.

Most of the reports are positive reports and the emphasized on news reporting is on the efforts of the governments of both countries to improve ties even though there are several disputes; sentiments and misunderstandings arise by the people of Indonesia.

Among such reports that portray efforts of improving ties are as follows:

1. BERNAMA- 1st February 2012- Indonesia Exports Hit US\$230.6 billion in 2011
2. BERNAMA- 15 February 2012- Indonesia to end franchise business monopoly
3. BERNAMA- 25th February 2012- Moderate earthquake strikes Indonesia
4. BERNAMA – 8th March 2012 – Rais: Pos Malaysia – Pos Indonesia Cooperation forges closer ties;
5. BERNAMA – 8th March 2012 – Rais proposes foundation to boost Malaysia-Indonesia people to people ties.
6. BERNAMA- 27 April 2012- Organs of the three killed Indonesians intact says Jakarta
7. BERNAMA – 3rd May 2012 – Indonesia’s Sky Aviation Inaugurates Tanjung Pinang – Melaka Flight;
8. BERNAMA – 9th May 2012 – Indonesia will not interfere in probe into fatal shooting of its nationals;
9. BERNAMA – 18th May 2012 – Malaysia and Indonesia agree to form Parliamentary Caucus;
10. BERNAMA – 3rd June 2012 – Indonesian maids back to work in Malaysia following Indonesia’s decision to lift the freeze on maids to Malaysia;
11. BERNAMA- 15 June 2012- Embassy seeks explanation on arrest of two Malaysians in Indonesia
12. BERNAMA- 24 June 2012- Malaysia condemn attack on embassy in Jakarta.
13. BERNAMA – 25th June 2012 – Protesters do not understand history: Indonesian Parliament Speaker;
14. BERNAMA- 3 July 2012- Indonesia visit to open up space for better ties.
15. BERNAMA – 19th July 2012 – Sharing Crime Information between Malaysia-Indonesia Police Forces;

Other BERNAMA's news reports found are news reports on economic ties between Malaysia and Indonesia, and one on disaster entitled "Moderate Earthquake Strikes Indonesia".

It is seen that the government is the planner and news makers for the news reported by BERNAMA.

The findings indicate that the style of news reporting by BERNAMA is based on facts and none of the facts were manipulated. BERNAMA in full is Malaysia National News Agency which has a role in justifying facts on Malaysia's positive stand especially in relation to bilateral relationship between Malaysia and other countries including Indonesia. In relation to this data collected, BERNAMA only write news on the collaboration context and none on any disputes. Though some of the headlines reflect friction but the in-depth content of the news show continuous effort to resolve all problems encountered to ensure the cooperative ties continues. Moreover both countries are close neighbours and most importantly need to maintain the brotherhood spirit in ASEAN.

The news reporting is found to be objective, accurate and balance for it takes into account views from both sides so as to make the news report credible in the eyes of readers for both countries as well as both government of Malaysia and Indonesia.

## ANTARA

Regarding ANTARA News, not much news on the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Indonesia are projected from the month of January till August 2012. There are 14 news item traced from these months in the news organization archive.

ANTARA as Indonesian National News Agency should write balance reports in order to justify the situation and help to overcome the negative phenomenon that happens rather than provoking to worsen the situation. Similar to BERNAMA, ANTARA mostly reports on news with a positive tone. This is because its role is to bridge the gap between both countries by drowsing fury between the nations

The table below shows the news reports from ANTARA:

Date	News reports
ANTARA 27 Jan 2012	Indonesia, Malaysia sign sea territorial MoU (govt) = +
ANTARA 20 Jan 2012	Malaysia deports 173 Indonesian migrant workers (journalist) = n
ANTARA 1 Jan 2012	RI's Melissa wins best costume award 2011 in Malaysia (journalist) = n
ANTARA 28 Feb 2012	Malaysia tangani anak-anak tanpa kewarganegaran di Sabah (govt) = +
ANTARA 27 Feb 2012	Hundreds of ex-ptdi employees migrate to Malaysia (govt) = +
ANTARA 13 Feb 2012	Malaysia defends deporting Saudi in Twitter row (govt) = +
ANTARA 6 Feb 2012	121 Malaysian agencies ready to accepts TKIs (govt) = +
ANTARA 5 Feb 2012	Four Indonesian workers deported from Malaysia hospitalized (journalist) = n
ANTARA 4 Feb 2012	Malaysia deports 13 RI migrant workers (journalist) = n
ANTARA 8, Mar 2012	Three Malaysian arrested for shopping spree on forged credit cards (journalist) = n
ANTARA 6 July 2012	Malaysia raids on football gambling syndicate (journalist) = -
ANTARA 31 Aug 2012	Malaysian transsexuals challenge cross-dressing law (journalist) = n
ANTARA 20 Aug 2012	Malaysia temporarily closes embassy in Syria (govt) = n
ANTARA 18 Aug 2012	*Anwar Ibrahim pensiun jika kalah pemilu (journalist) = -

\*Indicator: + = positive, - = negative, n = neutral

Findings show that out of the 14 news item analyzed, 36% (5) reflects positivity, and only 14% (2) is on a negative tone. However whopping 50% (7) is neutral and impartial news reporting. This proves that the news report were unprejudiced and maintain a journalistic practice.

The data indicates 43% (6) news items involved the government as news makers. Another 57% (8) comes from journalists.

## KOMPAS

KOMPAS is another news organization in Indonesia which has a high rate of readership and is responsible to disseminate balance news to the people in Indonesia. Nevertheless, again, not many news in relation to Malaysia is reported between January to August 2012. In fact there were only 6 news articles about Malaysia identified from the organization's archives. The news on Malaysia is as follows:

1. KOMPAS - 2nd May 2012 - Indonesia protest over deaths of Migrant workers in Malaysia = - (journalist)
2. KOMPAS – 16th June 2012 – Malaysia Claim the Tor-tor Dance = - (journalist)
3. KOMPAS – 23rd July 2012 – Lagi Gula Pendatang Asing di Sita Polis = n (journalist)
4. KOMPAS– 30th July 2012- Dari Camilan Jantung Pisang hingga Sarung = + (journalist)
5. KOMPAS- 4th August 2012 Istri PM Najib dan cincin 24 juta dollar = - (journalist)
6. KOMPAS- 21st August 2012- PM Najib Razak: demokrasi juga terjadi di Malaysia = + (govt)

\*Indicators + = positive, - = negative, and n = neutral

From the news items extracted from the archives, 50% (3) have a negative approach of reporting, 33% (2) are reported in a positive manner while only 17% (1) news item is neutral.

Generally the news makers are the journalists whose report has fuelled certain displeasure among Malaysians. The treatment of reporting is by sensationalising certain facts that skewed towards conflicting situation. The findings significantly conclude that some media in Indonesia seems to encourage dispute between Malaysia and Indonesia by encouraging the anti-Malaysia sentiments through distorted news coverage, exaggerations and blowing the issues beyond the proportions. This is seen in news reports in KOMPAS.

One glaring example is on the news report taken from April 24, 2012 that has projected a bias headline which is “Malaysian police are 'barbaric:' Indonesia migrant agency says”. Among the content of the news report:

“The National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers has called for a thorough investigation into the shooting deaths of three workers in Malaysia, calling the police officers involved in the killings "barbaric."

"We condemn it as it seems barbaric," Jumhur Hidayat, chairman of the agency, known as the BNP2TKI, said on Tuesday. "We have formed an investigation team that will coordinate with the Indonesian embassy [in Malaysia]."

He said the team, to be led by the agency's director of protection, Brig. Gen. Bambang Purwanto, would also investigate reports organs had been harvested from the bodies of the three men.

Bambang, who is flying to Malaysia today, said he had received an initial briefing. "What is clear is the three migrant workers were illegals – they had no documents – and had been there since 2010."

The bodies of the trio – Abdul Kadir Jaelani, 24, Herman, 28, and Mad Noor, 33 – were this week returned home to East Lombok, three weeks after they were found dead in Malaysia, each with gunshots.

Suspicious over the motives for their killing arose when family members of the victims saw the conditions of the bodies, which included stitching. The families have demanded new autopsies.”

These news extracts indicate that news reporting on Malaysia and Indonesian bilateral relation by KOMPAS is not balance. The reports are based on the acts aroused by Indonesia’s people as well as activists in that country who over reacted.

Consequently, BERNAMA and ANTARA news reports relating to this issue is found to be more positive and balance. Positive feedback and response plays a role indirectly to calm down the misunderstanding.

For instance BERNAMA news story on 9th May 2012 reports – “Indonesia will not interfere in probe into fatal shooting of its national” revealed that the Indonesian government has left it to the Malaysian authority to investigate and prepare a report pertaining to the incident. On allegations about the organs of the three killed, BERNAMA story on 27th April 2012 reports Jakarta’s announcement that the organs of the three killed are intact.

### **Conclusion**

The result from this qualitative content analysis explains the approaches and treatments of print news coverage from both Malaysia and Indonesia. The following evidences are accumulated to answer the four research questions planned for the study.

RQ 1 What are the issues in print news coverage in Malaysia and Indonesia.

For news from Malaysia, BERNAMA being a Malaysian National News Agency, only incorporate news on the positive bilateral ties of the two countries concentrating on portraying both countries resolving problems that arise such as crime sharing information, cooperation forges in industries such as banking, franchise aviation etc.

For The Star though concentrates more on issue on maid however it is seasonal. Though it carries 54% of news on disputes, the news approaches are detached from slant and the news analysed is evident of straight reporting.

In Indonesia ANTARA the counterpart of Malaysia National News Agency also conveys 36% of news item with positivity and as much as 50% of news in a neutral manner. The remaining 14% of the news are on disputes. The news on disputes however is impartial.

The research could only obtain 8 KOMPAS news item from the archives. Nevertheless 50% of the news portrays negativity and 33 % is positive while 17 percent is neutral. In spite of that, the news on disputes is heavily slant using harsh words that are confrontational and this stir up discontentment among its neighbour country.

RQ2 What is the role of the bilateral cooperation in determining the news in print media;

Regarding bilateral cooperation is reciprocal between two countries engaging in industries such as banking, palm oil, sharing marine information, labour exchange etc. The reason for that is the geographical proximity and cultural similarity shared by the countries.

RQ3 What are the reflections of the news makers in the print media

For The Star 71% of collaborative news comes from the industry and only 29 % from the government. For news on disputes, the main news makers (36%) are from the government agencies and 27 % from the industries and another 27% from the journalists. And for BERNAMA the news is from the government.

ANTARA conveys 57% news sourced from the journalist and 43% from the government. KOMPAS delivers 83% of news sourced from the journalist and only 17% from the government.

RQ4 Who are the news makers that ruined the working relationship between the two countries.

The researchers deduce that since the analysis does not show discrepancies in Malaysia and news from ANTARA the perpetrator is the journalists from KOMPAS.

To build a harmonious relationship between Malaysia-Indonesia, various attitudes, actions and conversations that can nourish hatred, hostility and intolerance towards each other should be eliminated. It is essential for the media to practise impartial reporting without any hidden agendas to uphold the cordial ties for all ASEAN countries.

In whatever situation, a variety of activities that can help familiarize people in these two countries should be reported and emphasised on a continued basis because the strong unity of Malaysia- Indonesia will award effect to the strength of ASEAN. In contrast, the collapse of the unity of the two allied countries, will give a negative impact on the future of ASEAN.

**References**

- Abdul Rahman Embong & Rudolph, Juergen (2009). *Community in ASEAN Ideas & Practices*. Selangor: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- ASEAN Health Ministers, ASEAN Secretariat, 30 July 2010, News Bulletin, retrieved on 13.Sept.2012 from [www.aseansec.org/24842.htm](http://www.aseansec.org/24842.htm).
- 1st ASEAN Maritime Forum Convened, ASEAN Secretariat, 30 July 2010 (ibid)
- Assisting Young ASEAN Scientists, ASEAN Secretariat, 28 July 2010 (ibid)
- ASEAN Focuses on Green Energy, Da Lat, 23 July 2010 (ibid)
- Ceramalia Anjalah (2005), *World News* 22, July .
- Comstock, G. and Scharrer, E. (1999) *Television: what's on, who's watching, what it means*, San diego, CA: Academic Press
- Cororel, S.S. (2011). *The Role of the Media in Deepening Democracy from unpal*  
[NL.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/.../un/unpan010194.pdf](http://nl.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/.../un/unpan010194.pdf). Retrieved on 13 September 2012
- Farish M. Noor (2012). *Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: One Kin, Two Nations @ www.nst.com.my* June 22. Retrieved on 12 September 2012
- Gerard, Graham (2005). *The New Straits Times*, 14 Sept. pg 4
- Guerin, Bill. (2005). *Oil concessions add fuel to the fire*, Singapore Straits Times, 8 March: 23
- Khadijah Md Khalid & Shakila Yacob. (2012). *Managing Malaysia – Indonesia relations in the context of democratization: the emergence of non-state actors*. London: Oxford University Press in association with the Japan Association of International Relation.
- Liow, J.C. (2008). *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: One Kin, Two Nations*. New York: Routledge
- Liow, J.C. (2004). *Malaysia's approach to its illegal Indonesian Migrant Labour Problems: Securitization, Politics or Catharsis?* Singapore: Nanyang Technological University.
- Musni Umar. (2011). *The Future Malaysia-Indonesia Relations and ASEAN*. PhD Thesis.
- New Straits Times*.(2012). *Malaysia-Indonesia close ties to be nurtured from*  
<http://www.nst.com.my/nation/general/malaysia-indonesia-close-ties-to-be-nurtured-1.138661#ixzz27CwB084X>. Retrieved on 2 September 2012.
- Pereira, D. (2005). *High Stakes in Sulawesi*, Singapore Straits Times, 8 March
- .Salim Osman (2005). *In the Sulawesi Sea* Singapore Straits Times, 7 March.
- Shoemaker, P. J. and Reese, S.(1996). *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content* (2nd Ed.), White Plains, New York: Longman
- Syed Hamid Albar. (2010). *Malaysia Indonesia bilateral relation – My Personal blog from*  
[syedhamidalbar44blogspot.com/.../Malaysia-indonesia-bilateral-relation-27Dec](http://syedhamidalbar44blogspot.com/.../Malaysia-indonesia-bilateral-relation-27Dec). Retrieved on 2 September 2012
- Rickert, K. D. (2011). *Media & Democracy*. From [crln.acrl.org/content/72/1/24](http://crln.acrl.org/content/72/1/24) or Minnesota Association of College & Research Libraries. Retrieved on 1 September.
- Rusdihardjo (2005). *Time Net News*, 15. *The Indonesian Quarterly of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Jakarta*, 16 March, 2005.
- The Role and Influence of Mass media from www.cliffnotes.com/.../the role- and - influence –of-mass –media*. Retrieved on 4 September 2012.