

NATIONALISM, POWER POLITICS AND MARITIME-TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY IN INDONESIA'S RELATIONS WITH MALAYSIA: THE CELEBES SEA/AMBALAT DISPUTE

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of nationalism and power politics in shaping Indonesia's relations with Malaysia during the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) administration. Specifically, it aims to explicate 'nationalism' as a domestic variable, and its interactions with other determinants in defining Indonesia's management of the Celebes Sea/Ambalat maritime-territorial dispute. Interpreting from a neoclassical realist perspective, this study attempts to answer the questions of how, when, and the extent to which nationalism affects the SBY administration's perceptions/calculation and policy options, when dealing with Malaysia over the bilateral altercation back in 2005. It begins with an elaboration of the NCR theoretical construct, followed by a brief historical background of the Celebes Sea/Ambalat dispute, before delving on the mentioned case study. Particular attention is given to analysing the interactions between domestic nationalist pressure and other external-internal variables within the matrix of Indonesia's Malaysia policy-making, to assess the extent to which nationalism constrains Jakarta's management of this potentially destabilising bilateral dispute.

Keywords: *nationalism, power politics, maritime-territorial, sovereignty, & integrity.*

Introduction

Bilateral issues related to maritime-territorial sovereignty and integrity, are extremely sensitive and potentially explosive, especially in the era of resurgent nationalism and identity politics in international relations. This is notably so in view of such issues having the propensity to exacerbate nationalistic impulses that tend to induce potentially "irrational" state and/or societal reactions against a perceived threat to this non-negotiable Westphalian notion of statehood. The contemporary bilateral relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia is a case

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in point. The revitalisation of nationalist pressure and political resolve in the domestic political environment and processes of Indonesia since the advent of democratisation in the late 1990s, has been perceived to have had undermined both governments' effort to compromise and seek for a peaceful resolution to their festering maritime-territorial dispute over the Ambalat deep sea block in the Celebes Sea. This article analyses the role of nationalism as well as international and domestic power politics in shaping Indonesia's relations with Malaysia during the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY). More specifically, it examines how domestic nationalist stimuli interact with other external-domestic determinants in shaping Indonesia's behaviour and foreign policy options towards Malaysia, when managing the Ambalat dispute. Interpreting from a neoclassical realist perspective, this article seeks to address the questions of how, when and to what extent nationalism affects the perceptions and calculation of the SBY administration, and Jakarta's policy options during the maiden episode of this longstanding high-sea altercation that festered between February and June 2005. Special attention is given to examining the interactions between domestic nationalist pressure and the related external-internal determinants influencing Indonesia's foreign policy towards Malaysia, to assess the extent to which nationalism constrains the SBY administration's handling of the maritime-territorial conflict.

Neoclassical Realism and Indonesian Foreign Policy Analysis

This study utilises Neoclassical Realism (NCR), a 'middle-ground' variant of IR realism, as its analytical construct. Emerging in the late 1990s, NCR has gained scholarly acknowledgement as a realist theory of foreign policy that generally shares the basic tenets of the theoretical tradition. However, it diverges from the mainstream realist variants of classical realism and neo-realism, in that NCR stresses the systematic integration and explicit theorising of both external and domestic variables, to provide a more holistic and accurate analysis of state behaviour and international outcomes. To be specific, proponents of NCR concur with 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 (Rose, 1998; Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 2009; Lai, 2014). Yet, they also subscribe to the notion that the effects of such imperatives are subjective, insofar as they must be translated through peculiar domestic political actors, process, and conditions (Schweller, 2004: 164), which stand to affect a particular state's response to the external environment. In other words, neoclassical realists see the existence of an "imperfect transmission belt" (Rose, 1998: 146-147; Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 2009: 4) linking systemic imperatives to foreign policy behaviour, and concede that they must be mediated

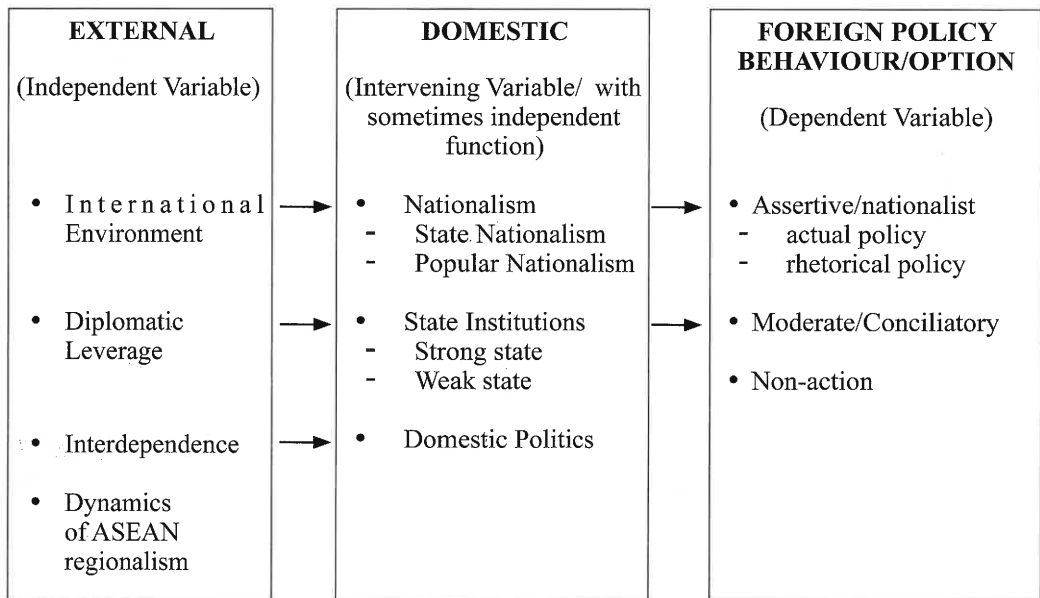
by unit-level 'intervening' variables, such as decision-makers' perceptions and other domestic political stimuli, which can induce states to behave similarly under different systemic conditions, or differently under similar situations (Lai, 2014). Specifically to this study, NCR's favouring of both external and domestic-level reasoning makes it amenable to the operationalization of nationalism as a domestic variable that mediates the external environment and influences the domestic political process and perceptions of Indonesian policy-makers. This, in turn, shapes particular foreign policy behaviour that either exacerbates, or mitigates the bilateral dispute with Malaysia over the Ambalat waters.

An NCR construct commonly comprises two sets of interactive variables; the external determinants serving primarily as the 'independent' variable, while domestic factors operate as 'intervening' variable (sometimes with independent function), which mediates and interacts with the former and with each other to produce particular foreign policy options, or the 'dependent' variable (Lai, 2014: 38) (Figure 1). The components forming the external/independent variable identified in this study are: 1) the international (security/strategic) environment; 2) diplomatic leverage vis-à-vis disputant-state; 3) interdependence (bilateral/multilateral); and 4) dynamics of regionalism [in this case, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)], all of which ascertain the parameter of Indonesia's policy options vis-à-vis Malaysia. Meanwhile, the domestic variable comprises determinants such as: 1) nationalism (state/popular manifestations); 2) state institutions (strong/weak state); and 3) domestic politics (power competition between state elites/parties/bureaucracies). Nationalism is assumed to interact with the external and other domestic determinants in affecting Indonesian state-elites' perceptions/calculation of Indonesia's relative power position vis-à-vis Malaysia and their domestic political resolve vis-à-vis 'nationalist' forces, which then define their specific foreign policy options, when dealing with the Malaysians over the Ambalat dispute.³

³ This framework requires the Indonesian 'state', or more specifically, 'state-elites' be made the primary agent, since they ultimately dispense the foreign policy decisions. This necessitates the task of identifying their political-ideological dispositions and affiliations, their dependence on nationalism as a power instrument, their inclination towards nationalist or pragmatic external agenda, and their domestic political resolve vis-à-vis nationalist and moderate elements to infer on nationalism's salience in affecting their perceptions/calculation. Also under scrutiny are other domestic agencies, namely the ruling coalition of the Democratic Party (PD) and GOLKAR; bureaucracy [Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Kementerian Luar (KEMENLU)/Departemen Luar (DEPLU), Ministry of Defence or Departemen Pertahanan (DEPHAN), etc.]; political oppositions [Partai Demokratik Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDI-P), Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat (Hanura), Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Gerindra), etc.]; and the Indonesian Parliament [Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR) via the First Commission (Komisi 1) on foreign policy and national security]; and non-state actors (i.e. media, intelligentsia, nationalist pressure groups, business community, and public opinion). For external agencies, the responses of the Malaysian government and society, the ASEAN factor, and the role of regional powers are considered together with other relevant contextual factors/actors in the international environment that simultaneously affect Indonesian foreign policy-making.

Figure 1

NCR Framework of Nationalism and State Behaviour/Preferences



Source: Adapted from Taliaferro (2009: 214); Lai (2014: 39).

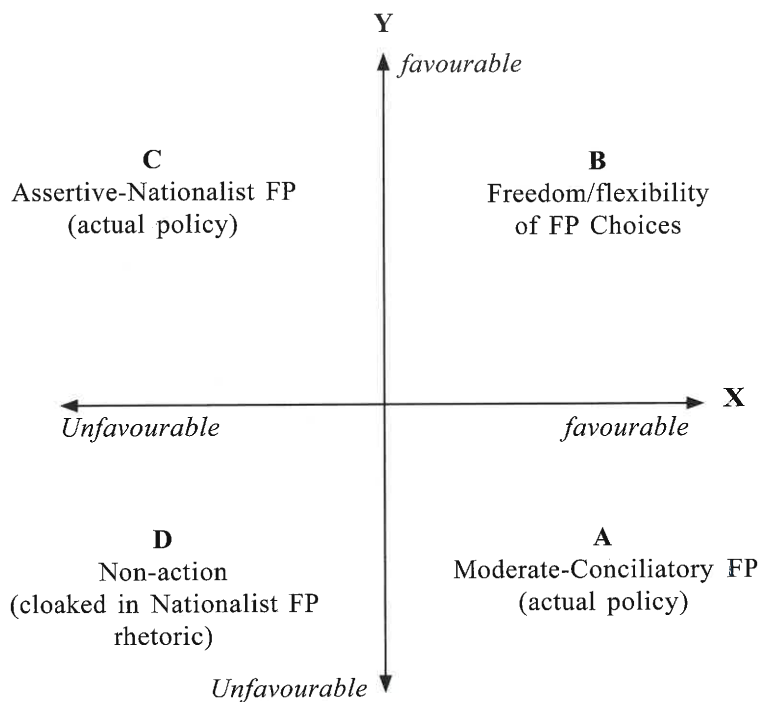
The operationalization of nationalism within this interactive NCR construct enables the explication of how, when, and under what condition it prevails in Indonesia's Malaysia policy-making. According to NCR, the salience of domestic stimuli on foreign policy-making is essentially dependent on the constraints/opportunities 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 (Lai, 2014). Neoclassical realists assume that states can exercise a wider range of foreign policy options, when international pressure or the probability of conflict is low, allowing nationalism and other domestic impetuses a bigger impact on foreign policy-making. According to Lai (2014),

"[u]nder such conditions where domestic political bargaining enjoys greater saliency in the decision-making process, nationalist pressure (i.e. from nationalist politicians, popular nationalist sentiments, etc.) may prevail and force, or even encourage states to adopt nationalistic 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 engendering state behaviour, under a relatively low-pressure international environment".

On the other hand, when external pressure is high, and the likelihood of threat becomes imminent, NCR assumes that state preferences-of-action would be limited, thus reducing the leverage of domestic dynamics on foreign policy-making. This implies that nationalist forces have lesser bargaining power in foreign policy-making, since “state-elites as ‘rational’ actors are expected to respond to systemic imperatives, rather than domestic nationalist pressures, or their nationalistic conviction, when determining policy options” (Lai, 2014: 40). In sum, NCR prescribes nationalism with both ‘intervening’ and ‘independent’ functions in foreign policy-making, depending on the prevailing external conditions. Nationalism serves predominantly as an ‘intervening’ variable under structurally determinate conditions, whereas under a low-pressure, external environment, it may develop concurrent independent functions in affecting actor behaviour/preferences (Sterling-Folker 1997: 22; Desch 1998: 169, *quoted from* Lai, 2014: 40).

Figure 2

NCR Model of Nationalism and State Behaviour/Preferences



X = Domestic Political Resolve (vis-à-vis domestic nationalist pressure)

Y = Relative Power Position (vis-à-vis disputant-state/China)

Source: adapted from Lai (2014: 42).

The above assumptions enable the construction of an NCR matrix of foreign policy options similar to the NCR model developed by Lai (2014), by juxtaposing the external (independent) and the domestic (intervening/independent) variables in two separate axes, to represent their interactions, which produce foreign policy outcomes (dependent variable). Represented in Figure 2, the external determinants identified earlier are incorporated into the matrix to measure Indonesia's relative power position vis-à-vis the disputant-state, Malaysia (as perceived by Indonesian state-elites), along the Y-axis. Meanwhile, nationalism is factored in with other domestic determinants, to measure the domestic political resolve of Indonesian state-elites, specifically against nationalist pressure, along the X-axis. Independently, both axes provide a measure of state-elites perceptions/calculation in terms of the degree to which they feel confident, or vulnerable against the pressure imposed by the respective set of variables, based on a 'favourable-to-unfavourable' continuum. Each axis generates its respective hypothesis on the expected Indonesian behaviour/policy option: (H1) by the Y-axis, and (H2), the X-axis. The juxtaposition of X- and Y-axes would essentially yield four more sub-hypotheses (H3-H6) representing the possible foreign policy options under specific external-domestic conditions during a particular time context (marked by Quadrant A to D; see Table 1) (Lai, 2014: 41-42).

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 foreign policy 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).

Hypothesis/ (Quadrant)	External-Domestic Conditions and Expected Foreign Policy Options
H2	Indonesian state-elites suffering from a decisively unfavourable domestic political resolve (vis-à-vis nationalist pressure), 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 determinately 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, and the domestic political resolve of Indonesian state-elites is favourable, they will enjoy flexibility/freedom 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).

Source: Adapted and modified from Lai (2014: 43).

The policy options (H3-H6) are principally hypothesised on the condition of the respective external and domestic domains being either determinately favourable, or otherwise. In the event where state-elites encounter an ambiguous domestic political resolve, NCR's first-order systemic argument assumes that the preferred policy option would chiefly 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 (Table 2).

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) (Quadrant B)	Assertive-cum- conciliatory policy options (btwn. A & B)	Moderate- conciliatory policy option (H3) (Quadrant A)
Ambiguous	Assertive- nationalist policy options (btwn B & C)	Assertive-cum- conciliatory policy options	Moderate- conciliatory policy options (btwn. A & D)
Unfavourable (H2)	Assertive- nationalist policy option (H5) (Quadrant C)	Assertive-cum- conciliatory policy options (btwn. C & D)	Non-action (H6) (Quadrant D)

Source: Adapted from Lai (2014: 44).

The problematisation of nationalism via the NCR construct, allows 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 importantly, NCR can contribute to a better understanding of other dynamics involved, while simultaneously addressing nationalism's role in Indonesia-Malaysia relations that traditional IR theories and constructivism have failed to adequately explain.

Background of the Indonesia-Malaysia dispute over the Ambalat/Celebes Sea

In general, the bilateral dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia over the maritime region of Ambalat/Celebes Sea refers to their overlapping claims, competition for energy resource, and the alleged incursions in the disputed area by naval and fishing vessels from both countries. Ambalat, which is basically the shortened Indonesian name for '*Ambang batas laut*', meaning 'edge of maritime boundary' is essentially an offshore area in the Celebes Sea located north east of the Indonesian province of East Kalimantan, and south east of the Malaysian state of Sabah. It

is neither an island nor a reef/rock as has been commonly misunderstood but a maritime area comprising undersea blocks that are rich in hydrocarbon reserves (oil and natural gas) (Arsana, 2010: 49; Schofield and Storey, 2005). In fact, Malaysia prefers to call part of the 'Ambalat' as Block ND6 (originally Block Y), and 'East Ambalat' as Block ND7 (originally Block Z), in view of these names being originally used by Indonesia to refer to the areas where concessions were previously granted to the Royal Dutch/Shell Group in 1999, and subsequently to ENI SpA (Italian oil company) and Unocal (an American multinational oil company) on December 12, 2004, for the purpose of oil and gas exploration (Sustina and Arsana, 2011: 12).

The seeds of controversy and conflict have already been sown as early as in December 1979, when the Malaysian government unilaterally published a new map that establishes Malaysia's territorial and maritime boundaries, especially her territorial seas and continental shelves. Based on the new 'Map of 1979', the Malaysian maritime boundaries have been delimited by a line drawn across from the most easterly point of the Indonesia-Malaysia border of Sebatik Island towards the south east of Celebes Sea, which incorporates the Sipadan and Ligitan islands as well as a large area of the Ambalat Block as part of Malaysia's maritime-territorial boundaries. Predictably, the publication of the New Map of Malaysia 1979 elicited protests from neighbouring states including Indonesia due to the alleged excessive nature of Malaysia's claims, which fail to properly address the boundaries of her neighbours (Arsana, 2010: 50-1). The Indonesian government officially submitted a diplomatic protest note to Malaysia on February 1980 stating its non-recognition of the latter's new map and maritime-territorial claims, especially those concerning the ownership and sovereignty of the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan. According to Indonesia, Sipadan and Ligitan as well as the entire Ambalat sea blocks are part of its maritime-territorial boundaries based on the historical agreement of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1891 and Articles 76 and 77 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Malaysia, nevertheless, rejected Indonesia's argument and has proceeded with its sovereignty claims over the two islands based on its 1979 map. Subsequently, both the Malaysian and Indonesian governments agreed to refer their overlapping claims of Sipadan and Ligitan to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which ultimately ruled in favour of Malaysia in December 2002, based on the justification of 'effective occupation' (ICJ, 2002; Guerin, 2005).

Following its defeat at the ICJ, Indonesia revised its territorial baselines by no longer using Sipadan and Ligitan to establish its maritime boundaries in the Celebes Sea. Instead, Jakarta has redelineated its baselines from the east coast of Sebatik Island to Karang/Takat Unarang (Unarang Reef) and three other points at the south east of the Celebes Sea. This, in effect, has indirectly altered

the geopolitics of the Ambalat block whereby it is no longer located entirely in Indonesia's territorial waters (Sustina and Arsana, 2011:14). Meanwhile, the ICJ's decision provided the opportunity for Malaysia to reconfigure its maritime-territorial boundaries by making both the legally acquired islands as the new baseline to establish its maritime borders in the Celebes Sea, which encompass parts of the Ambalat block (Sustina and Arsana, 2011: 14-15).

The Indonesia-Malaysia dispute over the Ambalat: the 2005 episode

The Ambalat controversy began to fester as early as September 2003 when the Malaysian authorities launched exploration and seismic research activities in Block Y (ND6) and Block Z (ND7) which are located in the territorial waters of East Kalimantan known as the Ambalat and East Ambalat blocks by Indonesia. Although the event did not trigger any unwanted incidents, the presence of the Malaysian authorities in the disputed waters became even more pronounced, such as i) shooting and live-fire exercises conducted by the Royal Malaysia Police (Marine) based in Tawau, near the Sipadan and Ligitan waters in June 2004; ii) the alleged aggressive action of Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) vessel, KD Sri Melaka, in "pursuing and open-firing" at Indonesian fishing boats in the vicinity of East Kalimantan in January 2005; and iii) the intelligence-gathering and manoeuvring by Malaysian naval vessels and Beechcraft-type reconnaissance plane during the routine patrol conducted by the Indonesian Navy [Tentera Nasional Indonesia-Angkatan Laut (TNI-AL)] warship, KRI Wiratno at the Unarang Reef in February 2005. These highly visible and potentially provocative actions were deemed by observers to be Malaysia's initial strategies to test Indonesia's reaction and resoluteness in defending its maritime territorial boundaries against its future plans in the Ambalat region (CSIS, 2005: 117).

The inaugural episode of the Ambalat dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia began in February 2005 when the government-linked Malaysian petroleum company, Petroleum Nasional Berhad (PETRONAS) inked a deal on February 16, that awarded oil and gas exploration concessions to the Royal Dutch/Shell Group and its own subsidiary, PETRONAS Carigali Sdn. Bhd. in the ND6 (Block Y) and ND7 (Block Z) deep sea blocks. As highlighted earlier, the Malaysian concessions overlapped with those of the Ambalat and East Ambalat blocks, which were already awarded by the Indonesian government to Shell in 1999, and ENI SpA and Unocal in December 2004, respectively (Rigzone News, 2005). Malaysia's resolve in claiming these deep sea blocks became obvious days later, when the Malaysian enforcement authorities detained 17 Indonesian workers who were constructing a beacon at the Unarang Reef on 21 February 2005 (Gatra, 2005b: 28; Tempo, 2005k: 27; Harvard Asia Quarterly, 2005). The assertive action was followed by

an official statement made by then-Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on February 28, which referred to the concession given by PETRONAS in the Celebes Sea as being part of and within Malaysia's maritime-territorial boundaries (CSIS, 2005: 117).

The Indonesian foreign ministry (KEMENLU/DEPLU) accused Malaysia's unilateral action in the Ambalat as tantamount to "a violation of Indonesia's sovereignty", and submitted a diplomatic note of protest to the Malaysian embassy in Jakarta (Gatra, 2005a: 38). At the same time, Jakarta issued a 'warning' to the Royal Dutch/Shell to not expedite any exploration works in the related areas, which Indonesia claims to be within its maritime boundaries. According to a senior Indonesian foreign ministry official, Arif Havas Ogroseno, a warning letter was issued to Shell Malaysia and Shell Netherlands to stake and underline Indonesia's sovereignty over the waters in the vicinity of the Ambalat (Guerin, 2005). Meanwhile, the foreign minister of Malaysia, Syed Hamid Albar, confirmed receiving the diplomatic note, but also stressed that Malaysia had submitted a similar diplomatic note to Jakarta to formally protest the awarding of exploration concessions to ENI and Unocal by the Indonesian authorities (The Star, 2005b).

Bilateral relations became increasingly strained by early March 2005, when both sides undertook the assertive measure of mobilising their respective militaries to the disputed area. On March 3, 2005, President SBY ordered the TNI to defend Indonesia's territorial sovereignty and integrity. The clarion call sounded by the Indonesian president saw the eventual dispatch of four TNI-AU (Indonesian airforce) F-16 fighter jets and three more TNI-AL warships to join four other naval vessels already stationed at the waters off East Kalimantan (Tempo, 2005b; Guerin, 2005). Conversely, Malaysia reciprocated by adding two more RMN warships to support four others that were in the disputed area. An announcement was also made by the Malaysian media on March 4 regarding the fortification of the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) units stationed in Sabah and Sarawak (Guerin, 2005; Tempo, 2005k: 26-29).

Bilateral tension ratcheted up at the Indonesia-Malaysia borders in the Ambalat waters on March 5, following provocative manoeuvres by warships from both navies, namely KD Kerambit (Malaysia) and KRI Nuku (Indonesia) which constantly faced-off each other in the waters around the Unarang Reef (CSIS, 2005: 117). A day later, an RMAF *Beechcraft*-type reconnaissance aircraft was accused of provoking further tensions, by allegedly violating Indonesian air space for the fifth time in two weeks, and making provocative manoeuvres close to the TNI-AL vessels near the Ambalat (CSIS, 2005: 118). The assertive stance of Indonesia's leadership on the Ambalat issue was vividly demonstrated by President

SBY, who boarded the Indonesian warship KRI K.S. Tubun from Nunukan on March 7, 2005 to Sebatik Island, in a highly visible act to visit and monitor the Indonesia-Malaysia borders, including the Ambalat block (CSIS, 2005: 118). However, SBY's border-monitoring trip was closely shadowed by two RMN warships, namely KD Pari dan KD Paus, which were accused of manoeuvring provocatively by "passing directly in front of the KRI KS Tubun" at a distance of approximately 3.2 kilometres (Gatra, 2005b: 29).

On March 8, 2005, an 'anti-Malaysian' demonstration took place in front of the Malaysian Embassy in Kuningan, Jakarta. The demonstration saw the participation of several Indonesian members of parliament⁴ together with various citizen groups, NGOs and university students. Apart from the vociferous calls of '*Ganyang Malaysia*' (Sweep Malaysia) reminiscent to the Sukarno era of Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation during the 1960s, and the burning of the Malaysian flag, voices of dissatisfaction were equally heard from several quarters within the crowd of demonstrators who accused the SBY administration of "purposely diverting domestic discontent towards the issue of energy price increase to the case of the Ambalat energy dispute" (Gatra, 2005b: 29; Seneviratne, 2005; Forum Keadilan, 2005a). Popular 'anti-Malaysian' demonstrations also occurred in cities across Indonesian provinces such as Pekanbaru, Balikpapan, and Makassar throughout the week, with reports of attempts by protestors to wreak damages at the Malaysian consulate and offices of the Royal Malaysian Armed Force in these provinces (CSIS, 2005: 118).

Similarly, nationalist 'anti-Malaysian'-flavoured sentiments and rhetoric reverberated amongst members of the Indonesian parliament (DPR), such as the Speaker of the DPR, Agung Laksono, who demanded the SBY administration to take assertive measures, including the use of force or military means, if necessary, to "resolve" the problem (Guerin, 2005). Meanwhile, in a separate statement, the chair of Komisi I (Politics and Security Affairs commission) of the DPR, Theo Sambuaga, pressured the Indonesian government to recall the Indonesian ambassador from Kuala Lumpur (Guerin, 2005). The unfettered anger and dissatisfactions of the Indonesian public were likewise expressed in the cyberspace, besides the flurry of attacks on official websites of Malaysian government agencies by Indonesian hackers, which triggered a 'cyber war' with Malaysia's cyber community (Gatra, 2005c: 35). According to Asia Times report, as many as 80 websites in Indonesia and Malaysia were attacked and damaged by hackers from both countries during the festering of the Ambalat dispute (Gatsiounis, 2005).

⁴ Members of the DPR who participated in the 'anti-Malaysian' demonstration included Permadi (PDI-P), Effendy Choirie (PKB), dan Yuddy Chrisnandi (Golkar) (Forum Keadilan, 2005a).

As bilateral tension continued to run high, the top leadership of both states took measures to reduce the possibility of an unwanted armed conflict by establishing a hotline call between President SBY and Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on March 8. As a result of the hotline conversation, both state leaders reached a mutual agreement to immediately seek a resolution to the Ambalat question via diplomatic channel, beginning with bilateral negotiations at the foreign minister-level on the very next day (March 9) (Guerin, 2005). Apart from that, both countries also agreed to stand down and reduce their respective military build-up in the disputed area as a measure to ameliorate border tensions (CSIS, 2005: 118). As planned, both foreign ministers, namely Indonesia's Nur Hassan Wirajuda and Syed Hamid Albar of Malaysia met in Jakarta, where a consensus was reached between both governments to establish a technical team that would meet periodically for deliberation towards a peaceful resolution to their maritime-territorial problems, especially in the Celebes Sea (Gatra, 2005d: 30, 36-37; Forum Keadilan, 2005a: 14). Syed Hamid Albar also took the opportunity to calm down the bilateral situation with his peace offering and conciliatory words during an interview with the Indonesian media in Jakarta on March 10, 2005. The Malaysian foreign minister reiterated that Malaysia does not want a military confrontation with Indonesia and that the close relationship between the two kin-states should not be allowed to be undermined by the Ambalat issue (Tempo, 2005e: 50; CSIS, 2005: 118; Seneviratne, 2005). This sentiment was equally shared by Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in his statement on March 14, 2005, where he stressed that Malaysia will defend any territory that lawfully belongs to her, but will not indiscriminately claim or occupy territories belonging to Indonesia (CSIS, 2005: 118).

Nonetheless, the peace-seeking rhetoric from both parties failed to hide the reality on the ground that their respective armed forces were still battle-ready and stationed at the disputed waters. For instance, two RMN vessels had been accused of encroaching on Indonesia's maritime border in the Sulawesi Sea on March 12, and again on March 19, 2005, where the Malaysian ships were allegedly trying to disable the Indonesian-owned beacon on Unarang Reef (CSIS, 2005: 119). Likewise, the TNI had further strengthened its military outposts at the borders, including the dispatch of TNI-AU fighter-aircrafts and reconnaissance planes as well as the relocation of the TNI elite-marine force from Surabaya to Tarakan to join the other TNI marine outfits based at current outposts (The Jakarta Post, 2005a). The assertive posturing by both Indonesia and Malaysia in the Ambalat blocks had the tendency to invite conflict since their warships frequently confronted and faced off each other while conducting patrol and monitoring in their overlapping maritime boundaries.

In accordance to the arrangement, the technical teams of both Indonesia and Malaysia had their inaugural closed-door meeting on March 22-23, 2005, at Nusa Dua, Bali, to seek a resolution to their maritime-territorial dispute over the Ambalat (ND6/Block Y) and East Ambalat (ND7/Block Z) deep sea blocks. The meeting was also meant to establish a mutually agreeable maritime boundary in the Celebes Sea. Ironically, as both technical teams went about their deliberations, popular anti-Malaysian demonstrations and the establishment of ‘*Ganyang Malaysia*’ vigilante posts, such as the Komando Bela Negara took place in front of the hotel in Nusa Dua, which served as the venue for the meeting (Forum Keadilan, 2005d: 86-7; CSIS, 2005: 119). The first round of the technical meeting failed to bear results, with both governments agreeing to continue with the series of periodic negotiations at the earliest opportunity, beginning on May 25-26 in Langkawi, Malaysia, to seek a joint resolution (Forum Keadilan, 2005d: 86; Media Indonesia, 2005b).

In the meantime, both the armed forces of Indonesia and Malaysia continued their respective patrol and monitoring activities in the Ambalat waters. The presence of and aggressive manoeuvring by the warships of both sides while staking their countries’ claims at the border ultimately led to a ship collision incident that almost triggered an Indonesia-Malaysia armed conflict for the first time since the confrontation in the 1960s. In the controversial incident that happened on April 8-9, 2005, the TNI-AL warship, KRI Tedong Naga was patrolling Indonesia’s maritime borders at the Ambalat when it collided with the RMN patrol vessel, KD Rencong, which was allegedly attempting to disable the construction of a beacon on the Unarang Reef (Tempo, 2005l: 20). The incident incurred minor damages to both vessels. It also sparked off a diplomatic tug-of-war between the two foreign ministries, with the DEPLU summoning the Malaysian ambassador to lodge Indonesia’s protest, while Wisma Putera called on the Indonesian ambassador to Malaysia, Rusdiharjo, to submit a similar protest against Indonesia (Suara Karya, 2005d). The Indonesians accused the Malaysian vessel of aggressive behaviour when it shadowed and rammed the Indonesian warship, although the post-incident commentary by TNI-AL head, Admiral Salamet Soebijanto gave the impression that the KRI Tedong Naga probably adopted an assertive approach to “pursue and expel” the RMN vessel from “Indonesia’s maritime territory” (The Jakarta Post, 2005b). Several days later, Indonesia’s Defence Minister, Juwono Sudarsono, claimed that the Malaysian government had “apologized” over the incident. However, Sudarsono’s Malaysian counterpart, Mohd Najib Abdul Razak denied the claims made by him (The Star, 2005c), and stressed that the RMN was only given strict orders to “avoid confrontation”, exercise restraint, and adhere to the “rules of engagement”. The Indonesian daily, *Kompas*, which carried the report, eventually admitted the inaccuracy of its information and agreed to withdraw its report on

April 15, 2005, while Malaysia compromised by agreeing to not pursuing action against the “wrongful reporting” by the newspaper company (Bernama, 2005). The ship collision/ramming incident was followed by assertive rhetoric from both governments to stress their position and stake their respective claims and ownership over the disputed maritime territory. The war of rhetoric began with the statement from Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on April 14, 2005, where the Malaysian premier was reported by the new agency, Bernama, to have emphasised that there was no reason for Malaysia to leave the Ambalat blocks. The Indonesian President, SBY, responded a day later in a talk at the Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional, Jakarta, by asserting that the “disputed territory is Indonesian territory”, and as such, the Indonesian government “will conduct hard/strong diplomacy and negotiations to defend what is our right and sovereignty” (*quoted from Kompas, 2005a; CSIS, 2005: 119*). Both the Indonesian and Malaysian governments also declared their intention to continue patrolling “their respective maritime territory” within the disputed area to stake and strengthen their respective claims. Amid the flurry of nationalistic rhetoric and acerbics, a meeting transpired between TNI-AL Chief-of-Staff, Vice-Admiral Slamet Soebinjanto and the head of RMN, Admiral Mohd. Anwar Bin Haji Mohd. Nor at the TNI-AL naval base in Batam on April 14, 2005, to sort out and close the case of the collision between KD Rencong and the KRI Tedong Naga in the vicinity of the Ambalat waters a week before. In what was amicably deemed as “golf diplomacy” by now-Retired Admiral Mohd. Anwar Bin Haji Mohd. Nor in an interview, both he and his Indonesian counterpart also reached a consensus in their Batam meeting to guarantee/ensure that such an incident shall never be repeated again (Kompas, 2005a).

The Ambalat dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia started to abate by May 2005, following a high-level diplomatic ‘fence-mending’ visit to Kuala Lumpur by Indonesia’s Vice-President, Jusuf Kalla together with his entourage of ministers on May 6, to strengthen the friendship ties between the two neighbours and kin-states. According to media observation, the main focus of the meeting between Kalla and then-deputy prime minister of Malaysia, Mohd Najib Abdul Razak in Putrajaya was to discuss the Ambalat issue, in which both parties reiterated their mutual interests in resolving the problem amicably via diplomatic channels and peaceful negotiations (Media Indonesia, 2005a). Indeed, this observation was confirmed by Jusuf Kalla himself, during an interview session for this research project.⁵ The visit also served as a prelude to the second round of bilateral negotiations between the technical teams of both countries held in Langkawi on

5 According to Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President, Republic of Indonesia, under the United Indonesia Cabinet of SBY (2004-2009), the meeting with Malaysian Deputy PM Najib Razak was conducted in a formal but cordial atmosphere, although Kalla did stress that he was assertive in demanding a stop to such mutually provocative activities at the disputed waters. Kalla asserted that “*saya memang*

May 25-26, 2005, which reportedly achieved progress in terms of the 'implicit' agreement from both parties to establish their maritime boundaries based on the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) (1982) as prerequisite for the bilateral negotiations to seek a resolution to the Ambalat dispute (Kompas, 2005c). The positive atmosphere resulting from the second round of technical negotiations was announced by Indonesian foreign minister, Nur Hassan Wirajuda, during the DPR's Komisi I meeting in Jakarta on June 8, 2005 (Suara Karya, 2005f). The Foreign Minister also reported that the third round of the technical team negotiations had been arranged to take place next month in Jakarta (Media Indonesia, 2005b). Meanwhile, the Italian oil company, ENI SpA, reported the temporary stoppage and postponement of exploration activities in the Ambalat blocks during a discussion meeting with the DPR's Komisi VII in Jakarta on June 16, 2005, as a measure to diffuse tension at the affected maritime borders (Kompas, 2005d).

Nationalism and power politics in the 2005 Ambalat/Celebes Sea dispute: a neoclassical realist interpretation

The chronological discussion above highlighted the assertive stance undertaken by both Indonesia and Malaysia in their handling of the maritime-territorial conflict over the Ambalat waters in 2005. In the Indonesian context, the nascent SBY administration which just took over the helm of the government less than a year ago, clearly exhibited assertiveness, if not controlled/calculated aggression in its external behaviour, in an effort to stake Indonesia's claim of sovereignty throughout the inaugural episode of the maritime dispute. This raises the question of the extent to which domestic nationalist pressure affects Jakarta's policy options when dealing with Malaysia over the Ambalat dispute, at the given time period, and whether these policy options were directly influenced by nationalist passion and emotions and the politics of identity, and/or 'calculated response' by the SBY administration for domestic political and diplomatic expediencies. Given the background of a fluid external and domestic environment faced by Indonesia, an NCR-oriented analysis of the interactions between nationalism and the shifting external and domestic dynamics, can help ascertain the propensity of nationalism in shaping Indonesia's foreign policy towards Malaysia over the Ambalat case.

The following analysis seeks to map Indonesia's external-domestic position, as perceived and calculated by the SBY government during the 2005 episode of the Ambalat spat, into the NCR matrix. This is done via an assessment of the conditions as well as the prevailing external and domestic factors/actors, and their interactions that affect Indonesia's policy-making towards Malaysia at the

time of the high sea dispute. Indonesia's management of the events leading to the Ambalat conflict in 2005 reveals the interaction between domestic nationalist pressure and the perceptions/calculation of Indonesian state-elites regarding their relative power position and domestic political resolve, which could either promote or constrain Jakarta's policy options vis-à-vis Kuala Lumpur.

Perceptions and calculation of Indonesia's relative power position vis-à-vis Malaysia

In the external context, the conducive international environment of the Asia Pacific region during the post-Cold War era, resulting from a distinct reduction of major power involvement and intervention, notably from the US, in the regional political and security architecture, has provided Indonesia the flexibility to raise her international profile and activism within and outside Southeast Asia. This is consistent with Indonesia's position as a 'middle power', not to mention, the legacy of regional leadership during the Sukarno era, which has instilled the contemporary Indonesians with a sense of regional entitlement (Sukma, 2012).

Although the Suharto regime's aspiration to shore up Indonesia's foreign policy activism suffered a setback due to the political and economic crises of 1997-98, the process of sustained political-economic reforms and democratization that followed have positively resurrected Indonesia's international position and image in the post-Suharto era (Sukma, 2012). Indeed, the normalisation of politics and economics in Indonesia succeeded in renewing its confidence in the international realm, as a result of the Indonesian nation's ability to ride through both political and economic challenges in the midst of a painful democratic transition. It is this renewed sense of national confidence that serves as the foundation and driving force towards the continuation of the 'new activism' principle in Indonesia's foreign policy at the dawn of the new millennia. This foreign policy activism can be vividly reflected in Jakarta's effort to play a dynamic role in both international and regional affairs, especially in Southeast Asia, such as assuming the role as the Chair of ASEAN in 2003. Specifically, Indonesia has become increasingly pro-active and assertive in the regional organisation, especially her role in promoting the establishment of the ASEAN Security Community and her advocacy to include democracy and human rights in the ASEAN Charter (Sukma, 2012: 80-1). The 'free and active' principle which underpins Indonesian foreign policy since the longest of time has equally manifested in Jakarta's efforts to deepen bilateral relations with both major and middle powers, such as the US, Russia, China, Japan, India, Australia and South Korea. In a similar degree of importance, emphasis has continued to be given to 'multilateral' processes within the ASEAN and East Asian region, as a whole.

The aspirations and new dynamism in Indonesia's external behaviour have continued to shine in the SBY administration, which repeatedly stresses that Indonesia aspires to possess a 'louder voice' in world affairs, and needs to exercise her 'freedom and activism' to realise her international roles as "peace-maker, confidence-builder, problem-solver, bridge-builder" (Yudhoyono, 2005). In addition, Indonesia, since the September 11, 2001 incident, and the terror attacks in Bali and Jakarta, has emerged as a 'reliable partner' to the US in the global war on terror. The close cooperation and 'political will' demonstrated by the past Indonesian administrations of Abdurahman 'Gus Dur' Wahid, Megawati Soekarnoputri, and now SBY, to participate in Washington's efforts, have helped foster amicable relations with the sole superpower. This in turn, would have further shored up the confidence and optimistic perceptions of Indonesian state-elites. Indeed, Indonesia's international confidence and the positive ties she has forged with the US as well as with a plethora of countries, as a result of her 'new activism' foreign policy in the post-Suharto period, would have had influenced the perceptions of Indonesian state-elites, especially those in the SBY administration regarding the conducive and favourable international environment, which Indonesia enjoyed. Such optimistic perceptions would, in turn, have the tendency to encourage SBY to advocate a more assertive and pro-national interest stance in foreign policy-making.

Nevertheless, the bilateral atmosphere of Indonesia's diplomatic ties with Malaysia appeared to be less positive than one would hope for since 2002, due to a compendium of bilateral issues that constantly aggravate unnecessary tension between the two so-called brethren-states. Among the issues which have periodically accentuated Indonesian sensitivity towards Malaysia, notably with regard to territorial sovereignty and integrity, is the stigma of the legal battle for Sipadan and Ligitan, of which most if not all Indonesians still feel the pain of 'losing' both the islands to Malaysia till this very day, as a result of the ICJ's adjudication in December 2002. The psychological impact of losing Sipadan and Ligitan not only has the tendency to forge a 'seige mentality' and sense of paranoia among the Indonesian masses as well as political elites, but also has continued to linger and haunt their bilateral relations. This was essentially due to these islands' correlations with Malaysia's subsequent maritime claim and award of oil/gas exploration concessions in the Ambalat blocks on February 2005, which has become the 'catalyst' to the marked deterioration in Indonesia-Malaysia diplomatic relations.

Apart from the legacy of the Sipadan-Ligitan dispute, the sizeable presence of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia equally courted problems for their fragile bilateral ties. Indonesian migrants that serve either as Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (TKI) or illegal immigrants (PATI) has become a very important issue in Indonesia-

Malaysia relations. In fact, the TKI problem has consistently undermined bilateral ties due to a compendium of problems faced by Indonesian workers in Malaysia. The Immigration Department of Malaysia estimated approximately two million Indonesians plying their trade in Malaysia. From this figure, it is estimated that 1.2 million have gained employment legally, while the rest constitute as illegal immigrants (Nor Azizan Idris, 2005: 148). This dire situation creates bilateral problems due to rising crime rates that tend to be associated with the Indonesian illegals. The issue of Indonesian illegal migrants became even more serious when they got themselves involved in a detention camp riot in Negeri Sembilan in 2002, which instigated growing calls from the Malaysian government to 'repatriate' Indonesian workers. The Malaysian government's concern had before this triggered diplomatic quarrels regarding the alleged 'rough treatment' imposed on Indonesian illegal migrant workers under detention and also the fortune of those who were still residing in Malaysia (Gatsiounis, 2005; Sukma, 2009).

Indonesia-Malaysia relations were tested once again on March 1, 2005, when the Malaysian government launched a large-scale operation to detain and repatriate illegal migrants, whose sheer numbers touched almost one million, of which 400,000 of them are said to be Indonesian citizens (Guerin, 2005; Seneviratne, 2005). The operation, which took place following a four-month long 'amnesty campaign' beginning late 2004, had been accused of being too 'high-handed' and 'heavy-handed' because the illegal who were detained not only faced heavy fines, but also prison sentence and canning (Seneviratne, 2005; Tempo, 2005d; The Star, 2005a). The most recent round of the Indonesian PATI issue that began almost simultaneously with the Ambalat dispute clearly contributed to the exacerbation of tension which further complicated the diplomatic relations of both countries.

The gloomy diplomatic atmosphere was further exacerbated by other unrelenting bilateral problems such as the unfettered illegal logging and log smuggling activities at the rainforest regions of Sumatera, Kalimantan and Irian, which allegedly involved Malaysian-owned companies (Gatra, 2005e: 40); border and territorial issues along the Sabah/Sarawak and Kalimantan borders as well as in the Malacca Strait; and the issue of exploitation and abuses of Indonesian workers by their Malaysian employers, to name a few.

Nevertheless, both governments have still been able to divert the tensed atmosphere over the last few years to continue cooperating in various bilateral and multilateral platforms. For instance, the SBY administration was appreciative of the humanitarian aid as well as the level of commitment and cooperation given by both the Malaysian government and non-government organisations in assisting the post-tsunami rescue and recovery efforts in the Aceh province, following

the devastation caused by the natural disaster in December 2004. Besides that, bilateral cooperation in the 'war on terror' campaign has brought about closer working ties between Indonesia and Malaysia in their joint efforts and mutual interests in fighting a 'common enemy' that is terrorism. Indeed, the presence of terrorist elements in both countries required close cooperation between the two neighbours together with the international community to combat the mentioned security threat. In this aspect, both governments have shown a high level of commitment by undertaking a wide range of security measures, not to mention, carrying out the 'war on terror' campaigns, such as detaining suspected members of clandestine terrorist cells in the likes of *Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM)*, which has been accused of having ties with various related extremist movements in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore. For example, the *KMM* and *Al-Maunah* have long been suspected of having ties with *Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)* and the *Al-Qaeda*, both of which are organisations most wanted by the US security authorities (Ganesan, 2003: 147-55). In relations to regional security and terrorism, both governments have likewise established bilateral cooperation in managing the security of the sea lines of communication (SLOC) in the Straits of Malacca via the *Malaysia-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (MALINDO CORPAT)*, which was announced in December 2004 (Kompas, 2004; Hanizah Idris, 2009). Similarly, a trilateral cooperation initiative between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore have been set up as early as June 2004 to coordinate sea patrol and peacekeeping operations in the Malacca Strait (Kompas, 2004).

Apart from working closely together on bilateral arrangements, both Indonesia and Malaysia are two of the most pro-active ASEAN member-states in promoting and encouraging multilateral cooperation via the ASEAN platform. For instance, Indonesia as the chair of the ASEAN Secretariat, and Malaysia as the host nation, have had been working closely with other ASEAN states to ensure the successful organisation of the inaugural East Asia Summit (EAS) in Kuala Lumpur late 2005, when the Ambalat crisis erupted in February-April of that year. The importance of Indonesia-Malaysia cooperation via the ASEAN channel would have surely been a constraint on Jakarta's contemplation to adopt an assertive let alone aggressive foreign policy option when dealing with any bilateral issue vis-a-vis Malaysia, including the Ambalat dispute. Moreover, as highlighted earlier, Indonesia's intentions to lead via the ASEAN platform, and to realise her international aspirations as "peace-maker, confidence-builder, problem-solver, bridge-builder" would have surely required the SBY administration to become the role model in adopting 'the ASEAN-Way' through the exposition of high moral and ethical external behaviour as well as rationality and moderation when managing bilateral conflicts (Gunawan, 2005: 22). The 'ASEAN' factor as a salient constraint on Indonesia's behaviour towards Malaysia during the Ambalat dispute was eluded

by the former Deputy Foreign Minister, Triyono Wibowo, who stressed that “*ASEAN ini juga harus dijaga jangan sampai kita perang dengan Malaysia bias bubar ASEAN itu*”.⁶

The perceptions and calculation of the SBY administration regarding Indonesia's diplomatic leverage vis-à-vis Malaysia would have been equally influenced by the state of economic relations and interdependence between the two countries. As neighbours, is it only natural for Indonesia and Malaysia to enjoy deepened socio-economic interdependence, which can be vividly depicted in the terms of trade, investment, finance, and human capital movement. For instance, their total bilateral trade in 2003 touched USD5.1 billion, which was 70 percent higher than the total sum recorded five years ago (in 1998). Malaysia became Indonesia's six largest trading partner, in 2004, while Indonesia stood at tenth position in Malaysia's list. Among ASEAN states, Indonesia was Malaysia's third largest trading partner, while Malaysia emerged as the second biggest destination for Indonesia's export and third largest source of import (Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia [MITI], 2005). In terms of the mutual flow of foreign investments, there were reportedly more Malaysian companies expanding their investments and operations in Indonesia. According to the Indonesian Investment Coordinating Board, Malaysia was the eleventh largest investor in Indonesia in terms of cumulative foreign direct investments as of December 2003, with a total of 629 projects worth USD10.3 billion. In fact, Malaysia became the tenth largest investor in Indonesia in 2003, with investments totalling USD155.3 million. The focus of Malaysia's foreign investments in Indonesia is in the sectors of plantation, manufacturing, trading, repair and maintenance, and transportation of goods (MITI, 2005). Meanwhile, Indonesia's foreign investment in Malaysia in the 1999-2004 period, totalled 26 projects, valued at USD1.5 million. The Indonesia-Malaysia economic statistics stipulated above clearly highlights a lopsided trend of interdependence, which favoured Malaysia. This lopsided trend continued to early 2005 at the time of the eruption of the inaugural episode of the Ambalat dispute.

There was similarly a healthy degree of interdependence in the social dimension, such as in the field of education where Malaysia has emerged as a popular destination for Indonesian students to pursue their higher education. According to statistics in December 2003, there were approximately 7,744 Indonesian students pursuing their studies in Malaysia. This made them the second largest group of foreign students, which comprised 20 percent of the total number of international students in Malaysia (MITI, 2005). Conversely, in the health and medical-care

⁶ Triyono Wibowo, Deputy Foreign Minister, Republic of Indonesia, in the United Indonesia Cabinet under SBY (2004-2009) (Interview, Jakarta, 23 July 2012).

sector, there were a total of 74,604 Indonesian patients receiving medical treatment in Malaysia as of December 2003. As the largest group, the Indonesian patients made up more than 72 percent of the total foreign patients in Malaysia.

Given the lopsided nature of the socio-economic interdependence experienced by Indonesia, it is not far-fetched to assume that Indonesian state-elites (SBY administration) would have been inclined to perceive their diplomatic leverage as less favourable vis-à-vis Malaysia at the time of the Ambalat dispute in early 2005. In fact, the reported meeting between President SBY and the Chief Executive Officer of Petronas, Tan Sri Dato' Sri Mohd. Hassan Marican on March 3, 2005, to discuss about issues related to Petronas' investment plans in Indonesia, during the festering of the Ambalat dispute (CSIS, 2005: 117), have expectedly, invited speculations regarding the possibility of pressure applied by the business community on the SBY government to adopt a moderate-conciliatory approach when dealing with the maritime-territorial dispute, as a means to protect Indonesia's burgeoning economic relationship with and the benefits of foreign investments from her neighbour, which are crucial to sustaining Indonesia's economic growth.

To surmise, the renewed national confidence enjoyed by Indonesia, as a result of her relatively successful political and economic reforms since 1998, have instigated the implementation of a 'free and active' foreign policy, which may have led to the SBY administration's optimistic outlook concerning the favourable international environment that Indonesia faced prior to the 2005 Ambalat dispute. However, the Indonesian government could have perceived their diplomatic leverage vis-a-vis Malaysia to be unfavourable due to a compendium of bilateral issues which have continued to haunt the diplomatic interactions between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur since 2002, not to mention, Indonesia's lopsided economic interdependence toward Malaysia in both trade and investment. Apart from that, Indonesia's commitment towards the principles and norms of ASEAN also tended to constrain and limit Jakarta's external behaviour. It is therefore credible to infer and interpret that the SBY administration was experiencing an 'ambiguous' relative power position, when facing the Ambalat dispute between February-June 2005.

Perceptions/calculation of Domestic Political Resolve (vis-à-vis domestic nationalist pressure)

In the domestic context, President SBY and his cabinet could be said to be still enjoying popular support following his success in the first-ever direct presidential election that took place in October 2004. SBY's electoral success had fostered a favourable domestic political environment for the newly elected president to

act tough, and more importantly, provided him with the all important political mandate to pursue a 'suitable' foreign policy towards Malaysia. As a moderate leader armed with vision and high intellect, President SBY is more inclined towards promoting a moderate-conciliatory rather than an aggressive foreign policy when dealing with all sorts of issues and disputes, in both domestic and international arena. According to Hasjim Djalal, although SBY has nationalist credentials like all Indonesian leaders before him, he is also a pragmatic, rational and analytical person, who always takes into account and gives adequate consideration to all factors before making a decision.⁷ Indeed, such personality traits and idiosyncrasies that characterised the *modus operandi* of the SBY administration have had the president frequently accused of being 'slow' in taking actions or making decisions by his critics.⁸ In the context of the bilateral relationship with Malaysia, SBY's personality and idiosyncrasies together with his awareness on the importance of a healthy and progressive Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral relationship, in helping realise Indonesia's comprehensive national interests, may have the tendency to influence his foreign policy options, when managing the Ambalat crisis on February-June 2005.

Nonetheless, the domestic political temperature in Indonesia was already heating up when the Ambalat dispute erupted, due to demonstrations and strong protests from various parties towards the subsidy reduction and oil/energy price hike (BBM) plan that was implemented by the SBY administration beginning March 1, 2005. The plan was supposedly a part of the economic reforms programme to reduce the burden of public expenditure, which was originated from the National Development Programme Law (*Undang-Undang Program Pembangunan Nasional*) approved in year 2000. Among the plans for the programme included the eradication or reallocation of energy subsidies in stages by the end of 2004 (Tempo, 2005b: 23). Besides aggravating public dissatisfaction, the SBY administration's decision to increase oil/energy prices invited strong opposition from political parties on both sides of the political divide, including those within the government coalition. According to media reports, the Finance and Energy Commissions of the DPR, in principle, opposed the oil/energy price increase based on the failure of the SBY government to provide adequate compensation plans to cushion the negative impact of the programme. There were also strong opposition from among the members of the ruling coalition, which saw the Golkar, PPP, PKB, PAN, PKS and PBB political factions threatening to impose a political sanction/boycott,

⁷ Prof. Dr. Hasjim Djalal, former Ambassador to the United Nations, and Ambassador At-Large for Law of the Sea/Maritime Affairs; Member of Indonesian Maritime Council; Advisor to the Naval Chief of Staff (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 30 May 2011).

⁸ Prof. Dr. Hasjim Djalal (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 30 May 2011).

if the SBY administration were to maintain its uncompromising stance (Tempo 2005b: 23). According to political observers, “the strong domestic protest against the oil/energy price increase has brought panic and anxiety to the government” (Tempo, 2005c: 33). The domestic political upheaval caused by the oil/energy price hike issue has, to some extent, undermine the domestic political and power position of the SBY administration vis-à-vis the opposition and critics/detractors of SBY, who would be inclined to exploit the issue to garner popular support, while challenging the political integrity/credentials of President SBY and his Cabinet. Domestic political pressure also continued rising due to the attitude of the oppositions, who kept harping on, as well as questioning and criticising the SBY administration’s so-called ‘100 days performance’ that was based on the theme of ‘consolidation, conciliation, and action’ [*konsolidasi, konsultasi dan aksi (K2A)*], which they saw as more of “rhetoric and make believe” [*bahan omongan dan retorika*] (Tempo, 2005a: 26).

The domestic political atmosphere deteriorated further with unrelenting pressure deriving from domestic nationalist elements following the eruption of the Ambalat dispute. Although this foreign policy crisis started in the middle of February 2005, it only gathered momentum and became serious by early March, which interestingly, coincided with the announcement of the oil/energy price hike by the SBY government. Such an [in]opportune timing has had many political observers linking the oil/energy price hike issue with the Ambalat crisis, where the SBY administration has been accused of trying to divert domestic political disaffection to the international realm by “supersizing” the nationalist-flavoured territorial dispute to re-mobilise popular support and political unity (Noorsy, 2005: 74; Tempo, 2005c: 33; Seneviratne, 2005). However, the claims of diversionary tactics by President SBY have been rebuked by Agung Laksono, the DPR Speaker, who asserted that the SBY government never had the intention to purposely manipulate the Ambalat issue to divert public displeasure from the oil/energy price hike, and that what happened was a “spontaneous development”.⁹ Nevertheless, the SBY administration did encounter severe nationalist pressure throughout March and April 2005, be it from the media, ‘nationalist’ NGOs, and public opinion, as well as political parties from both the ruling coalition and opposition, to take up an assertive and non-compromising foreign policy position against Malaysia, when handling the Ambalat conflict.

One of the most vociferous propagator of nationalistic ‘anti-Malaysian’ sentiments was the Indonesian media, which did not only give comprehensive and detailed

⁹ Agung Laksono, Speaker, House of Representatives, (DPR), Republic of Indonesia (2004-2009) from the Fraksi Partai Golkar and Coordinating Minister for People’s Welfare in the United Indonesia Cabinet Volume II (2009-2014) (Interview, Jakarta, 1 August 2012).

coverage of the various incidents at the affected maritime borders, but also provided hawkish and nationalistic-flavoured commentaries that were polemical as they were inflammatory. Such were the efforts of the media to mobilize the nationalistic sentiments of the Indonesian masses and set the agenda for the SBY government to act tough against Malaysia (Seneviratne, 2005). Apart from the coverage by newspapers like *Kompas*, *Jakarta Post*, *Koran*, and *Republika*, popular weekly magazines, such as *Tempo*, *Gatra*, and *Forum Keadilan* dedicated almost their entire weekly edition of March 2005, respectively to discuss the maritime-territorial issue and related problems in Indonesia-Malaysia relations. Such comprehensive coverage has yet to include the significant air time given to the issue by both radio and television broadcasting stations such as MetroTV and TVOne, and internet media/forums (e.g. *okezone*; *detikNews*; *Indonesiamatters.com*), which equally contributed to drumming up nationalistic 'anti-Malaysian' sentiments among the Indonesian people. With assertive and provocative headlines that read "Defend our rights and sovereignty in the Ambalat" ["*Pertahankan Hak dan Kedaulatan di Ambalat*"] (*Kompas*, 2005a), the rights of RI over Ambalat are non-negotiable" ["*Hak RI atas Ambalat adalah Harga Mati*"] (*Kompas*, 2005b), "*Adu Gertak di Ambalat*" (*Tempo*, 2005g), and "*Posko Ganyang Keangkuhan*" (*Gatra*, 2005f), the Indonesian media's role in increasing the visibility of the Ambalat issue, had indeed, further complicated the ability of the SBY administration to compromise with Malaysia in the inaugural episode of their maritime-territorial dispute.

As elaborated earlier in the part on the chronological development of the Ambalat spat, domestic nationalist pressure also manifested in the form of popular 'anti-Malaysia' demonstrations that took place in front of the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta as well as consulates in several Indonesian provinces, such as Surabaya, Solo, Pekanbaru, Ambon and Medan that were participated by various segments of the public including university students and members of the DPR (*Gatra* 2005f: 32). With the rhetorical clarion call of 'sweep Malaysia' (*Ganyang Malaysia*) filling the air, and other provocative actions such as the burning of the Malaysian flag, these demonstrations are not only spontaneous reactions of popular emotions against Malaysia's intentions and ambitions, but also an attack on the SBY administration, which had been perceived as being 'too soft' and 'too slow' in taking assertive actions against Malaysia at the beginning of the crisis. That said, it cannot be denied that some of the participants of these demonstrations were allegedly 'paid' to do so by parties with narrow political interests, be it the ultra-nationalists who wanted the government to take aggressive action against Malaysia, or the domestic political oppositions who may have tried to utilize the anti-Malaysian demonstrations to attack the policies of the SBY administration.¹⁰

¹⁰ Prof. Dr. Hasjim Djalal (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 30 May 2011).

Likewise, these popular demonstrations were organized to simultaneously protest the harsh actions taken by the Malaysian authorities against illegal Indonesian migrants during an operation that was launched in early March 2005, as well as serving as a channel for popular dissatisfaction towards the oil/energy price hike.

Popular nationalist pressure also emerged in the efforts of 'nationalist' pressure groups (NGOs) that sought to establish 'sweep Malaysia' vigilante posts throughout the four corners of the Indonesian archipelago, from as centrally located as Bandung and Surabaya to as far flung as Makassar and Bali, to protest Malaysia's claim over the Ambalat. Among them included the Front Ganyang Malaysia (GAM) (Sweep Malaysia Front); Posko Ganyang Malaysia at Jalan Onta Lama, Makassar, which was led by activists from the Makassar National Anti-narcotics Movement that reportedly succeeded in registering 3,800 'volunteers'; Posko Ganyang Malaysia that was formed by Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam in Surabaya; and other similar movements by LSM Petani Berjuang (PBI) and Angkatan Muda Ka'bah (AMK) in Bandung, not to mention, the Gerakan Masyarakat Anti-Arogansi Solo (Gemar's) in Solo (Gatra, 2005f: 32-33; Tempo, 2005c: 32-33). Similar to the questionable motives of certain segments of demonstrators who may not be necessarily nationalistic, there were those among these so-called 'volunteers' who were 'paid', or who joined such movements out of boredom (Tempo, 2005c: 33).

The SBY administration also faced pressure from various individuals and political party factions, especially in the DPR, to adopt assertive measures to handle the Ambalat dispute. As previously mentioned, politicians either from the government factions or oppositions had joined these popular demonstrations. There were likewise DPR members who gave provocative statements/commentaries, during a time when the Ambalat issue was simmering towards boiling point. Their actions were either encouraged by their respective nationalistic sentiments and/or to gain political mileage or strengthen their nationalist credentials for domestic political expediency. For instance, the DPR Speaker, Agung Laksono, had pressured the SBY administration to take assertive actions, including the use of military force, if necessary, to 'resolve' the problem. According to Laksono, the DPR would support such a step in view of its relevance to the desires of the Indonesian population (Guerin, 2005). The DPR Head also disagreed with the utilisation of diplomatic negotiation channels to resolve the Ambalat problem because he saw Indonesia's participation in the negotiation process as tantamount to admitting that there was indeed a 'dispute' over the affected territory (Gatra, 2005d: 37).

Meanwhile, in a separate statement, the chair of the DPR's Komisi I (Political and Security Affairs Commission), Theo Sambuaga, pressed the Indonesian government to recall its ambassador to Malaysia (Guerin, 2005). The pressure from the chair

of Komisi I was equally supported by other members of the Commission, such as Effendy Choirie, Yuddy Chrisnandi, Ali Mochtar Ngabalin, and Abdillah Toha, who wanted the SBY administration to act assertively in the territorial dispute. For example, Abdillah Toha in his media interview had provocatively asserted that “when diplomacy fails, we [the DPR] demand the government to take military measures” (Forum Keadilan, 2005c: 85). Several members of Komisi I including Dr Yuddy Chrisnandi, the co-researcher of this project, also took the pro-active measure of visiting and monitoring the Indonesia-Malaysia borders in the Ambalat waters, a few days before the high-profile, ship collision/ramming incident between KD Rencong and KRI Tedong Naga in early April 2005. Indeed, we can interpret this highly visible, ‘nationalistic’ measure and provocation by members of the DPR’s Komisi I to visit the border areas was among the domestic nationalist pressure that had possibly influenced TNI-AL’s more assertive posture, not to mention, its calculated aggression that led to the ship collision incident.

Domestic nationalist pressure was also translated from the views and commentaries of intellectuals and opinion leaders, not to mention, assertive statements from TNI representatives. For instance, the renowned and well respected former Indonesian ambassador on sea and maritime affairs, Hasjim Djalal, had accused “Malaysia for not behaving like a good neighbor” in an interview with *Tempo*. Djalal asserted that the current Indonesian government “must have strong political will” like its predecessor in the “Bung Karno” era, to take assertive actions to defend its territorial sovereignty and integrity (Tempo, 2005i: 38-9). The retired Ambassador who was also a member of the Indonesian technical team involved in the advocacy of Indonesia’s sovereignty claims over the Sipadan and Ligitan at the ICJ, reiterated his strong opinion in an interview on 30 May 2011.¹¹ A similar viewpoint was shared by Rizal Sukma, Director of CSIS Jakarta, who opined that Malaysia’s bold attempt to claim Ambalat was based on strategic calculations that clearly revealed Indonesia’s lack of adequate ‘deterrent’ measures. This dire situation was the result of TNI’s limited defence capabilities in comparison to the Malaysian armed forces, as well as a serious ‘*lacuna*’ in the doctrines, strategies, coordination, posture, and national defence priorities. The well known Indonesian political thinker/scientist pressed the SBY government for a speedy reform and to strengthen the TNI wherewithal to enable Indonesia to face challenges and national threats more effectively (Sukma, 2005: 98-9).

At the same time, senior TNI and Department of Defence officers issued a strong rhetoric stressing their preparedness to go to war with Malaysia to defend Indonesia’s territorial sovereignty. For instance, the media reported a nationalist

¹¹ Prof. Dr. Hasjim Djalal (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 30 May 2011).

statement deriving from TNI-AL spokesperson, Admiral Abdul Malik Yusuf, on early March 2005, which asserts that Indonesia “*tidak akan melepaskan/menggadaikan walaupun seinci tanah atau setitik air lautan kita ke dalam tangan pihak asing*” (Guerin, 2005). An almost identical message was likewise presented by the TNI-Angkatan Darat (AD) Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Djoko Santoso, who said “*kami tidak akan membiarkan satu jengkal tanah pun diambil negara lain*” during his statement concerning TNI-AD’s combat readiness to carry out operations in the Ambalat (Forum Keadilan, 2005a: 13). Similarly, the Indonesian Minister of Defence, Juwono Sudarsono, saw Malaysia’s actions in the Ambalat as “*uji coba terhadap kekuatan militer Indonesia*” yang dinilai negara jiran tersebut sebagai “*tidak terlalu kuat*” (Gatra, 2005b: 31). For instance, as an actor and stakeholder of Indonesian foreign policy and security, such nationalistic statements can be interpreted as ‘indirect’ pressure on the SBY government to prepare a bigger budget allocation for the operations of the Department of Defence (DEPHAN), as well as for the development and modernisation of the two institutions, namely the DEPHAN and TNI.

Overall, the domestic actors in Indonesia arguably reached a near consensus in protesting against Malaysia’s claims and in demanding the SBY administration to take assertive actions to defend Indonesia sovereign rights over the Ambalat deep sea blocks. It cannot be denied that there were sporadic voices of moderation amongst the plethora of actors, especially from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DEPLU) which were most emphatically manifested through the Foreign Minister, Nur Hassan Wirajuda, himself, and Rusdiharjo, the Indonesian Ambassador to Malaysia, who had worked hard to reduce the bilateral tension with their moderate, diplomatic and conciliatory stance towards Kuala Lumpur. For instance, Ambassador Rusdiharjo had been accused for undermining Indonesia’s national pride following his ‘apology’ and criticism of the mob-like behaviour of the Indonesian masses as well as the flag burning incident during the anti-Malaysian public demonstrations in Jakarta (Forum Keadilan, 2005b: 82-83). Although possessing a *modus operandi* that is inclined towards diplomacy, there is a possibility that the ‘conciliatory’ posture of the DEPLU reflected the foreign policy stance of the SBY administration, who were not prepared to risk sacrificing Indonesia-Malaysia relations for an issue which could be potentially resolved at the negotiation table. What more, the personality and idiosyncrasies of President SBY himself, tended to rest on a rational and peaceful approach when managing the maritime-territorial dispute.

Apart from that, moderate behaviour was likewise portrayed by a number of Indonesian Islamic leaders who had sent a ‘peace-mission’ delegation to Kuala Lumpur middle of March 2005, under the auspices of ‘Muslim brotherhood’ to

repair the bilateral relationship that had been damaged as a result of the Ambalat dispute (The Jakarta Post, 2005a). In fact, the former Indonesian president, Abdurrahman 'Gus Dur' Wahid had also advised the Indonesian government to display a moderate behaviour and sought for a "peaceful solution" to the Ambalat conflict (The Jakarta Post, 2005a). Nonetheless, strong and vociferous domestic nationalist pressure from various segments of the society, coupled with President SBY's perceptions of his administration's somewhat wobbly power position due to strong public displeasure towards his domestic economic policies have had the SBY government perceiving its domestic political resolve, especially vis-à-vis domestic nationalist pressure to be unfavourable.

The SBY administration's policy option in managing the 2005 Ambalat/Celebes Sea dispute

In sum, Indonesia's foreign policy option during the inaugural episode of the Ambalat dispute in February-June 2005 was possibly decided based on the anticipation of an 'ambiguous' relative power position vis-à-vis Malaysia, resulting from a combination of a conducive international environment but somewhat unfavourable diplomatic leverage against its neighbor and disputant-state. The indeterminacy of the condition would have given the SBY administration flexibility in policy option. Conversely, the positive domestic environment during the early period of SBY's presidency, which was fostered by his electoral success and popular support, had been somewhat undermined by the oil/energy price hike issue, followed by 'anti-Malaysia' nationalist pressure due to the eruption of the Ambalat incident and problems related to the Indonesian workforce and illegals in the neighbour state. The relatively 'unfavourable' domestic political resolve (as perceived by the SBY government) juxtaposed against an 'ambiguous' relative power position, would have generated an external-domestic nexus that saw the SBY administration moving to a position between quadrant C and D in the NCR Model. Jakarta's foreign policy option and behaviour when dealing with the Ambalat crisis were consistent with the NCR's assumptions, which required the SBY administration to adopt a combination of assertive-nationalist and 'highly visible' policy option (e.g. visiting the disputed maritime-territorial border; issuing tough statements and rhetoric; mobilising and beefing up TNI forces at the border of dispute; and acquiescing to the controlled/calculated aggression of the TNI-AL during the navy's encounters with RMN vessels, etc.) to satisfy domestic nationalist demands, which was concurrently complemented by conciliatory measures and signals (e.g. 'hotline' between SBY and the Malaysian premier; reduction of military power concentration or military 'stand-down' at the border of the disputed area; issuing of moderate-conciliatory statements either by SBY, or through the DEPLU; agreeing to establish a bilateral negotiation mechanism to seek a peaceful resolution, etc.)

to reduce the diplomatic cost of a worsening bilateral relationship. Indeed, the need for the SBY administration to play to the domestic nationalist gallery and yet simultaneously maintain a rational and moderate posture, externally, was vividly reflected in the assertion made by former Indonesian defence minister, Juwono Sudarsono himself, regarding the ‘symbolic’ nature of the TNI mobilisation to the disputed area, during an interview for this project.¹² It could therefore be inferred that such acts of ‘symbolism’ represent the limits and superficiality of nationalism in affecting Indonesia’s external behaviour, where Indonesia’s pragmatic state-elites appear to place more emphasis on maintaining cordial relationship with the disputant-state to secure Indonesia’s broader national interests.

Conclusion

Indonesia’s management of inaugural episode of the Ambalat maritime territorial dispute with Malaysia in 2005 highlighted, to a certain extent, the salience and effectiveness of domestic nationalist pressure in limiting and constraining SBY’s foreign policy options. Nevertheless, unlike the other bilateral disputes that periodically taint diplomatic relations, i.e. cultural heritage dispute, which can be deemed as a ‘symbolic’ issues, the Ambalat maritime-territorial conflict is ‘real/tangible’ and has the potency to trigger military confrontation, given the danger of unfettered, chauvinistic nationalist desires and excessive military brinkmanship or grandstanding.¹³ Theoretically, the tenets of NCR would require Indonesian (and Malaysian) state-elites/policy decision-makers to exercise caution and control in managing issues of territorial sovereignty and integrity, and that they ought not to carelessly allow nationalistic passion and emotions override their rationality in policy decision-making. The ‘calculated/measured’ policy options as well as diplomatic manoeuvres adopted by Jakarta clearly highlights the SBY administration’s emphasis on ‘sensitivity’ rather than ‘passion/emotions’ when it comes to decision-making, not to mention, ‘balancing’ to advance both foreign and domestic policy goals simultaneously. This demonstrates the extent to which nationalism affects and shapes Indonesia’s external policies, where under specific external-domestic conditions and time context, as perceived and calculated by Indonesian state-elites, can be more or less significant vis-à-vis other determinants in shaping their foreign policy options.

¹² Juwono Sudarsono, Defence Minister, Republic of Indonesia, in the United Indonesia Cabinet under SBY (2004-2009) (Interview, Jakarta, 27 August 2012).

¹³ The ‘symbolic’ and ‘soft’ nature of the cultural heritage dispute was also the opinion of several elite interviewees of this project, including Jusuf Kalla and Triyono Wibowo, Triyono, who was the deputy foreign minister during the first SBY cabinet, suggested that the dispute over Tortor, Reog were just ‘trigger’ to larger unresolved problems., including territorial/maritime disputes which can easily trigger conflict due to the non-negotiable value of territorial sovereignty and integrity. Triyono Wibowo (Interview, 23 July 2012).

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