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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

RELIGION, NATIONALISM AND REGIONAL POLITICS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND AND MALAYSIA

JURAIRAT PATTANASATAPORN

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

APRIL / 2012
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The thesis “Religion, Nationalism and Regional Politics in Southeast Asia: The Relations Between Thailand and Malaysia” aims to study the impact of religions on the foreign relations in Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia is the region of religious and ethnic diversity. And religion is still one of the most influential societal institutions. Although none of the Southeast Asian governments sets religions as a goal of their foreign policy, they cannot completely ignore the religious factor. Religion can at least affect the government’s policy through the worldview and expectation of the constituencies.

But religion is definitely not the sole factor determining the foreign policy. There are many other factors, and other national interests that the government needs to consider. Therefore, the thesis aims to find out the extent to which religion can affect the foreign policy of the Southeast Asian governments, how they weigh the religious factor against the national interests, and eventually how religion impacts the regional relations. In this process, the thesis takes the Malaysian policy toward the Thai–Muslim insurgency as the main case study, then compares the findings with other similar cases in the region in order to reach the conclusion on the influence of religion on the foreign relations in the regional level.

The Background

- The theoretical introduction

In term of international politics, this is the era of nation-states, because they are
the main agents which pursue the relations toward each other in the international system. However, the nation is actually the new political concept emerging a few centuries ago.

When the religious institution was influential in Europe and people identified themselves through religion, the dynasties launched the war against each other in order to support their co-religionists in other territories. But the repeating bloody religious wars, especially the Thirty Year War, led to the settlement on the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, in which the idea of sovereignty emerged. The settlement agreed on the idea of sovereignty over the territory in order to prevent the interference against each other in defense of minorities sharing the same religious affiliation.¹

But it was the agreement among the European elites. The ordinary people in Europe did not feel the commonality nor connection among them until the expansion of vernacular languages. The standardized printed media in the age of capitalism connected the people to feel the collective membership of the same community which was a base of nation. The new kind of common identity formed up in the same time that the religious dominance declined from the public sphere. The wide societal changes brought about the increase of the educated middle class who shared the common experience on the new society. They brought the mass to participate in the formation of “nation.”² After the popular revolution had started to create the nation in France, the model was

imitated mainly in Europe.

However, in Southeast Asia, the formation of nation-state did not originate from the ordinary people’s will. The idea of nation-state entered the region through the western colonizers and the western-educated Asian students. In the same time, the exposure to the colonization and the influx of Asian immigrants trembled the original structure of Southeast Asian society. To term with the changing political circumstances, the notion of nationalism was imposed to accelerate and fortify the formation of nation in order to confront with the invaders, whether they were colonizers or the foreign immigrants. (The details will be discussed in the next chapter.) The notion of nationalism became an effective tool to create a nation, because it originally suggests the congruence of the nation and the territory. Namely, it justifies that an ethnic-religious group should have a state of its own.3 The notion values the societal inheritances, and legitimizes the exclusion of the newcomers from their lands.

But the notion of nationalism contains a paradox. It creates a nation based on an ethnic-religious claim, but in most cases a nation is composed of more than one ethnic or religious group. This means aside from the exclusion of the newcomers, the notion unintentionally, (or intentionally by the practices of the rulers), excludes the old inhabitants who become the ethnic or religious minority after the borderline was drawn from the political arena. In turn, the ethnicity or religion which the majority of population adhere to is promoted as the core identity of the nation, and the majority ethnic-religious group is the main voice

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to control the country.

On the other hand, a nation is required to be neutral on ethnicity and secular in order to transcend its legitimacy to all ethnic and religious groups. Plus, as a new nation-state, the unification or the stability of Southeast Asian states are unsecured. This even emphasizes the significance of the ethnic neutrality and secularism in order to contribute to the national cohesion. But this is hard to achieve if a particular ethnic or religious group is politically dominant. Furthermore, if consider the societal condition when the nation-state was established, the identity of people was still based on the religion and kinship. And these cultural identities intertwine with national identity, which means they have political implication.

Moreover, the cultural identity can connect people beyond the borders. The same ethnic-religious group can be the majority in a country, and the minority on just another side of border. When the ties between the co-religionists and co-ethnics are strong, how far could the religious solidarity affect the foreign policy, especially if the state has the interests of national cohesion or security to preserve in the same time?

- The case study: The Thai–Muslim insurgency and its impact on Malaysian relations with Thailand

Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat provinces are the southern-most provinces of Thailand which border the northern states of Malaysia. The majority of residents
in these provinces are Muslims and Malay descendants, while the majority of Thai population are Buddhists. The Thai–Muslim insurgency in the south of Thailand erupted in 2004. Many Malaysians perceive the insurgency as the result of the Thai government’s oppression against their Muslim “brothers”. The Muslim Malaysians share the religious, ethnic and linguistic bonds with the Thai–Muslims and they both have relatives living on the other side of the border. The heavy-handed policy of the Thai government on suppressing the insurgents even firmed up the solidarity of Malaysians for the Thai–Muslims. The relations between Thailand and Malaysia, as the nearest Muslim neighbor country is inevitably interrupted.

The Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), the opposition and Islamist party, which has the strong base on the northern Malaysian states, such as Kedah and Kelantan, which share the border with the Thai southern provinces clearly showed their sympathy with the Thai–Muslims by handing the protest memorandum to the Thai consulate in Kota Baru,\textsuperscript{4} which exerted the political pressure on the Malaysian government. As a result, when 131 Thai citizens of Muslim–Malay ethnic fled into Malaysia as refugees, the Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi set the condition that the refugees would be sent back only if the Thai government guarantees their safety\textsuperscript{5}. This incident led to the lowest point of the Thai–Malaysian relations.

\textsuperscript{5} John Fuston, \textit{Thailand’s Southern Fires : The Malaysian Factor}, (The paper is prepared for Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.) November 2006, p. 60.
Amidst the political pressure from the Malaysian constituencies and PAS based on the claim of Muslim solidarity, one question rises. Malaysia is a Muslim-majority country, but how much would it allow the religious factor to influence its policy, especially when it has other mutual interests with Thailand?

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

With the above-mentioned case study, the thesis hypothesizes that the religious factor hardly affects the foreign policy of countries in Southeast Asia, because the Southeast Asian countries prioritize the national interests over the religious factor. And the thesis seeks to elaborate on:

1. What would be these national interests which the Southeast Asian countries prioritize over the religious factor? And why are these interests indispensable?
2. How do the Southeast Asian governments balance the religious factor against the national interests?

The religious factor plays a role in a foreign policy but is weighed against the national interests all the time. And the calculations are not as simple as a choice between the national interests and the religious commitment. The second research question will explore the conditions under which these balances take. The answers to both questions will affirm the hypothesis. The thesis will take the Malaysian policy toward the Thai-Muslim insurgency as the main case study, and compare the findings from the main case to the similar cases in the region in order to draw the conclusion in the regional level.
The Literature

A nation is a political unit. Many political scientists agree that to be a nation, the members in the political unit must adequately believe in their common national identity. The conventional view concerning the nation suggests that the common identity is derived from the inherited quality of the community, such as ethnicity, religion, language and the way of life. This is probably because before the rise of the “nation,” people connected to each other through the kinship system and the religious canopy. They recognized who was who through the family lineage, and it expanded to the village or tribal level. The people in the same community also had the communal religious practices, spoke the same language, and followed the same way of life.

Therefore, for Ernest Gellner, a nation is defined through the culture. To be a part of the same nation, two individuals must “share a common culture—a system of ideas, signs, associations and ways of behaving—and they must recognize each other as belonging to the same nation.” When a nation develops to constitute a permanent administrative unit with the territory, then it becomes a state.

Max Weber, the German sociologist and political economist, differentiated between “nation” and “state.” He defined a “nation” as “a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own…and tends to produce a state of its own” and defined a “state” as “a territorial organization exercising

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legitimate control over its own bounded territory, unchallenged by internal power competition or external intervention\textsuperscript{7} Therefore, according to him, before a state could form up, communities in a state must have a common conscience to express themselves as the same political unit. This definition implies that a nation, (or a collective popular sentiment as a nation) is a prerequisite of a state.

The traditional view which believes that the common identities of a nation are a base of state can explain the state-formation of German and Italy, where inhabitants had the common language and history. Hence, this approach believes that the state is legitimate only when it reflects the cultural characters of the population, and the state exists in order to protect the common cultural identity which binds the inhabitants.\textsuperscript{8} Lars-Erik Cederman notices that nationalism which is derived from this type of state-formation would be “unification nationalism.\textsuperscript{9}” However, this is the traditional explanation of the state. There are other explanations of the nation-formation.

The modernist perspective tends to analyze the nation-formation as a result of the societal change. Anthony Giddens, the British sociologist offers another explanation which reverses the traditional view. Instead of that a nation is a base of state, he believes that a state comes first, and it produces a nation. He contends that “A nation … only exists when a state has a unified administrative


reach over the territory over which its sovereignty is claimed.\textsuperscript{10}

In other words, the new political circumstance of the modern state era actually conceptualizes a nation. This view can explain the state-formation in France where the Enlightenment era ignited the recognition of the right of self-determination which led to the establishment of the state. Lars-Erik Cedeman notes that nationalism which is derived from this type of state would be “state-framed nationalism.\textsuperscript{11}"

Benedict Anderson does not believes in the common identity as a base of a nation. Rather, his explanation points to the connectedness in the society among the people of different identity. According to him, the spreading vernacular languages connected people. And when the spoken languages transformed to be the standardized printed media which was massively produced, it rendered the readers (from different religious and ethnic backgrounds) to imagine of each other as the members in the same societal unit. However, when he touches on the origin of national consciousness in South America, he also mentioned that the politically and economically self-contained characters helped to create the sense of unity. As he explained, “each of the new South American republics had been an administrative unit from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century … The original shaping of the American administrative units was to some extent arbitrary and fortuitous, marking the spatial limits of particular military conquests … In

\begin{thebibliography}{11}
\end{thebibliography}
addition, Madrid’s commercial policies had the effect of turning administrative units into separate economic zones.\(^{12}\)

As for the modernization theory, it predicts that when a region is modernized, the various traditional identities would be homogenized into the main cultural system. Through this cultural commonality, a state would form up, and the ethnic and religious identity would subside.\(^{13}\) Therefore, the ethnic or religious mobilization in a state is just the remainder from the pre-modern era which cannot adjust itself to the modernity.

All theories agree on one thing which is the emergence and existence of a state depend much on its inhabitants’ perception on their identity. The commonality of the religion or ethnicity of the inhabitants may not be very necessary for a state, according to the modernist view, as the population of many countries are not homogeneous. But when a state is fully developed, its people must believe in the common national identity embedded in them, whether the belief in the national identity would originate from the popular level, the societal changes or it is projected from the state level.

But in many cases, where the evolution of the state-formation does not develop naturally and the boundaries do not completely relate to the inhabiting nationals, the national identity could overlap with the traditional ethnic-religious identity. In Southeast Asia, the development of the states is different from the European


model. All Southeast Asian states were either direct or indirect outcomes of the colonial intervention and massive immigration in a short period. This external factors did not appear in Europe, but for Southeast Asia, they imposed the considerable influence on the state-formation, since the Southeast Asian states were forced to strengthen their identity as a nation, even before their people would feel belonging to the states by themselves.

Hence, David Brown and Lee Yong Leng agree that the Southeast Asian states are not real nation-states. While David Brown proposes that the Southeast Asian states should be understood as a plural society which is diverse in languages, religions and ethnicities bringing about the specific ethnic or religious affiliation, (but not as a nation), which eventually leads to the unified national identity, Lee Yong Leng does not even see that Southeast Asian states were the plural society when they were firstly established, because the people of different ethnic-religious groups lived separately and did not consider themselves as a part of the same multiethnic-religious society.

Because the formation of Southeast Asian states is reactionary, rather than evolutionary, the traditional ethnic-religious characters of the communities persist in the era of nation-state. In Southeast Asia, the religions are not the individual’s choice like in the western countries. The religions are the communal inheritance

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which a person is born and raised with. A person is an adherent of the religion through the family line and social connection in the village. Thus, the religions in Southeast Asia intertwine with the kinship and ethnicity. When a person attends a religious activity in a mosque, temple or church, s/he does it with the family, relatives, or friends. And neighbors meet each other at the religious places in their villages. (Different from the American society where an individual voluntarily goes to a religious place by himself to perform a religious activity along with other strangers. But the strangers may get to know each other later.17)

Accordingly, the religious activities in Southeast Asia are actually religious-social activities. They lay the base of social connection which can be mobilized as a political-social movement. And it is relatively rare for an individual to convert to another religion, not only because the religions deeply absorb into all elements of life, but also it means breaking up the ties with the family.

Furthermore, because the religions are not an individual’s choice, they cannot be limited to the private sphere. The religious teachings widely overwhelm in the public life. In term of politics, the religions also represent the authenticity of the Southeast Asian society before the colonized period. Therefore, when the Southeast Asian leaders wanted to establish the nation-states, the nation leaders defined the national identity through the religion and ethnicity, and they imposed nationalism through the states’ apparatuses.

With the nationalist programs, the religion and ethnicity were reproduced as the

symbols of the nation. In order to create the national unification, the religious and ethnic core of nations needed to be clarified and then valued. Hence, the political value of religions and solidarity intertwine deeply with the national conscious. This is why Charles Taylor asserts that secularism has more than one dimension.\(^\text{18}\) While the constitutions and political structures of the Southeast Asian states can be considered as legally secular, because the religion is subscribed under the control of the states, in the social dimension, the religions are influential, and they inevitably affect the politics.

On the other hand, each state in Southeast Asia is composed of many ethnic-religious groups, and needs to create the national harmony among them. When a foreign policy is designed, according to the realist theory, the foreign policy is supposed to serve the nation as a whole, and does not just respond to a particular group’s demand or interest. Furthermore, Hans Morgenthau believes that the foreign policy should not be guided by the morality or religion. Because there is no agreed set of universal morality among countries anyway. But in practice, because the nationalist programs set a particular ethnic-religious group as a core or symbol of a country. Consequently, the religion intertwines with the national conscience, as discussed above. Also, the foreign policy could be under the control of a particular ethnic-religious group who controls bureaucracy. Hence, practically, the influence of religion on the foreign policy could possibly be different from what the theory suggests.

Based on the literature survey on the religious influence on the foreign policy, the result is quite mix. The article “Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations”\(^ {19}\) by Jonathan Fox and article “Religion and Nationalism: Understanding the Consequences of a Complex Relationship”\(^ {20}\) by Barbara – Ann J. Riffer assert that religions can affect the international relations, including in a secular democratic state, especially in the case of ethno-religious conflict, in which some of minorities get supports from other countries.\(^ {21}\) Religion also influences the foreign relations, when it contributes to nationalism in a country. Furthermore, religion can involve with the policy, when the politicians claim the religion to boost their legitimacy.

The article “Religion Re–Emerging: The Role of Religion in Legitimating Integration and Power in Modern Societies”\(^ {22}\) by Ole Riis asserts that when religion has its role on constructing the national identity or the political ideology, it inevitably affects the policy. Religion gives the worldview which formulates the standard of the “good society” or the “good world.” Through this process, some people or governments feel their religious commitment which sometimes must be performed across borders.\(^ {23}\) In this case, it is hardly to distinguish between the religious mission and foreign policy.

Samah Mohamed Adnan Al–Rayyes took the Kashmir conflict as a case study in


his thesis “Religion, Domestic Politics, and Foreign Policy in the Third World: the Case of the Indo–Pakistani Conflict over Kashmir.” He found that in the Third World where most states are still in the process of nation–building, the security of the political structure (or the regimes) is the priority of the government. Therefore, sometimes the ruling class composes foreign policies which actually aim at overcoming the internal threats. And in the Third World religion is used as a political tool by the government often because these new states frequently confront the internal opposition.

However, the studies which focus on the Southeast Asian region in particular give the opposite result with the above–mentioned works. The paper “Malaysia’s 2005 – 2006 Refugee Stand – Off with Thailand : A Security Culture Analysis”, by Peter Hourdequin, reminds the readers that “Islam has always played a significant role as one of Malaysian’s core values ... [but] various interpretation of how Islamic values should function in the Malaysian nation–state have been bitterly contested ...” And the Malaysian regime’s survival depends more on the economic growth and the stability of its multi–racial society.

As for Indonesia, the article “The Role of Islam in Indonesian Foreign Policy Since 1945” by Wahyu Wicaksana reveals that during the authoritarian regime,
the leader is the decisive factor on the foreign policy setting. Under the
governments of President Sukarno and Suharto, who were nationalist militants,
Islam was barely considered in formulating the foreign policy, except in the time
that the leader wanted to regain his domestic popularity. However, after the
domestic politics changed in 1998, the Islamist parties can operate more actively.
The Indonesian government engages more in the world politics with the
religious approach, but the author analyzes that this is just to decrease the
political challenges from Islamists parties and groups. Therefore, based on this
article, the religious factor is weighed under the condition of domestic political
game. Normally, the leaders still prioritize the national interests which help the
regime to survive.

Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, explores the extent to which the Islamic factor plays
a role in Indonesian foreign policy. His articles “State – Society Relationship :
Assessing Islam in Indonesia’s Foreign Policy Toward the Muslim World under
Suharto” and “Islam ‘Symbolic Politics’, Democratization and Indonesian
Foreign Policy” found that the Indonesian government does not take Islam as a key
factor in setting its foreign policy, but in the same time, it has to decrease the
pressure from Muslims in the country, either by promoting Islamic institutions, or

28 Wahyu Wicaksana, The Role of Islam in Indonesian foreign Policy since 1945, Center for
Muslim States and Societies, The University of Western Australia.
29 Wahyu Wicaksana, The Role of Islam in Indonesian foreign Policy since 1945, Center for
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Foreign Policy Toward the Muslim World under Suharto”, Department of Asian Studies and
Language, Flinders University, Austrailia,
31 Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, Islam ‘Symbolic Politics’, Democratization and Indonesian
Foreign Policy,” Department of Asian Studies and Language, Flinders University, Austrailia,
interpreting Islam in the way that supports its policy. However, with the current trend, the Indonesian government has to open more for the societal demand.

Based on the above-mentioned studies, it can be concluded that in the Third World countries, the leader or regime has a crucial role to decide the weight of religion on the policy. However, how religion would affect the foreign policy depends on whether the leader would dismiss religion, like the Malaysian and Indonesian cases, or bring in religion to be his political tool, like the Indian–Pakistan case. This means, normally the domestic politics in which the regime struggles to survive defines the role of the religion rather than the world’s politics. However, this argument needs to be examined further in the thesis.

The Methodology

Based on the hypothesis that the religious factor hardly affects the foreign policy of countries in Southeast Asia, because the Southeast Asian countries prioritize the national interests over the religious factor, the thesis sets the two research questions:

1 ) What would be these national interests which the Southeast Asian countries prioritize over the religious factor? And why are these interests indispensable?
2 ) How do the Southeast Asian governments balance the religious factor against the national interests in order to politically survive?

As for the methodology, the thesis will take the Thai–Muslim insurgency and
its impact on the Malaysian relations with Thailand as the main case study. It will answer the questions on 1) what would be the national interests of Malaysia? And why are these interests indispensable? and 2) how does the Malaysian government balance the religious factor against the national interests?

The findings from the Malaysian case will be analyzed further by comparing with other similar cases in Southeast Asia, such as the Indonesian policy toward the Thai–Muslim insurgency, the Philippines’ policy toward the demand for the independence in East Timor in 1998, and the Indonesian policy toward Rohingya minority in Myanmar. The same two questions will be asked in these comparative cases in order to draw the common conclusion in the regional level. The comparison with other cases will also work as the counter–checking which will add the credibility to the original findings from the Malaysian case.

To answer the first research question concerning the national interests, the thesis adapts the methodology from the book “Asian Security Practice : Material and Ideational Influences” by Muthiah Alagappa. It tries to identify first the indispensable national interests of a regime by studying the key policies of a country, and calls these interests “core values.” Then, the political practice conducted by the regime is explained in relation with the core values. The methodology is influenced by the realist theory in the sense that it hypothesizes that the foreign policy should be judged and guided by its national interests.33

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And some national interests are permanent and do not change through the time. It believes that it is a government’s duty to defend and promote its national interest. Hans Morgenthau, the realist political theorist, stated that the national interests are the standard by which political practices must be judged and directed.34

In the same time, the methodology does not completely deny liberalism. If the international cooperation is beneficial to the national interests, the methodology accepts such finding, because the methodology simply aims to explain the political practices of a state as they really are without guiding or suggesting like the theory does.

The idea of the methodology is similar to the realist theory in the sense that it takes the state (the government) as the main agent to decide and pursue the foreign policy. However, the state-central approach of the methodology does not totally ignore the domestic politics like the realism. It believes that all domestic social and political groups can exert the pressure on the government, but in the end the government is the agent which appropriates, weighs and balances all pressure and factors, and eventually decides the policy. And this approach fits the Southeast Asian politics in which the political groups can participate in the foreign policy, but limitedly, because the states can mostly control the pressure from the people.

Therefore, in the case of the Thai–Muslim insurgency and its impact on

Malaysian relations with Thailand, the thesis will first investigate what could be the indispensable national interests of Malaysia. Then the Malaysian policy will be analyzed by relating to its national interests. If the religion is considered as one of Malaysian national interests, it would be revealed in this stage, and it will be affirmed if the government pursues the policy to protect the religious values, even on the expense of its national interests.

To systematically measure whether the Southeast Asian governments pursue the policy to protect the co-religionists or not, the thesis adopts the definition and indicator of Joseph S. Nye, Jr. from his book “Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History.” He provides the broad definition of the intervention that “intervention refers to external actions that influence the domestic affairs of another sovereign state.” It ranges from the speech intended to interfere in the domestic affairs of another state, broadcasting messages, providing the economic assistance to the opposition in other country, to the military invasion. Therefore, he disagrees with the narrow definition of the intervention which refers to it as “forcible interference in the domestic affairs of another state,” because the low degree of interference, such as speeches, is not forcible, but it is still interference. This case happens when the religious or ethnic minority whom a state want to protect across the border have high local choices.

Other books define the intervention in the same way that its main feature is

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breaking the sovereignty and interfering in a state’s domestic affairs. But their definitions are various on whether the interference needs to be forcible or coercive or not. Hence, they agree that the interference basically means violating the sovereignty of another state, but the degree and the form of the interference is differently defined and categorized. Aurel Croissant and Christoph Trinn categorize the involvement in the ethno-religious conflicts into five levels which start from dispute, non-violent crisis, violent crisis, limited war, and war.\(^{38}\)

However, the thesis chooses to adopt the indicators of Joseph S. Nye, Jr., because he categorizes the interference into many levels, and relates them to the political choices of minority group which a state wants to protect. As appears in the table below, when the minority group has many political choices, the interference is less coercive, for example, delivering the speeches. And when the group has less political choices, the interference tends to be more coercive, such as limited military action. The indicators of different degrees of interference will be compared with the political practices of the Southeast Asian governments in order to clearly identify the level of interference, if any.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Coercion</th>
<th>Speeches</th>
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<td>(high local choice)</td>
<td>Broadcasts</td>
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<td>Economic Aid</td>
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<td>Military Advisers</td>
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<td>Support Opposition</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Coercion</td>
<td>Blockade</td>
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<tr>
<td>(low local choice)</td>
<td>Limited Military Action</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Military Invasion</td>
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Further, the second research question believes that the religious factor plays a role in a foreign policy, but is weighed against other national interests all the time. And the policy-decision is not as simple as a choice between the national interests and religious values. Therefore, the second research question aims to explore how the Southeast Asian governments balance the religious factor against the national interests in order to politically survive. The thesis will study the interaction between the Southeast Asian governments, the religious institutions and the constituencies, including their discourse on the conflict in the neighbor countries. If the governments give more weight on the national interests, the study in this part will reveal how the governments calm down the pressure from the religious groups.
The findings from Malaysian case will be compared further with the similar cases in the region, the common findings from the main case study and the comparison will explain the regional relations in the Southeast Asian region.

**The Objectives**

Since Southeast Asia comprises of various ethnicities and religious believers, the ethno–religious conflicts frequently happen in the region. The answer on how religion affects the foreign relations will prove whether the neighboring countries with the different religious beliefs can still cooperate to together develop their countries.

As presented in the part of the theoretical framework, before the era of nation-states in Europe, the wars were launched in the name of religions. However, after the nation-states formed up around the world, the ethnic and religious identity were subscribed under the national identity. And the religious values are considered secondary to the national interests. But their influence on the state’s policy exists nowadays.

The thesis acknowledges the influence of both ethnicity and religion. But because of the high ethnic diversity in Southeast Asia, for example, Indonesia is composed of Javanese, Sudanese, Madurese, Coastal Malays, Chinese, and many other sub-ethnic groups.\(^{39}\) There is only one case that the minority in one state is of the

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same ethnicity with the majority in another state, that is the Thai-Muslims of Malay descent and the Malays in Malaysia. There is no other conflict where the minority ethnically relates to the majority in the neighbor country. With this limitation, the thesis can study only the influence of the religious factor on the foreign policy, but it will analyze some influence of the ethnic factor too, if possible. And hopefully, the findings of the thesis will contribute to better understanding of the domestic and regional relations in Southeast Asia.

The Material

For both the main case study and the comparative cases, the study will involve the questions 1) what would be the national interests of each Southeast Asian country? And why are these interests indispensable? and 2) how does the Southeast Asian government balance the religious factor against the national interests?

For the first question, to identify the national interests and address their significance, the thesis will rely mainly on the primary sources such as the declared state policies and national strategies, for example in the Malaysian case, among the policies which will be analyzed are the New Economic Policy (NEP), Vision 2020, and Islam Hadhari. The formal statements and the official speeches of the leaders will be included in the analysis as well.

To answer the second research question, the thesis will study how each Southeast Asian government deal with the conflict in the neighboring country and compare its policy with the indicator of interference presented above to clarify the extent
to which the religious solidarity can affect the policy. In the same time, the thesis needs to study the bilateral cooperation of countries to see how much the country holds on with the national interests. And in the end, it will study on how the government balance between the religious solidarity and the national interests. In this stage, the thesis will use both primary and secondary sources, for example, the speeches of the leaders concerning the conflict, the news from the official agency on the bilateral cooperation and the official visits, the statistics of the bilateral trade and investment. The involved academic articles will also be used to be the guidance in analysis as well.

The Outline

The thesis will contain seven chapters. The first chapter will explain the topic, introduce the research question and hypothesis. It will set the scope of the study. It will state what is already found in the literature survey and what would be the method of study. And what is expected to be found from this study.

The second chapter will begin with the theories concerning nation and nationalism, and the relation between the traditional identity, such as the religion and ethnicity, with the nationalism. Then it will provide the religious and political background of Southeast Asia.

The third chapter will present the main case study which is the Thai–Muslim insurgency and the Malaysian policy toward the insurgency. It will begin with the introduction of the case, then analyze the Malaysian national interests. It will
describe how Malaysian government coped with the Thai–Muslim insurgency, the influence of the religious factor on the policy, and how the government terms with the religious domestic pressure.

The fourth chapter will bring the findings of two research questions from the Malaysian case into comparison with another case. Here, it will be compared with the Indonesian policy toward the Thai–Muslim insurgency. It will introduce the Thai–Muslim insurgency only on the part that involved with Indonesia, but will follow the same step of analysis. What were the Indonesian interests at the time? How did the Indonesian government termed with the insurgency? And how did it manage the religious domestic pressure, if any?

The fifth chapter will introduce the case of the demand for the independence in East Timor in 1998 and study how the Philippines responded to the case, because they are the only two Christian–majority in Southeast Asia. The chapter will identify the national interests of the Philippines at that time, and analyze its policy in relation to these interests in order to find how the religious solidarity played a role on the Philippines’ policy in this case.

The sixth chapter will study the case of Rohingya minorities in Myanmar. The chapter will introduce the case and study Indonesian policy on Rohingya refugees. It will skip the part of Indonesian national interests, because it is already analyzed in chapter 4. Still, it will analyze the policy to find how the religious solidarity affected the Indonesian foreign policy toward Rohingya minority in Myanmar.
The last chapter will conclude the findings from the case study and comparison. It will answer the two research questions, and hopefully can provide the common ground to understand the role of religion on the foreign relations in Southeast Asia.
CHAPTER 2

ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND NATIONALISM

“…previously there was a ‘sacred canopy’ stabilizing life experience and providing shared meanings, in modern times the canopy is rent and the collective bases of morality and identity are diminished or destroyed.”

Peter Berger, the American sociologist

According to the original concept of nationalism, “each nation should have a state of its own.” However, the emergence of nation-states in Southeast Asia did not originate from the nationals. The nation-states in Southeast Asia shaped up through the official imposition of nationalism. But the traditional identity of people, such as the ethnicity and religion, were not dismissed. They were included as a part of the national identity, and have some political role under the framework of nation-state. However, the ties of people through the cultural identity can sometimes function across the border. The Southeast Asian states need to find the right balance of the cultural factor in their foreign policy.

Nation and Nationalism

The meaning and explanation of “nation” is still fluid and contested among the political scientists. Starting from the general explanation from the historian


perspective, the concept of nation initially surfaced in the Westphalia Treaty of 1648. It, for the first time, acknowledged the sovereignty of each ruler within his territories as an independent entity. Hence, it established the principle of non-interference in other state’s affairs, especially in support of the co-religionists in other territories.³

The idea developed further in the Enlightenment Era, which promoted the reasoning of human. The prevailing political belief in this era recognized the right of self-determination of people over their government. Then the French revolution unleashed the social force in which the people believed in their rights over and their participation in the government. The legitimacy of the state is now based on the collective will of its people encapsulated in the notion of nation.⁴ The new kind of identity, - the citizenship, emerged. It connected people together into the same political unit as opposed to the primordial identity which linked people through the network of kinship, religion and language.

The political scholars provide the interpretation and explanation on the concept of “nation.” Joseph S. Nye refers to the meaning of nation in a dictionary as “a group claiming common identity and the right to be a state.” However, he, and other political scholars, debates on what could be the common identity which will provide the legitimacy to claim a state. This is a crucial question, as a

state’s supposedly main function is to protect the group of people who share this common identity.

Constructivism sees differently on the common identity as a base of a nation. It explains that the collective identity of people in a nation is not fixed. It is constructed through the interaction with other subjects (nations) in the international system and the interaction among subjects within a nation itself. And a nation forms up through this process. Hence, the constructivists do not consider a nation, nor a common identity, as a static entity.

As for the modernists, they assert the alternative explanation. They argue that a nation is not the developed products of the common identity. Rather, a nation emerges as a consequence of modernity, coupled with the wide social and political changes in Europe.

The historians seem to agree with the modernist explanation. Eric Hobsbawm asserts that “nations exist as a function of or in the context of a particular stage of technological and economic development.” Hence, a nation is just “the products of nineteenth-century ideologues who wanted to create independent territorial states that would provide the most effective mechanism for ensuring that large-scale market economies could flourish.”

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Benedict Anderson, also sees a nation as a form of social imaginary made possible by the social and technological changes. According to his book titled *Imagined Communities*, a nation is an imagined community, since all members in the community do not actually have face-to-face contact, but recognize each other as members in the same community through the printed media. The modern printed media, such as newspaper and books, replaced the sacred script on binding the people together. The connectedness in society gradually became a basis of a nation.

From the discourse on the notion of “nation,” there are some crucial points which scholars discuss most. The first is whether nations are the social product of modernity (like Anderson’s explanation), or they have their ancient roots, based on the religious, ethnic and linguistic collectivity, and neutrally develop to be a nation nowadays. Craig Calhoun believes that this argument has its steak, because it would justify whether ethnicity or religion can be a claim for nationalists to establish a nation.

Secondly, associated with the significance of the religious and ethnic collectivity, how the primordial identities function in a new form of nation today. The modernists believe that the notion of equal citizenship, regardless of ethnicity and religion, replaces the primordial identity. But is it always true that all religious and ethnic groups equally function in politics of the modern state?

**Nationalism and Ethnicity**
Nationalism is a perceptual framework which stems from the concept of nation. The book “Ordering the International: History, Change, and Transformation” (2004) gives the general definition which prevailed in the era of nation-state that nationalism is the principle that each nation should have a state of its own or at least some degree of self-determination in the territory.\textsuperscript{10} Because the basic idea of nationalism links the national unit with the political legitimacy, it often becomes a political device for an ethnic group to claim a nationhood or reinforce the cohesion in a state.

But the modernist approach does not agree with the claim on the natural linkage of the cultural inheritance with the nationhood. Ernest Gellner gives the traditional definition to nationalism that it is “the political doctrine which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent,\textsuperscript{11}” but in the same time, he perceives that both nation and nationalism are the artificial modern phenomenon. He asserts that “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness, it invents nations where they do not exist - but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on.\textsuperscript{12}”

Roger Friedland defines nationalism that it is “a state-centered form of collective


subject formation, a form state representation, one grounding the identity and legitimacy of the state in a population of individuals who inhabit a territory bounded by that state.” But “the cultural commonalities of that population do not constitute the basis for the formation of a nation. Nationality is … a contested claim, not a social fact.13”

Likewise, Craig Calhoun acknowledges the role of ethnicity vis-à-vis nationalism. But nationalism cannot be based on the ethnic similarity only, as many ethnic groups do not have nation of their own. To be able to support the claim of nationhood, the ethnic similarity must contain some political implication, such as homeland, national hero, and the past glory era.14 He notes that the role of culture in a nationalist claim is not in the form of pure historical continuity. Rather, the culture is reproduced on both its content and orientation.15 The ethnicity, as well as language and religion, is selected, adjusted and translated into a claim of nationhood in the attempt of nationalists to make the nation fit the state.16

David Brown provides the constructivist explanation on this process. He suggests that an ethnic group needs to develop the consciousness on their common identity through the situational context, for example, the more interaction within the group (or the imaginary connectedness in the society as Anderson explains),

or the interaction with the external threat.\textsuperscript{17} However, as the ethnicity is now an appropriated political claim, it does not function similarly with ethnicity in the pre-modern era. It is not merely the expansion of the kinship network, but it affirms the values of family members, based on the similarity of the language, religion and the way of life. And its influential role in the modern state is still perpetuated.

Ethnicity is still influential, because it is politicized. The state can use ethnicity as a source for national unification, political capital in the competition with the opposition or justification for its legitimacy. Yet, the state cannot utilize the ethnic claim without any limitation. The ethnic policy must be consonant with the national identity as well. In turn, the state-opposition can use a specific ethnicity to mobilize the resistance against an existing, probably multinational, state.

David Brown studies the role of ethnicity in a state and finds that in a mono-ethnic society, the national identity and the values derived from it are associated with the dominant group in the society. But the interesting finding is in the multi-ethnic society, where most scholars believe that the state is constrained to pursue the ethnically neutral policy in order to expand its legitimacy to all ethnic groups in the state.

On the contrary, Brown finds that in the multi-ethnic society, the state’s policy is controlled by one dominant ethnic group and responds to their benefits, because

the state needs to both strengthen the loyalty of the majority ethnic group toward the government and in the same time ensure the government’s popularity among this main ethnic group.\textsuperscript{18} Although in some cases, the state promotes the “unity in diversity,” there must be one ethnic group which functions as the national core among the diversity.

**Nationalism and Religion**

Religions had been the original identity of people in the societal level along with ethnicity before the nation-state arose. Benedict Anderson claims that the first imagined community was connected through the sacred script.\textsuperscript{19} Religious values laid down the primary norms guiding the social and political behaviors. In the European medieval age, Christian dogma covered all aspects of life,\textsuperscript{20} including politics. The canon law had priority over the worldly law. The king authority was constrained by the Roman Catholic Church’s edicts.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, the worldly rulers had long tried to resist the Roman Catholic Church, but their attempt succeeded when the European society changed against the domination of the Roman Catholic Church in the era of Enlightenment.


The societal changes in Europe, such as the connectedness in the society through the printing capitalism, the mass education outside the Church, and the belief in the political right of self-determination of people, realized the formation of nation-state. In the European part, when the state was established in France, the religious symbols were banned from the public space, as a result of the emerging secular idea on separation between the public and private sphere. When the model of nation-state spread in and outside Europe, secularism was adopted along with the idea of nation-state too. However, state leaders in Europe aimed to limit the influence of the Roman Catholic Church only. They did not object the religion as a whole. Therefore, the morality and traditions were considered secular, and still functioned as the social values in the public sphere, but under the authority of the nation-state.

The idea of nation-state exerted the identity of equal citizenship to replace the religion as the collective identity of people. Secularism also universalized the religious toleration and the recognition of the right of the religious minorities. With these principles, a secular nation-state can expand its authority and legitimacy over people of different religions in its territory, and became a political successor of religion. Mark Juergenmeyer calls the polity in which

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secularism contributes to the authority of nation-state “secular nationalism.”

In the age of the western colonization, the countries outside Europe were forced to learn and adopt the concept of nation-state. In some cases, the nation-formation process was initiated by the western colonizers in order to unify the territory under their controls. The process included standardization of the formal language, setting up the centralized mass-educational system, and establishment of the ruling apparatus or bureaucratization. In other cases, the ruling class of the local countries launched the nationalist programs by themselves as a response to the threatening western power. In both cases, secularism was promoted along with the idea of nation–state in order to fortify the new “national” identity, transcending all religions and ethnicities of the inhabitants, and eventually to legitimize the newly–established governments.

John Markoff and Daniel Regan perceive this process as “the state’s assault on the local (religious and ethnic) identity.”

Hans Kohn claims that “It is the first period in history in which the whole of mankind has accepted one and the same political attitude, that of nationalism.”

However, the concept of nationalism does not operate out of vacuum. It needs

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some cultural basis on which it stands. Religion often partakes in nationalism as a national collective identity as well. In fact, one of the most effective tools for the state to unite the people as a nation is religion. The Philippines, Sri Lanka and Pakistan are examples. But nationalism posits itself above religion, and integrates it as a supplementary element of the nation in which the religious institution cannot harm the state and give the state the religious legitimacy in the same time.29 In this case, the strength of religious collectivity is eventually absorbed to be a part of national loyalty.

But the problem can occur in some cases, since the nation-state is not strongly established everywhere. Mark Juergenmeyer notes that in the territories where the nation-state is weak, the religious violence prone to take place,30 because the religious identity still prevails, and it merges with nationalism as a product of the modernization age. The consequence is each religious group in the territory attempts to establish their own religious state which inevitably causes the conflict with other religious groups in the same territory.

Roger Friedland calls the polity in which a particular religion is promoted to claim the nationhood and the secular ideas, such as the equality among all religious adherents, is ignored, the “religious nationalism.”31 It implies that religion

is not exactly the opposite of the state, nor it is the authority which the state displaces like secularism claims.

Here, the religion eagerly operates within the existing nation-state. In this state form, the religion is a national collective identity, a source of legitimacy of the state, and the ultimate purpose of the state’s existence on this earth.\(^\text{32}\) As opposed to the modernization theory, this type of state does not aim for the progress, especially the economic progress. Rather, it aims toward the social redemption,\(^\text{33}\) with which the religious values become the national goal and interest.

All religions provide the basic idea on how the good society should be and how the resources in the society should be distributed. Although religions do not exactly peach on the polity, the religious texts are read politically. Hence, for some religious nationalists, its teachings easily become a base for a public policy. Although Islam is frequently referred to in the context of political Islam, other religions, especially when it represents the identity of an ethnic group, can emerge, as an alternative to a secular nation-state as well.

Then again, the circumstance in which one religion is chosen to promote nationalism can happen in both secular and religious state. Although the basic principle of secularism overlooks the religious difference, in practice many states are not really religiously neutral, or completely dismiss the religious factor in politics. This is consonant with the above-discussed argument on the ethnic


neutrality of the new nation-state. Even a secular state does not always stay religiously and ethnically neutral, since the inherited culture is a part of modern “citizen” identity. The culture is the living social institution which inevitably influences the people’s political worldview and accordingly the national existence.

**Southeast Asia**

“If Indonesia is to survive … it must create … a coherent *national* identity, one which at the same time, rests on a multiplicity of *local* community forms and identities.”

Hildred Geertz, the American anthropologist

The above quote can apply not only to Indonesia, but also to many other countries in Southeast Asia, where the nation–states were formed up less than a century. Before the colonization era, Southeast Asia was the region of ethnic and religious diversity due to its wide and different geography covering the mountains and lowland in the continental mainland and the archipelago spreading along the equator. The geography defines the economic and social features of communities. In the north of the continent, the mountainous geography impedes the interaction among people. As a result, the basic social identity of people lies in their tribes which maintain their unique linguistic and religious characteristics until today. Myanmar and Laos are composed of 135 and 160 ethnic groups

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respectively. On the contrary, in the south of the continent is the archipelago which lies along the world’s main sea-route. As a result, the region was colored with the cultural and economic dynamics. Many Persian, Arab, Indian, and Chinese traders settled down here before the nineteenth century.

But this does not mean Southeast Asia had developed to be a fully plural society, because the animist hill people, the Buddhist farmer in the lowland, and the Muslim immigrants on the coastal islands separately lived their ways of life on different parts of territories. They interacted with people of different religious and ethnic groups, but then went back to their villages where they mainly lived with the co-religionists and co-ethnics. Not to mention that the transportation and communication before the colonization era did not support the intercommunication among the people.

Just like Europe before the nation-state era, the Asian rulers in the eighteenth century had the authority over the limited territory. In fact, the territory of governance was never clear, because it always changed in accordance with the rise and fall of each ruler or the marriage among the dynasties. Moreover, a ruler could sent the yearly tribute to show his homage to more than one suzerainty. Because the concept of sovereignty was not known, the local ruler had the inconsistent degree of independence pertaining to the relations with the suzerainties. While the local ruler had the authority over his territory, the bigger empires could demand him to send some resources, labors or troops. Therefore,

the troops in that age were the multi-ethnic troops which fought the enemy in order to protect the economic resources and the kinship, rather than fighting with the common ideology of nationalism.

When the European colonizers entered the region, the idea of nationalism was applied to the Southeast Asian countries in order to define the territory under their control and legitimize the authority over the territory. For instance, the Anglo-Siamese (the previous name of Thailand) Treaty in 1909 which drew the border between Thailand and Malaysia demonstrated the British attempt to identify the sovereign territory as the first step of making a nation when it colonized the Malay Peninsular. And other borderlines (except sea borderline) in Southeast Asia was created by the western colonizers in the same way, which means the border does not pertain to the characteristics of the local inhabitants.

In the case of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909, Siam (presently Thailand where the majority of population were Buddhists) lost Kedah to Malaysia, in which inhabitants of 27 villages were Buddhist Siamese. Aside from these Siamese in Kedah, there were Samsams who were of Malay descent, practiced Islam, but spoke Thai language. According to the Malaysian census in 1911, five percent of the whole Malaysian population was Samsams. In return, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat provinces in which the majority of the population were the Malay-Muslims were kept under Thai territory, because the sultans in these provinces

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sent the yearly tribute to Bangkok. The tribute was politically interpreted as the Thai authority over the three provinces, although the majority of the population there were Muslims. If consider the case with the concept of nationalism discussed above, this could be a factor causing the conflict, because the boundary was arranged only among elites and colonizers, and it lacks the congruence between the ethnicity of inhabitants and territorial boundaries.

After setting the clear borderlines, according to Benedict Anderson, schooling was another strategy to cultivate the national identity out of the various cultural identities and dispersed local political units. In the governmental schools, the standardized certificates and textbooks, and the centralized curriculum diluted the religious and ethnic background of students and built them up from the same mold.\(^{39}\) It was also a place to cultivate the idea that they were of the same “nation.” Here, they learnt to speak the same standardized language, and believe in the common history and future goal. Hence, the national unity was created to supersede the religious and ethnic diversity. Although many new nations have the motto “unity on diversity,” Craig Calhoun notices that nationalism prefers the ethnic homogeneity to the cultural variation.\(^ {40}\)

On the other hand, the nationalism was cultivated by the Southeast Asian elites themselves who were threatened by the economic power of foreign immigrants. Before demanding the independence from the Dutch in 1916, in 1911-1912

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Sarekat Islam Party aimed to protect Indonesian traders in textile industry against the control of Chinese middlemen.\textsuperscript{41} Before 1941, the Malay nationalists were attracted to the idea of Pan-Islamism due to the will to protect the peninsular from the economic encroachment of Chinese. (Actually, the Malay nationalism was an outstanding case compared to the nationalism in its neighbors, as Malay nationalists’ resentment objected at Chinese immigrants rather than the British colonizers.) During and after the first World War, the Burmese nationalists demanded the educational and economic improvement for Burmese, as they saw Indian immigrants dominated the credit and loan system, the trade sector and the agricultural areas of their own country.\textsuperscript{42}.

However, in some other cases, nationalism was also imposed as a response to the threatening western colonizers. The clearest example was the Vietnamese nationalism led by Ho Chi Minh starting since 1927 to establish the independence of Vietnam against the French colonization.\textsuperscript{43} To respond on the British invasion into Malaya peninsular, the Thai government abolished the self-governing authority of the Malay leaders in the southern provinces, and sent the bureaucrats from Bangkok to govern the provinces instead in order to strengthen the centralized sovereign power.\textsuperscript{44}

The western colonization in a way created a common grievance among Southeast

\textsuperscript{41} J. Kennedy, \textit{Asian Nationalism in the Twentieth Century}, (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1968), p. 47.
Asians, especially the Dutch and French colonization, and it was a catalyst for the unification within Southeast Asian countries. In the first phase of their resistance, the nationalist movements were led by ones who obtained either the western education in Europe or the national centralized education initiated by the western colonizers in their own countries. However, to express their authentic identity, many of them mixed religion into their nationalist ideology, reflecting the paradigm which classifies their country’s history into the pre and post colonization periods. The religion, especially Buddhism and Islam which long existed before the colonization symbolizing the old traditions and common heritages, were presented as opposed to the western mind. Hence, the very first nationalist movements in Southeast Asia were, for example, Sarekat Islam Party of Indonesia and the Young Men’s Buddhist Association of Burma.45

But the Philippines is the exception of this tendency, since their population had widely converted to Christianity, (the western religion), since the sixteenth century, long before the nationalist movement began in the region.46 By the time that the nationalist movement began in the region, not only the Christian (western) religion was already a part of Philippine identity, it was also a tool to unite the nation of hundred islands. Buddhism and Islam were also the reason that after the second World War, Marxism was objected by the nationalists in Myanmar47 and Indonesia.

This proves the importance of the political function of the religions in Southeast Asia, which may contradict to the modernization theory. This is because Southeast Asian societies’ path of modernity is different from the European path. The emergence of nation-state is a product of modernity, but the process of state-formation in Southeast Asia, whether it was the response to the western colonization or the foreign immigrants, was the social project initiated from the top by the elites. The new modern “national” commonality and identity were not driven by the ordinary people. For them, the traditional identity still hold communities together.

Therefore, the states had to heavily build up the “nation” through the nationalist programs to intervene into the cultural identity in order to cultivate the national loyalty. In the same time, the states control the religious agents, either by accommodation (like Malaysia under the era of Mahathir Mohamad, or Thailand under the administration of General Phibun Songkram in which the religion was a part of national identity) or by suppression (like Indonesia under President Suharto in which almost all religious parties were banned), or the mixture of both strategies.

If secularism is defined as the religious toleration and the right of the religious minority, the constitutions of all Southeast Asian countries set them to be a secular state. But when the religion contains the political implication, all religious adherents are not actually equal under the state’s policy, as the secular

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nationalism suggests. Although a state (or its constitution) claims to be secular in order to transcend the authority of the government to all religious and ethnic groups, the religion (and secularism) contains more than legal dimension. It has also social meaning which intertwines all the time with politics.

Likewise, ethnicity was used as a tool to create a nation too in some countries. Thailand, Malaysia and Brunei held Thai and Malay ethnicity respectively as a core of national identity above Chinese and others. But Singapore and the Philippines were and are still ethnic neutral. As for Indonesia, the administration and politics are constantly under the influence of Javanese since its independence, but its national ideology never sets any ethnicity as a national identity.

Aside from the particular religion and ethnicity as a tool to unite the nation, some countries hold the monarchy as the state’s symbol to unite people together. In Thailand and Brunei, the king is a part of the national ideology. The motto of Thai national ideology is “Nation, Religion, and King”. As for Brunei, its national ideology is “Malay, Muslim and Monarchy.” In Malaysia, Sultans (Yang Di Pertuan Agong) of nine states must be Muslims and protectors of Malays’ privileges in their states.49

This leads to the fact that although almost all Southeast Asian modern states (except Myanmar) recognize the religious and ethnic minorities’ rights, possibly

for the sake of national cohesion, they are not absolutely ethnically neutral nor religiously secular. The cultural factor still plays a role not only in their domestic politics, but its role expands to the foreign policy, because it concerns the supreme national interest, such as the national unification which is significant for the unstable nation-state, especially its formation did not origin from their own grass-root people.

The consequence is that a particular religious or ethnic group dominates the state goal and policy, such as Bumiputera policy of Malaysia which is designed and driven by Muslim-Malay bureaucrats to protect Malays’ economic interests. In some cases, the state imposes the centralized assimilation, or horizontal standardization.\textsuperscript{50} The Buddhist Burmese government claims that all of its ethnic and religious minorities, except Rohingyas, are descendants from the same racial stock, therefore, it justifies the government’s racial assimilation holding Burmese as the ethnic core.\textsuperscript{51}

Lee Yong Leng claims that in 1980 the Southeast Asian countries were not really “nations” yet, because their governments still issued the policy based on the idea of ethnicity (or religion).\textsuperscript{52} But the development of the nation-formation was seen since 1990. David Brown noticed that the national policy that emphasized on the ethnic or religious core transformed to affirm on the multi-

ethnic and multi-religious community instead. Even the Malaysian government became to call for “Melayu Baru” or New Malay, which is defined as a Malay who “could transcend Malay ethnocentrism.” Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi also projected Islam Hadhari policy which interpreted that the true Muslims can live peacefully with non-Muslims. This is not to say that the ethnic-religious core policy is dismissed, but it is now added with the acknowledgement of the multiculturalism.

However, this kind of policy demonstrates the basic fact that the Southeast Asian countries are still on the process of nation-making. Lee Yong Leng reminds us the political reality that there is no nation in this world, including the Southeast Asian countries, whose all of their population consider themselves belonging to their legal nation. But a nation-state must at least makes the majority of its population to feel this way in order to exist.

Therefore, the fundamental concerns of Southeast Asian nations revolve around the basic problem of a state, such as the security and survival, the sovereignty, or the national cohesion. They are the primary national interests of the states in this region. To term with these problems, the Southeast Asian states cannot abandon the nationalist concept. On the other hand, the nationalism is the concept of inclusion and exclusion. Nationalism tells the people who they are and who they

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are not through setting the identity which marks how they are similar to one group and different from other groups. And the border functions to maintain this difference.  

As a result, when a nation imposes the national concept to strengthen the state’s existence, it is done on the expense of the ethnic and religious groups which are excluded from the national identity. They are minorities who are, in most cases, politically isolated, economically deprived, and inhabit on the geographic periphery of the states.  

As discussed above that the borders in Southeast Asia are drawn by the colonizers and the local elites, hence the territories lack the congruence between the national groups and the state, as the original meaning of nationalism suggests. The first consequence is the religious and ethnic minorities do not, at least in the beginning of the state-formation, consider their legal government as legitimate. Secondly, the borders separate the ethno-religious groups. They can be minority in one state, and majority in others. But the cultural ties based on the ethnic and religious identity still exist and function across borders. Therefore, the ethnic-religious group which becomes a majority in one state can easily become a big sympathizers for their co-religionists or co-ethnics who are minority in another state. Thirdly, the religion and ethnicity is included as a part of national identity, and they have the political influence. Although the state has its national interests to protect, especially they are the new weak states, the cultural factor can exert

the influence sometimes either through its constituencies or the opposition. The thesis aims to study the extent to which the religious factor can affect the foreign relations in the region and how the state would preserve the balance so that the cultural factor would not override the state’s fundamental interests.

CHAPTER 3
MALAYSIA’S POLICY TOWARD THE THAI–MUSLIM INSURGENCY

Malaysia positions itself as a “moderate Muslim country,” based on the fact that the majority of its population are Muslims. In the same time, it implies as well that the government has to contest for the interpretation on how to be a Muslim. At the time of its independence in 1957, with the high proportion of the non-Muslims in the country, the aspiration to be a multi-ethnic and secular society reflected in its constitution. Although Islam is the religion of the Federation of Malaysia, other religions can be practiced, and the Indians

and Chinese, who are mostly non-Muslims, are entitled to the citizenship. However, after 1970s, the Islamic revivalism asserted the religious values as another core value of the nation. The Islamic party clearly indicates in its platform policy that its goal is to change Malaysia to be an Islamic State with the Shariah applied.\textsuperscript{60} The contestation between the secular and religious orientation continues until the present time, whenever an issue surfaces and the government needs to decide how to deal with it. This chapter takes the Thai-Muslim insurgency in Thailand as a case study to examine how the Malaysian government weighs the secular interests and the religious values in setting its foreign policy, and how the religious factor affects Malaysia’s relations with Thailand.

**The situation**

On the northern border of Malaysia is the south of Thailand. The majority of Thai population are Buddhists, while 4-5% of Thai population is Muslims.\textsuperscript{61} Most of them are of Malay descents, and speak Malay language. The Thai-Muslims concentrate in Thai southern provinces, such as Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, which border with Kelantan, the Malaysian northern states. This means the Thai-Muslims in the three southern provinces share the religion, ethnicity, and language with their Malay neighbors. Many of them actually have relatives living on another side of border, and the ties between them are still strong even after the British drew the border between Thailand and

\textsuperscript{59} Jaclyn Ling-Chien Neo, “Malay Nationalism, Islamic Supremacy and the Constitutional Bargain in the Multi-ethnic Composition of Malaysia,” *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 13, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{60} Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker (ed.), *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook,* (Singapore: Seng Lee Press, 2006), p. 246.
Malaysia.

The difference between them is that the border makes the Thai-Muslims become minorities in their own home. Many Thai-Muslims insurgent groups emerged to resist the governance of Bangkok, especially during the time that the Thai central government implemented the nationalist policy during the year 1938–1944. However, their resistance was suppressed, until the Thai government changed its policy in 1990s. The government set up many developmental programs in the south, granted the amnesty to the insurgents, and many Muslims began to participate in the parliamentary system of Thailand.

The three Thai southern provinces had been in peace for decades until 2004 when the violence erupted again with the gun robbery from the military camp in Narathiwat province. At that time, the Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, responded to the insurgency with the equal violence which consequently affirms the perception of Muslim Malaysians that the Thai–Muslim insurgency results from the oppression of the Buddhist government against their “Muslim brothers.” In Malaysia, the Islamic Party of Malaysia, (Parti Islam Se – Malaysia or PAS) and many Malaysians, compared the Thai–Muslims living under the Buddhist government to the Palestinians under the Israeli occupation. They called for the boycott against Thai products, and held the protests in front of the Thai embassy in Malaysia. PAS, the opposite and

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Islamic party took a role on rising the fund to donate for the Thai-Muslims whose family members were killed or disappeared by Thai soldiers.65

All these incidents inevitably exerted the political pressure on the Malaysian government. The situation got complicated when Prime Minister Thaksin claimed that the insurgents were trained and hid from the Thai authorities in Malaysia. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, denied the allegation. Both leaders exchanged the hot argument through the media, which caused the tension and distrust on the bilateral relations. The relations reached its bottom period when 131 Thai Muslim refugees fled from Thailand into Malaysia, and Prime Minister Badawi decided to allow the officials of the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR) to interview them and did not arrange their return to Thailand as the Thai government demanded.

The case of Thai–Muslim insurgency contains some religious aspect, which can be seen in the Malaysians’ and PAS’s discourse revolving around the religious values. In the same time, the Thai–Malaysian relations contribute to Malaysia’s secular interests, since it promotes the Malaysian economic growth and security. This chapter will study how the Malaysian government addressed the issue based on its core values, and how the Malaysian government termed with the complicated bilateral relations while maintaining the balance between the secular interests and religious values in the country. Finally, the chapter will conclude how the conflict affected the bilateral relations of the two

countries whose religious beliefs are different.

**Malaysia’s core values**

According to the system of analysis of Muthiah Alagappa proposed in his book “Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences,” a policy is determined by the regime or the decision makers’ interests. The interests can be the political interests, such as, the political advantages over the opposition party or the expansion of its ideology. The interests can also be economic, such as the prosperity of the country which will strengthen the status of the regime. Or it can concern the national security which guarantee the regime’s survival. But naturally, the regime or the decision makers will issue the policy that will protect, fortify or promote their own interests. Some of the interests do not change easily through time, for example, the survival of the country, the territorial integrity or the national ideology. Muthiah Alagaapa calls these indispensable interests the “core values.” They are permanent interests, no matter how the governments change. Therefore, they must be always considered as the priority when the government issues the policy.

Muthiah Alagappa suggests that the core values can be found in the key foundations or policies of the country, such as the constitution and the long-term economic or developmental plans which guide the direction of the country. These policies reveal what is significant for the country, and what would be its ultimate goals. And this will be the guideline on its policy making and implementation. It will also be the main factor to indicate how

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the regime will deal with the rising issue.

In the Malaysian case, the government has been continuously led by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) since its independence in 1957. Hence, the direction of the policies of the country is relatively steadfast. To indicate what would be the core interests of Malaysia, the thesis will study the constitution of Malaysia, “New Economic Policy” or NEP, “Vision 2020” and “Islam Hadhari”.

A) The Federal Constitution of Malaysia (FC)

Not different from the constitutions of other countries, the Federal Constitution of Malaysia sets the territorial integrity and its sovereignty as the priority of the country. Article 1 and 2 of the Federal Constitution declares the territory under the Malaysian sovereignty. But what is distinguished about the Federal Constitution is that it emphasizes much on the national identity, or “Malayness” in its multi-ethnic society.

Before gaining the independence, Malaysia was under the occupation of the British. During the time of occupation, many Chinese and Indians immigrated into Malaysia to trade or work as the labor of the British empire. At the time of the independence, the non-Malays constituted 60% of population in Malaysia. As a result, the Malay nationalists felt the vulnerability and consequently the urgency to protect their “Malay identity” to the extent that the constitution needs to define who is a “Malay.” In the Federal Constitution,

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Article 160 indicates that “… a Malay is a person who professes the Muslim religion, speaks the Malay language, and practice the Malay customs.” Here, on the process of nation-building, Islam becomes a part of the national identity. Because Chinese and Indians can be Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, or Hindu. But almost all Malays are Muslims. The religion involves deeply with the sense of the national security in the case of Malaysia. It is noteworthy that the qualifications of Malays indicated in the constitution are exactly the qualifications of the Thai-Muslims.

When drafting the constitution, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) which championed the interests of Malays initially denied the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) to grant the citizenship for the Chinese and Indians. But after the negotiation, also due to their realization of their common threat from the Malayan Communist Party, the Chinese and Indians obtained their citizenship in return for their recognition of some economic and educational privileges granted to the Malays. This demonstrates some facts. With the proportion of Malays which barely exceeded the half of the whole population, (and this proportion has not changed much until today68), the Malays felt that their identity must be protected to keep Malaya peninsula as the land of the Malays.69 And Islam was taken in, to identify the identity of a Muslim. In the

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68 Peter A. Poole, “Malaysia” in Politics and Society in Southeast Asia, (Jefferson and London : McFarland & Company Inc., 2009 ), p. 94. The Malays constitute 53.3 % of the whole population, followed by 26 % of Chinese, 11.8 % of indigenous tribe, and 7. % of Indians. As for the religious adherence, Islam constitutes 60.4 %, followed by Buddhism 19.2 %, Christianity 9.1 % and Hinduism 6.3 %.

The Malays and non-Malays accepted that they must live together in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

The position of the religion in the constitution asserts the same ideas, - Islam as the symbol of Malay identity, but operating within the multi-religious context. Although Article 3 of the constitution indicates that “Islam is the religion of the Federation”, (right after the first two articles which indicate the territorial integrity and national sovereignty. This can also imply the significance of the religion.), it reads further that “but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation.” In the same time, Article 8 (1) and 8 (2) guarantees the rights of the minorities that “ …all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law… there shall be no discrimination against citizens on the ground only of religion, race, descent, or place of birth…”

As for the judiciary, the Malaysian judiciary applies the dual system of both Shariah and common law. Although the constitution grants the Shariah court the wide sphere of authority beyond the interference of the State’s court, as stated in Article 121 (1A) in 1988 that “The High Court shall have no jurisdiction in respect of any matter within the jurisdiction of the Shariah Courts,” in practice, Shariah applies to only Muslim Malays, and is referred to when the lawsuit concerns the domestic affairs, such as the family and

71 Erica Miller, “The Role of Islam in Malaysian Political Practice,” The Fletcher School Online Journal for Issues Related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization, Fall 2004, Article 4, p. 3.
inheritance law. The UMNO, MCA which represented Chinese, and MIC which represented Indians had an agreement that the position of Islam in the constitution will not affect the civil rights of the non-Muslims. The Alliance of the three parties gave the assurance to the Colonial Office that they did not intend to establish a theocratic state and “Malaya would be a secular state.”

However, the necessity to protect Islam appears in Article 3 (2) which requires further that the ruler of each Malaysian state is also the “Head of the Religion of Islam.” The law also prohibits Muslims to convert to other religions, but allows the non-Muslims minors to convert to Islam without the parental consent.

Likewise, the constitution requires the head of the state to protect the special status of Malays. Article 153 (2) states that “… the Yang di-Pertuan Agong shall exercise his function … to safeguard the special provision of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and to ensure the reservation for Malays and natives … of the position in the public service … and of scholarship, exhibitions and other similar educational and training privileges or special facilities … and, when any permit or license for the operation of any trade or business is required…”

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Therefore, Shanti Nair contends that the Malaysian politics revolves around the concept of protection, either protection of Islam, or protection of the Malays.\textsuperscript{76} However, in spite of this protection and awareness of the pluralistic and fragile character of the Malaysian society, the wide economic gap between the Chinese immigrants and the local Malays brought about the racial riot on 13 May, 1969.

B) The New Economic Policy (NEP)

Before 1969, the economic sectors in Malaysia were separated based on the ethnicities. The local Malays concentrated in the traditional agricultural sector, while Chinese mainly worked in the commercial sector, which resulted in the unequal benefits from the national economic growth.\textsuperscript{77} In 1970, 65.9\% of Malays and other indigenous groups lived in poverty, compared to 27.5\% of Chinese Malaysians.\textsuperscript{78} The wide economic gap brought about the racial riot which not only ended the leadership of the Malaysian first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, it also threatened the national unity on a whole. The 4\textsuperscript{th} Malaysia Plan referred to this incident that “The May 13 incident … demonstrated that any development effort that did not deal sufficiently with the needs of the poor and the imbalance of the racial groups would lead to growth without equity and resulted in a nation divided…\textsuperscript{79}”

Therefore, the NEP which was introduced in 1970 set “creating a united nation” as its number one challenge. The second challenge is eradicating the poverty, then followed by correcting the economic imbalance. And expanding the economy came as the fourth challenge of the plan. Since then, the economy became a strategy of nation-building of Malaysia.80

The Malaysian government diluted the economic sectors defined by the ethnicities by generating the participation of Malays in the modern economy, especially in commerce and industry. In the same time, it worked with the private sector to correct the economic imbalance.81 The quota preserved for Malays in the education and employment in the public sectors also helped relocating the occupations of Malays.82

Whether the NEP achieved its goal is still controversial. But on the bottom line, the achievement of NEP is necessary and considered as a part of “national security.” Datuk Abdullah Ahmad, a Malay elite, perceived the racial riot in 1969 as the “system breakdown” and this occurred when the compromises and contracts achieved by the Alliance of the three parties, (UMNO, MCA, and MIC which represented Malays, Chinese and Indians respectively) in the time of Malaysian independence was violated.83

The racial riot in 1969 also demonstrated how Malays’ well-being and security involves deeply with the Malaysian (or national) security. And the NEP and the following Malaysian economic plans were designed to protect them, (or to say at least, to strengthen their capability in the economic competition with Chinese.)

Some say that the NEP achieved its goal, considering from the higher proportion of Malays in the manufacturing and service sectors. 20% of the shares in Malaysian corporation now belongs to Malays. But some academics question the achievement of NEP. Judith Nakata believes that the NEP can dilute the career segregation based on the ethnicities, but the poverty still persists in the Malays. Vejai Balasubramaniam asserts that the NEP achieved the economic growth and urbanization rather than the wealth distribution. He points out that the Malaysian economic growth even raised the income inequalities, and the racial riot between Indians and Malays breaking out in 2000 showed that the tension from the economic gap among ethnicities still exists.

Furthermore, the NEP is designed to create the social harmony. But after 1969, many Malaysians become more aware of the ethnic separation in the country. The Malays consider the non–Malays as the threat, while the non–Malays

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believe that the Malays are obsessed with the race issue.\textsuperscript{88}

On the social angle, the 1969 racial riot was the best catalyst for the Islamic revivalism. The Islamic revivalism started in the university campuses where students perceived the hardship of Malay farmers as the national issue. They believed that the Malays’ poverty was only a part of Malays’ problem.\textsuperscript{89} As a result, many student organizations, the Islamic Youth Movement or “Angkatan Belia Islam” (ABIM) in particular, called for the social reform in accordance with Islamic principles. Although the student organizations now have less political and social implication, due to the Internal Security Act strictly enforced, the demand of social reform based on the Islamic teachings still goes on both in and outside political arena. In the political arena, the Islamic opposition party (PAS) applies the Islamic teachings on monitoring the works of the government. In the societal arena, the Islamic revivalism generated the Dakwah movement. Although the movement is not homogenous, their common feature is that they apply the Islamic ideology to analyze and suggest the solution to achieve the better Malaysian society. However, the phenomenon results in alienation of the non–Malays.\textsuperscript{90}

The incomplete achievement of the NEP and the perpetuated social disharmony are the challenges which Vision 2020, proposed by the former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad aimed to resolve.

C) Vision 2020

Vision 2020 is the vision proposed by Dr. Mahathir Muhammad in 1991, regarding on how Malaysia should be in year 2020. The former Prime Minister aimed that Malaysia would be “a fully developed country” by year 2020. But what interesting is that his “developed country” should not be measured by the economic growth only. He envisioned that “[Malaysia] must be a nation that is fully developed along all the dimensions: economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically, and culturally.”91 Realizing Malaysia’s inherited danger, Vision 2020 sets two goals for Malaysia, which are the national unity and economic development.

To achieve the united Malaysian nation, Malaysia is designed to be a liberated, democratic, matured, tolerant, and caring society. It must ensure the prosperity with the economic justice. As for the economic goal, the Vision 2020 still has the similar goals with those of the NEP, (This proves that the NEP has not totally realized its objectives yet.), which are the eradication of the poverty and the diluting the specific race in economic sectors. Dr. Muhammad stated that “… in all the major sectors of employment, there should be a good mix of the ethnic groups that make up the Malaysian nation … by the year 2020 to reach a stage where no-one can say that a particular ethnic group is inherently economically backward and another is economically inherently advanced.”92

It is clear that the two goals complement one another. The national unity cannot be achieved without the overall economic prosperity, while the nation cannot fully develop the economy without the social stability. It can be noted here that although the Malaysian government emphasizes on the social problem concerning the status of Malays, the way it approaches the problem and the strategy to resolve are purely based on the secular thinking which is opposite to that of ABIM and PAS.

After Dr. Muhammad left the office, his vision is still Malaysia’s main policy. Although the succeeding Prime Minters, both Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Najib Razak, apply the different strategies. Prime Minister Badawi believed that the privileges of Malays do not help to encourage Malays to compete with other ethnicities.93 In the same way, Prime Minister Razak believes that the non–equal educational and economic opportunities among all Malaysian citizens would hinder the entire national economic growth.94 But both of them still hold on with the objective of the social harmony and economic justice.

D ) Islam Hadhari
As mentioned above, the Dakwah movement both alienates the non–Muslims and asserts some political pressure on the government which has the long reputation on corruption and authoritarianism. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad termed

with the Dakwah movement by the accommodation strategy, such as building mosques, establishing the Islamic Bank and International Islamic University. In the same time, the government promoted its own version of Islamic interpretation as “authentic Islam,” and outlawed some threatening Islamic organizations, for example, Darul Arqam. As a result, the Islamic teachings and practices in Malaysia are relatively united. The influence of both Dakwah movement and the government’s accommodation strategy also results in the high religious awareness among Malaysians. In the international affairs, the Malaysian government activated its role in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), supported the Palestinians, and engaged more with the Muslim countries in order to affirm its Islamic credential to Malaysian constituencies.

However, after the end of Cold War, the religious perception increasingly influences the foreign relations. According to the Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, “… many western countries have absorbed its misperception about Islam to become part of their national strategic thinking that the Islamic world is an adversary.” To promote its role as a modernized Muslim nation toward both Muslim countries and the world community in general, Malaysia promotes the idea of Islam Hadhari (Civilizational Islam), based on the belief that Islam is compatible with modernization and globalization. Prime Minister

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Badawi interprets that creativity and rationalization are a part of Islamic teachings, as seen consonant with the concept of Ijtihad. He believes that Islam is universal concept. The national harmony is still paramount to Malaysia, and Islam does not impede this goal of Malaysia in any way.

To demonstrate the idea of Islam Hadhari, the Malaysian government improves its image as a leading country in the Islamic world. In the same time, it declares the intention to co–exist peacefully with the western and non–Muslim countries. Moreover, it unofficially positions itself as an authority which issues the correct version of Islamic interpretation. As a result, it marginalizes the extremists both in and outside the country.

**Malaysia’s core values**

To draw the conclusion from the study on the Malaysian constitution and its main policies, Malaysia’s core values which must be its priority in foreign policy setting can be described as follows,

A ) The national unity

The national unity of Malaysia does not cover the traditional meaning, such as, the territorial integrity only, although it is surely its indispensable interest as well. But the most possible threat against Malaysia’s security does not come from military invasion. The former Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad articulated that “The security is not just a matter of military capability. National security is inseparable from political stability, economic success, and social harmony.”


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and religion. Not to mention its naturally separated territory. Although majority of the population speak Malay, but they speak with many different dialects. The Malays, Chinese and Indian were able to reach the agreement on the constitution and national principles in 1957, but at that time, they had the common enemy, such as the British colonial rule and the Malayu Communist Party. After both enemies were abolished, Malaysia is united owing largely to the strength and the responsiveness of the central government. K.S. Nathan gives opinion on Malaysia’s unity that “In Malaysia, the state has definitely come before the nation. A major task of post–independence policy makers has been to create a nation out of the pluralistic state.” He quoted that “In Malaysia, authority and sovereignty have run ahead of self–conscious national identity and cultural integration.”

B ) The economic growth

As mentioned earlier that the economic growth can mend the ethnic fractions in Malaysia, since it decreases the Malays’ discontent against Chinese. However, although the NEP helped to decrease the gap between Chinese and Malays, it unintentionally increased the gap among Malays themselves. Malays who can raise their incomes are ones who access the educational and economic privileges. But other Malays still live in poverty. Therefore, the economic growth is still Malaysia’s core interest because it contributes to the national unity.

However, most of Malaysia’s income is from the export and tourism, which means Malaysia’s economy deeply involves with the world’s economy and its international relation. Malaysia also needs a huge amount of foreign investment to realize its goal of being the first industrial Muslim country in 2020. Presently, the Malaysian government has burdened the budget deficits to stimulate the growth of domestic industry, the construction and agricultural sectors, and to improve the existing infrastructure. Therefore, the government is facing the problem on credit rating, and needs the financial relief from the foreign investment.

The economic growth on export and tourism also needs the energy security, abundant labors, and most of all, the peace and stability in the country and the region.

The Thai–Muslim insurgency and its impact on Malaysian core values

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia states seven objectives in the pursuit of its foreign policy. Among seven objectives are,

1 ) Maintaining peaceful relations with all countries regardless of its ideology and political system.
2 ) Forging close relations and economic partnerships with all nations, particularly with ASEAN and other regional friends
3 ) Promoting peace and stability in the region through capacity building and

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conflict resolution measures

4) Projecting Malaysia as a leading example of a tolerant and progressive Islamic nation\textsuperscript{105}

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia also states further that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the cornerstone of Malaysia’s foreign policy, because of many regional and sub-regional cooperation under ASEAN context which all aim to accelerate the common economic growth of the region. For example, ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), the ASEAN Mekong Development Cooperation, and the Joint Development Area (JDA). The Ministry affirms that “The peace, prosperity and stability that Malaysia enjoys today are to a large extent, due to ASEAN’s role as an organization that fosters trust and confidence amongst its member states.\textsuperscript{106}”

Furthermore, ASEAN guarantees the external security for Malaysia. Normally, the Malaysian government allocates only 2–3\% of its GNP for the defense budget, believing that the military forces is only a front of the whole defense strategy. To defend the country comprehensively, Malaysia believes that the mechanism of bilateral and multilateral security cooperation would be the best guarantee for the regional stability.\textsuperscript{107}


When the insurgency erupted in Thailand, the second core value of Malaysia was immediately affected. Dato’ Nazirah Hussain, the Malaysian ambassador in Thailand, explained that “When you want to develop (the country), you want first peace and stability.” Because people need to move around freely to proceed on their international trade and tourist activities. According to her, ASEAN members will become ASEAN Community in 2015, therefore, the insurgency in the south of Thailand affects Malaysia’s national interests too. When something happened, the foreigners, who are the potential investors or tourists, look at the incident as a “regional problem” and avoid coming to the whole Southeast Asian region. So, the ambassador viewed that “the insurgency should not be taken as Thailand’s or Malaysia’s problem, because both countries are actually in the same one community.”

Moreover, the insurgency in Thai southern provinces affected the energy security of Malaysia, because Thailand and Malaysia have the bilateral energy development project in the Joint Development Area (JDA). It is a project which began since 1979 to solve the problem of overlapping claim of the two countries over the offshore area. Instead of drawing a sea territory to separate

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108 Interview with Dato’ Nazirah Hussain, the Malaysian ambassador in Thailand, at the Malaysian embassy in Thailand, on 23 September 2011.
109 Interview with Dato’ Nazirah Hussain, the Malaysian ambassador in Thailand, at the Malaysian embassy in Thailand, on 23 September 2011.
the overlapping-claimed area, the two countries agreed to invest, explore, extract the hydrocarbon resources, and share the expense and profits equally.110 Now, Malaysia finished the constructing of the gas pipeline on its part, and cannot risk wasting its investment on this project.

Likewise, the free mobility of foreign labor is necessary to the economic development of Malaysia. The insurgency will obstruct the mobility of Thai labors to Malaysia. Now, there are approximately 36,000 Thai workers in Malaysian textile industry, furniture manufacturing factories, and agricultural sector.111

The insurgency could also hinder the growing bilateral trade. At the time of the beginning of the insurgency, the bilateral border trade alone valued around 8,090 Million US Dollars per year.112 As for the rest of the bilateral trade, it yearly valued around 15,506.25 Million US Dollars.113

If the violence from the insurgency expanded crossing the border, it could also threaten the territorial integrity and internal security of Malaysia. Although most of the Thai–Muslim insurgent groups demand the independence of the

112 Department of Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Commerce, Thailand, http://dft.moc.go.th/the_files/$$59/level3/malaysia_8.htm, the value showing in the website is in Thai Baht. It is converted to US Dollar here at the rate 36 Thai Baht = 1 US Dollar.
113 Department of Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Commerce, Thailand, http://dft.moc.go.th/the_files/$$59/level3/malaysia_8.htm, the value showing in the website is in Thai Baht. It is converted to US Dollar here at the rate 36 Thai Baht = 1 US Dollar.
three Thai southern provinces, their political ideology originates from the concept of “Malayu Patani Raya” or the Great Malay Patani, which believes that the three Thai southern provinces and Kelantan State of Malaysia belong to the same territory.\textsuperscript{114} The propaganda of the insurgent groups which want to establish an Islamic state may stimulate the extremists in Malaysia. Or according to the concern expressed by Prime Minister Badawi in 2007, the Thai–Muslim insurgency may attract the transnational terrorists to establish their operational base in the region.\textsuperscript{115} This is why Prime Minister Badawi expressed the same concern on the Thai-Muslim insurgency that “We hope he [Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra] will be able to manage the situation without allowing the violence to spread. It is important he manages it.”\textsuperscript{116} At the present time, the Malaysian government still faces the threat from the regional terrorists. The arms in its military camp were robbed,\textsuperscript{117} just like the incident which started the insurgency in Thailand.

Malaysia’s policy toward the Thai–Muslim insurgency

Although the Thai-Muslim insurgency is portrayed mostly through the nation-state perspective as the Muslim minority against the dominating Buddhist government, and its discourse contains \textit{some} religious dimension, but the conflict is not purely the result of religious difference. This could be the reason that the Malaysian government, the religious groups and PAS, did not express any religious solidarity for the Thai-Muslims in the beginning of the

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Siam Archives}, Vol. 32, February 2007, p. 165.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Siam Archives}, Vol. 30, December 2005, p. 1707.
insurgency. Initially, the Malaysian government tried and seemed to be able to keep the good relationship with Thailand.

After the gun robbery in the Thai military camp in Narathiwat province, Prime Minister Badawi visited Thailand to confirm the Malaysian cooperation on containing terrorists in the region. The two countries set up the joint border committees\textsuperscript{118} which will work to relieve the discontent of the Thai–Muslims, based on Malaysia’s belief that their resentment stemmed from the unequal development. Therefore, Prime Minister Badawi proposed the 3 E strategy to solve the problem of insurgency in the long run, which required the Thai government to improve the education, employment and entrepreneurship for the Muslim people in the South.\textsuperscript{119} (It can be seen here that the Malaysian government omitted the religious aspect, and demonstrated that Malaysia, as a Muslim country, can work with the Thai Buddhist government to solve the problem. Most of all, the Malaysian government interpreted that the insurgency was not a religious problem.)

More interestingly, even after the Kreu-Sae incident on April 28, 2004 in which the Thai police followed the insurgents into the ancient Kreu-Sae mosque and killed 30 insurgents inside, none of the religious solidarity was voiced from Malaysia. But some problems concerning the Thai-Malaysian cooperation on the security surfaced. Sometimes the Malaysian government denied to extradite the separatists whom the Thai government identify, because they held the Malaysian nationality, and this became the matter of

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\textsuperscript{119} Siam Archives, Vol. 32, August 2007, p. 1055.
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However, after the insurgency went on with more violence for 10 months, the turning point was after Tak-Bai incident. On October 25, 2004, thousands of Thai–Muslims protested in front of the police station in Tak–Bai district, Narathiwat province of Thailand, as the police had arrested their community leaders. The soldiers arrested some of the protestors and removed them to the military camps with the trucks. During the removing, 78 of the detainees were dead due to the suffocation, because the soldiers forced them to lie down, piling up on each other in the trucks, with their hand bound.121

The Malaysian reaction came in two directions, either suggestions for the solution on the insurgency or critics against the Thai government. The first who responded on the incident was the former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad who had a personal dispute with the then Malaysian Prime Minister Addulalh Ahmad Badawi at that time. He took a political opportunity to show off his leadership over Prime Minister Badawi by publically suggesting the solution for the insurgency through the Malaysian newspaper, Utusan, that the Thai government should allow the autonomy for the three southern provinces.122 After Mahathir Muhamad, Lim Kit Siang, parliamentary opposition leader, suggested that Malaysia and ASEAN send the fact-finding missions to the Thai southern provinces.

As for Anwar Ibrahim, the Malaysian key opposition who fought to change sovereignty.120

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the regime after he was jailed for the homosexual-behavior allegation, criticized the Thai Prime Minister that his aggressive solution would only lead to more terrorist acts. All this pressured Prime Minister Badawi to expressed his concern on the insurgency too, but he conveyed only the moderate massage, “If there is anything that we can do to help, we will. If not, we wish that the Thai government will be able to manage this crisis so that it will not spread and cause further violence. We want the Thai government to take the firm action.”

The compromising statement of Prime Minister Badawi opened for the political attack from PAS, the Islamist opposition party whose political base is in Kelantan, the Malaysian northern state bordering the three Thai southern provinces. Kamarudin Jaafar, a PAS central committee member, criticized that Prime Minister Badawi’s statement was ambiguous, and implied that he agreed with the Thai security force. “If he meant that the Thai government had to take even stronger action and sacrifice more lives, that would be regrettable.” Meanwhile, PAS members both launched the activities to support the Thai-Muslims and strongly criticized the Thai government. The PAS youth wing handed a protest memorandum to a Thai consulate in Kelantan, saying “We appeal to Thailand to act fairly towards the minority Malay community in south Thailand, … so that no group feels oppressed.” It also launched a fund to help the families of the victim killed or injured by

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the Thai soldiers. Badrulzzaman Yusuf, the secretary of PAS’ s Ulama linked Tak-Bai incident with the religion. “The tragic deaths showed that the Thai authorities had no respect for the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims practice fasting.”

As for the religious organizations, they protested against the Thai government too. The Malay Initiatives Network, the Secretariat for Asian Ulamas, the Institute for Community Progress and Development, and the Institute for the Research and Development for Syariah issued a statement calling for a sanction against Thailand, “The Thai government is not being sincere in handling the problem, and Islamic nation worldwide must stop trade relations with it until they succeed in resolving this issue peacefully.” It is noteworthy that PAS, as an Islamic party, and the Islamic organization’s discourse were similar in implying that the insurgency resulted from the oppression of the Thai government against the Muslims. On the contrary, the non-religious political figures’ comments were suggestions for the solution (as presented above) rather than the direct critics against the Thai government.

The Thai-Muslim insurgency became the issue that Malaysian politicians exploited to gain the popularity. Therefore, although the Islamists’ discourse focus on the religious solidarity for the “Muslim brother”, in the end, if the Malaysian government really expressed some concern for Thai–Muslims, it would not be driven from the will to protect the religious values. The

Malaysian government just wanted to appease their Muslim constituencies. This means even if the Malaysian government had referred to the Islamic values, the real agenda of its policy was not religious. Rather, it was for the political supremacy of the regime.

To decrease the pressure from the Muslim Malays, the Malaysian government allowed all the popular protests against the Thai government and their campaigns on boycotting the Thai products. Although the Thai government issued the statements against the Malaysian organizations, and some Thais protested in front of the Malaysian embassy in Bangkok in response, the Malaysian government insisted that as a democratic country, it could not forbid the movement of the Malaysian NGOs, as long as it did not violate the law. It also warned the Thai government that it should be more mature and less narrow-minded, not letting the political dispute to disturb the economic relations, because as the neighboring countries, such dispute could happen sometimes.  

When Salahudeen Ayoob, a PAS representative initiated the debate on Tak-Bai incident in the Malaysian Parliament, the governmental representatives needed to play along. The Parliament decided to condemn Thai government for its excessive use of force in Tak-Bai incident. In the regional level, Prime Minister Badawi was about to raise the incident to discuss during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Laos in November 2004, but Prime Minister Thaksin threatened to walk out from the

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meeting, if any country brought up the issue.\textsuperscript{131}

In the same time, to affirm the Malay-Muslim constituencies that their government did not ignore the sufferings of the Thai-Muslims, and to avoid the religious influence on Malaysian politics and its foreign policy, the Malaysian government held with the interpretation that the Thai-Muslim insurgency was the outcome of the unequal development. The Malaysian government chose to deal with the political pressure from the Islamists through the non-religious discourse. It presented itself as the one who can “help” if the Thai government allowed. And its helps revolved around the economic development and educational improvement in the three provinces. But in general it refrained from criticizing the Thai government through the religious aspect which is based on the dichotomy of the Buddhists (government) against the Muslims which could lead to the confrontation between the two governments.

This policy went in line with the Islam Hadhari idea which positions Malaysia as a moderate Muslim country which can work with other non-Muslim countries in the regional and global level. In turn, it put PAS on the defensive position, because since 9/11 PAS leaders were suspected on their links with the radical Muslims in the region. There were some allegations also that some PAS members funded the separatists in Thailand.\textsuperscript{132} Hence, PAS had to be careful on its position too, when it called for the justice for the Thai-


Muslims.

However, in spite of the cooperative policy of Malaysia, the uncontrollable insurgency increased the Thai suspicion against Malaysia. Few months after Tak-Bai incident, Prime Minister Thaksin claimed that the insurgents were trained in Kelantan State of Malaysia, \[^{133}\] which caused Prime Minister Badawi to quickly responded that Malaysia was not a base for any group to resist other country. And if Prime Minister Thaksin had any information which Malaysia did not possess, he should have submitted it to Malaysia rather than speaking to the media. \[^{134}\] Likewise, the deputy Minister of Defense of Malaysia kept on demanding Thai government to show the evidence of the allegation, \[^{135}\] which the Thai government was unable to do so.

Despite the lack of evidence, the Thai government’s mistrust against Malaysia did not fade away. In year 2005, General Dhammarak Isranggul, the Defense Minister of Thailand claimed that the Thai–Muslim insurgents used Lankawi Island of Malaysia as a place to plan on their sabotage. \[^{136}\] The succeeding Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont claimed as well that Thai–Malays working in Malaysia set up a restaurant network to launder money and transfer it to the Thai insurgents. \[^{137}\] As usual, the Malaysian Ministers denied the allegations and demanded for the evidence.

\[^{134}\] Siam Archives, Vol. 29, December 2004, p. 2094. The speech of Prime Minister Badawi here is translated from Thai–language source. Therefore, it may not be the exact same words with the English original version.  
The continuously surfacing allegations, in spite of the lack of a clear evidence, showed the Thai government’s distrust against Malaysia. The argument between two countries could be interpreted as the sour relations. But on the other hand, the Malaysian government needed to protect its reputation as a moderate Muslim country. It should be noted here too that the Malaysian reaction this time was to protect the country’s reputation, not for the religious values.

The geographic proximity brought Malaysia another incident which proved the Malaysian religious solidarity. In September 2005, 131 Thai–Muslim refugees fled into Malaysia, claiming that they were afraid for their uncertain security living in Thailand. The first thing that Malaysia did was stating that Malaysia allowed the refugees to live in Malaysia for humanitarian reason, and it will not interfere in the Thai domestic affairs.138 The Malaysian government allowed the officials of the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR) to interview the refugees, but in the same time, it allowed Thai authorities to meet them afterwards as well. In the meantime, Datuk Najib Razak, the then Minister of Defense of Malaysia, asked the Malaysian media not to intervene in the Thai domestic conflict which could lead to the misunderstanding between Thailand and Malaysia.139

When Prime Minister Thaksin demanded Malaysia to send the refugees back to Thailand, claiming that some refugees were collaborators of the separatists, it put the Malaysian government in difficulty. If the Malaysian government sent them to Thailand, it could not avoid the wrath of the Muslim–Malays.

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But if the Malaysian government allowed them to stay, it would risk alienating the Thai government.

As a result, the Malaysian government applied the half-way policy. While the incident was in the media’s attention, it allowed the officials of the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR) to conduct the interview, and in the same time, repeated their affirmation to Thailand on their non-interference policy. Syed Hamid, the Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that Malaysia would return the refugees to Thailand only if Bangkok can guaranteed their safety and human rights.\textsuperscript{140} But few months later, when the incident gained less media’s attention, the Malaysian government sent one of refugees whom Thailand identified as a insurgent back to the Thai authority.\textsuperscript{141} Although the Malaysian government did not send all refugees to the Thai authority, it allowed the Thai officials to meet with them regularly, and affirmed that it is ready to send them back whenever they are willing to return to Thailand.

The half-way policy of Malaysia is an example of the Malaysian government’s attempt to strike the balance between maintaining the good relations with Thailand and calming the discontent of Malaysians who expected their government to protect the Muslim fellows. Considering Malaysia’s policy, this is one of the few times that the Malaysian government protected the Thai–Muslims. And it did not do so for the sake of Islamic values. Rather, the Malaysian Government tried to avoid the wrath of the

\textsuperscript{140} Baradan Kuppusamy, “Thai, Malaysian War of Words Heats Up,” \url{http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/GJ13Ae01.html}, October 13, 2005.
Muslim-Malays in order to survive in the political game. This indicates that the religious values may sometimes influence the Malaysian policy. But it is not actually the national core value which is always necessary for the government to protect.

During November 2004 (after Tak-Bai incident) to December 2005 (after 131 Thai-Muslim refugees fled to Malaysia) was the period that the Thai-Malaysian relations became most problematic, mainly because of the Thai government’s blame on Malaysia for the insurgency, rather than because of the Malaysian interference in the insurgency. Furthermore, the insurgency was politicized by the Malaysian Islamists, therefore, the verbal response from the Malaysian government was actually intended to be heard by its domestic audience. (And it was the same on the Thai side.) Hence, the heated argument exchanged through the media cannot really indicate the level of relations. Dato’ Nazirah Hussain, the Malaysian ambassador in Thailand commented that just because the argument of the country leaders rose in the media, did not mean that the bilateral relation went downhill. She reminded that the two countries are very close to one another. It is unavoidable to have some arguments.\textsuperscript{142} Malaysia did not regard the argument as a bilateral conflict. Rather, it was just an issue to resolve.

Moreover, most of the leaders’ argument happened during Thaksin’s administration. After Prime Minister Thaksin was ousted from the position, the relation improved. Badaran Kuppusamy cited the undiplomatic words of a

\textsuperscript{142} Interview with Dato’ Nazirah Hussain, the Malaysian ambassador in Thailand, at the Malaysian embassy in Thailand, on 23 September 2011
political analyst to conclude the situation, “The problem is not Thailand, but Thaksin.\footnote{Badaran Kuppusamy, “Thai, Malaysian War of Words Heats Up,” http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/GJ13Ae01.html, October 13, 2005.}

Furthermore, the real policy of Malaysia should be judged from its real practices. And during the period of the strong argument between the two countries’ leaders, the bilateral cooperation in every fields still proceeded as normal. To preserve the bilateral relations with Thailand which contribute to the Malaysian national interests, the Malaysian government tried to maintain the mutual trust, bilateral trades and other cooperation. Through the period of intense relations, the two Malaysian Prime Ministers, both Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Najib Tun Razak, still visited Thailand yearly, and sometimes joined the trip to the southern provinces with Thai Prime Minister to diplomatically express Malaysian recognitions on Thai sovereignty over the southern provinces.

In addition to the regular visits of the country leaders, both countries frequently exchanged the visits of the military leaders, the police, and senior bureaucrats, to strengthen the bilateral trust and improve the cooperation, especially on the security, aside from their regular meeting under the context of the bilateral joint border committee and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) cooperation. Malaysian leaders also repeatedly affirmed their respect on the Thai sovereignty and hold on with the non–interference policy.\footnote{Siam Archives, Vol. 31, October 2006, p. 1375, Siam Archives, Vol. 32, June 2007, p. 753, Siam Archives, Vol. 33, May 2008, p. 652, and Siam Archives, Vol. 34, December 2009, p. 1677.}
Concerning the economic solution for the Thai–Muslim insurgency, both countries set up the Joint Development Strategy (JDS) as a sub–regional project to develop the economy of the Thai southern provinces and Malaysian northern states. Despite all the disputes between the Prime Ministers, the JDS was accelerated to merge with the Southern Seaboard Development Project of Thailand, and its strategy was set to be complementary with the existing development projects, such as the Indonesian–Malaysia–Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT), focusing to develop the transportation, tourism, fishery, and human resource in the covered provinces.\(^\text{145}\)

On the security, the Malaysian government also exchanged the information of census database to identify the people who held the dual–nationality.\(^\text{146}\) The Thai–Malaysian General Border Committee (GBC) met annually as usual. In fact, they initiated the new cooperation as responses to the insurgency, such as the joint patrol unit,\(^\text{147}\) the intelligence cooperation and joint training of law-enforcement units.\(^\text{148}\) The police department of the two countries increased the cooperation on the drugs trafficking, illegal immigration,\(^\text{149}\) human trafficking, and illegal weapon trade.\(^\text{150}\) On the economy, both countries started the project which aims to be the Halal food center of the world by utilizing the Thai skill on food production and Malaysian marketing base in the Muslim

\(^\text{149}\) Siam Archives, Vol. 31, November 2006, p. 1540.  
\(^\text{150}\) Siam Archives, Vol. 34, December 2009, p. 1678.
In spite of some boycott against Thai products, the value of the Thai export to Malaysia increased. In year 2004 when the insurgency started and was followed by Tak–Bai incident, Thai export to Malaysia valued 5,789 Million US Dollars, compared to 3,829 Million US Dollars in the previous year. And after that the value of Thai export continuously rises to be 6,058 Million US Dollars in 2005, and 7,159 Million US Dollars in 2006. The value of overall bilateral trade in 2004 increased as well, from 9,675 Million US Dollars in 2003 to 12,130 US Dollars in 2004, and rose to be 15,506 Million US Dollars in 2005, and 16,035 Million US Dollars in 2006.

On the transportation, the two countries also opened the second friendship bridge which links Narathiwat province of Thailand with Kelantan State of Malaysia. Namely, it links the sensitive areas of both countries together. They also opened the new border crossing point in Songkhla province of Thailand, and opened the permanent border checkpoint through 24 hours in Yala province. The decision to facilitate the circulation of people and trade

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152 Office of the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Commerce, Thailand, [http://www2.ops3.moc.go.th/](http://www2.ops3.moc.go.th/). The website shows the statistic in Thai Baht. Here, the figures are converted to US Dollar with the rate 36 Thai Baht = 1 US Dollar.
in this area shows the mutual confidence of the two countries.

In the end, to measure systematically whether and how much the Malaysian policy was affected by the religious factor, the thesis adopted the indicator from Joseph S Nye, Jr.’s book “Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History.” The indicator measures the degree of interference by classifying the interference into eight levels. If Malaysia interfered in the Thai-Muslim insurgency in favor of the Thai-Muslims in the expense of the risk of the deteriorated bilateral relationship, the thesis takes the action as affected from the religious factor, and the degree of the influence of the religious factor is according to the degree of interference.

If measure with the indicator of Joseph S. Nye, Jr., through the years of the Thai-Muslim insurgency, the Malaysian government’s policy could be considered as interfering in favor of the Thai-Muslims only one time, which was the condemnation of the Malaysian Parliament on Tak-Bai incident. And the degree is the first level (speech).

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The Malaysian government protected the 130 Thai-Muslim refugees, (and extradited one of them to the Thai authority). But according to the indicator, it is not considered as the interference. Or at most, the Malaysian statement insisting that it would return the refugees to Thailand, only when the Thai government guaranteed their safety, which implied the Thai suppression against Muslims, could be considered as interference, but it was only the first level of interference.

The argument between Prime Minister Thaksin and Badawi on the Malaysian involvement in the insurgents’s training could demonstrate the bilateral conflict, but the Malaysian verbal response was not actually the interference, because it reacted to protect Malaysia’s reputation itself. Most of all, it was not intended to protect the Thai-Muslims. Thus, it cannot indicate the religious factor on the Malaysian foreign policy.

In sum, if measured by Nye’s indicator, the Malaysian policy barely got the influence from the religious factor, because it interfered in the insurgency to protect the Thai-Muslims only once (or twice if consider the statement concerning the refugees as interference) in the low degree.
On the other hand, the progress of the bilateral cooperation proves that the Malaysian government pursued its policy in accordance with its national interests which aims to foster the economic growth and regional stability, in order to achieve the Malaysian national unity. With the convergence of interests of the two countries, especially on economy and security, the basis of the bilateral relations is still strong. Although the Malaysian government was under pressure from PAS and other religious groups, it mainly chose to preserve the relationship with Thailand which contributes to Malaysian core values. Dato’ Nazirah Hussain, the Malaysian ambassador in Thailand, explained that PAS can criticize the government, but the Thai–Muslim insurgency is the political issue only in the Kelantan state, not the issue for the Malaysian constituencies to consider in the national level. And in the end, “Whatever the Malaysian government does, it must do for the national interests.”

Conclusion

The rage of some Malays (but not Malaysians) against the Thai government stemmed from their religious and ethnic ties with the Thai-Muslims whom they believed were suppressed. However, this does not mean that the Malays in Malaysia still exactly hold on with the traditional identity which is based on the religion and the ethnicity. The solidarity does not merely come from the commonality of the religion and ethnicity. But it is how the religion and the ethnicity are re-produced and presented under the paradigm of the modern nation-state which made the Malays strongly feel that these identities

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157 Interview with Dato’ Nazirah Hussain, the Malaysian ambassador in Thailand, at the Malaysian embassy in Thailand, on 23 September 2011
need to be protected, because the identity relate to who they are, who belong to their group and who are “others.” As discussed in the last chapter, nationalism is actually about inclusion and exclusion, the framework that defines a group of people as different from their neighbors.\textsuperscript{158} The commonality of the traditional identity under the thinking framework of modern nation-state, makes the Malays consider the Thai-Muslims as the same group of people (Muslims with Malay descents, speaking Malayu), although the border of nation-state separated them apart.

After the establishment of nation-state of both Thailand and Malaysia, namely after the borderline was drawn in 1909, the people of the two countries are inculcated by the states to think of themselves as citizens of their nations. The problem is in the Malaysian case, where Islam intertwines deeply with the thinking framework of nation-state. The nationalism in Malaysia with the Muslim-Malays as the core of the nation is also strongly promoted due to the great influx of foreigners before its dependence, which is very recent when compared to the long history of the country. So, when Islam and Malay ethnicity associate with the Malay identity, even Malays perceive the situation through the modern nation-state paradigm, they can still feel the religious-ethnic ties with the Thai-Muslims, rather than the separated affairs between “Thai” and “Malaysian” people.

On the other hand, with the identity of the citizen of a Malaysian nation-state, the Muslim-Malays are reminded of their national interests too, even when

they expressed the solidarity for the Thai-Muslims. Most of all, under the framework of nation-state, Malaysians delegate their government the authority to pursue the foreign policy for the country. And the Malaysian government, as an agent which pursues the policy, appropriated the Islamist demand in the balance with the other national interests, because preservation the national interests in turn can judge the survival of the government. Furthermore, as found in the part of Malaysian core values, Malaysia is not the nation of Malays only. Almost half of the population comprises of Chinese, Indians, and indigenous people. The utmost national interest, as a new-born nation with the racial complex is the social harmony, which is achieved, according to Malaysia’s strategy, through the equally-distributed economic development. The internal security is also another Malaysia’s interest. Therefore, the peace and stability in the region and the economic ties with Thailand need to be maintained.

Therefore, when the issue of the Thai–Muslim insurgency rose, despite that the issue was related to the Muslim solidarity, the Malaysian government weighed the national interests, such as the economic growth, over the religious value. However, when the Malaysian government maintained the close relationship with Thailand, providing the security cooperation with the Thai government, it had to balance the pressure from the religious groups. Therefore, the strategy of the Malaysian government, as a Muslim country, toward the Thai-Muslim insurgency was to “help” the Thai government to decrease the discontent of the Thai-Muslims through the economic and educational programs. With this strategy, the Malaysian government can claim that it somehow helped both the Thai-Muslims and the Thai government. It imposed its own Islamic worldview
that a real Muslim country can peacefully work with non-Muslim countries. The Malaysian government’s discourse tried to dissolve the dichotomous perception of the Malays on the situation in Thailand as the Buddhist government against the Muslim minority. And the areas which it reached out to provide the helps were mainly economy which conveyed the message to the Malays that the insurgency is not purely a religious conflict.

This shows that the religion is actually neutral. But the politicians themselves politicize the religion, giving it the political values. When the state imposed nationalism to protect the Malay identity, a set of the religious interpretation was affirmed. But when the state evolved, and needed the social harmony in the domestic level, and the international cooperation in the regional level, another set of the religious interpretation, such as Islam Hadhari, is promoted. It means the religion and its influence on the policy is fluid according to the changing domestic situation. And it is not the static independent variable on setting a policy.

To conclude the finding, in the Malaysian case, the indispensable national interests of Malaysia are the national unity and economic development which the peace and stability in the region and the relations with Thailand contribute to. Malaysia, as a new nation still has a problem on the national unity. Therefore, the Malaysian government pursued the policy toward the Thai-Muslim insurgency by maintaining the close relations with Thailand, and proceeding all cooperation as normal in order to preserve its own national interests. In the same time, to cope with the Islamists, the Malaysian government let them protest freely and interpreted the insurgency with the
non-religious discourse. According to the indicator, overall the religion barely affected the Malaysian policy, because the Malaysian government lowly interfered in the Thai domestic affairs a few times only when the basic rights of the Thai-Muslims were clearly violated. Hence, in the Malaysian case, although the religion and ethnicity have their role on the foreign policy sometimes, the Malaysian government, which is the agent to pursue the foreign policy, appropriated the religious and ethnic factor with the framework of nation-state which requires the foreign policy to respond to the national interests as a whole, rather than to a specific ethno-religious group. And with this framework, the national interests were prioritized over the religious factor in pursuing the foreign policy.

CHAPTER 4

INDONESIA’ S POLICY TOWARD
THE THAI–MUSLIM INSURGENCY

Indonesia is the biggest Muslim country, with 177.5 Millions of Muslim population. But Islam in Indonesia is different from Islam in Malaysia in term of the diversity and its implication on politics. Islam came to Indonesia in the 14th century through the Arab, Persian and Indian merchants. At that time, Buddhism and Hinduism had been already practiced by the local people. Therefore, when they adopted Islam, it was blended with the existing religions,

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including atheism and local traditions. Moreover, the archipelagic geography made Islam observed differently in Indonesia, ranging from the strict Muslims in Aceh to Sufi Muslims in Papua. Hence, Islam cannot effectively be the common identity and ideology which binds Indonesians together as a nation like the Indonesian Islamists assert. Moreover, Islamist parties have long been suppressed under President Sukarno’s and President Suharto’s regime. However, the religion still exists in the society, therefore, it can influence people’s worldview and political ideas.

Just like the Malaysian case, when the issue rises, the Indonesian government has to assess the situation, weigh the interests, and issue the policy. This chapter studies how the Indonesian government, as the biggest Muslim country, deal with the Thai–Muslim insurgency, and how the religious values affect the Thai–Indonesian relations.

The situation

When the Thai–Muslim insurgency broke out, Malaysia was the country which the Thai government turned to most in an attempt to solve the problem, due to the strong ties between the Thai–Muslims and Malay-Muslims in the area and the geographical proximity of the two countries. Indonesia does not share the border with Thailand. But after the violence intensified, Indonesia began to involve.

On 28 April 2004, the Thai–Muslim insurgents attacked the police’s checking point in Kreu–Sae district in Pattani province of Thailand. The police fought against them and followed them to Kreu–Sae Mosque where they fled to hide
inside. When the insurgents denied to surrender, the police opened fire into the ancient mosque, and killed 30 insurgents inside.\textsuperscript{161}

As a response to the incident, 50 Indonesian Muslims met up with the Thai ambassador in Jakarta to inquire about another 75 “lost” Muslims during the clash at the mosque. They also asked for the permission to send the delegates to observe the situation in Thailand. Some news agencies reported that they declared to come to Thailand in order to launch “Jihad” to protect the Thai–Muslims. But the Thai ambassador denied this part of the news reports.\textsuperscript{162}

When Thai soldiers arrested and piled up the bodies of the Thai–Muslim protestors in the trucks which caused 78 of them to die from suffocation, the Indonesian Islamic organizations condemned Thai authority’s excessive use of force, and demanded the Thai government to investigated the incident.\textsuperscript{163} The Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and Malaysian Prime Minister intended to question Prime Minister Thaksin about the incident during the ASEAN Summit in 2004 in Laos, but Prime Minister Thaksin threatened to walk out from the meeting. For that reason, the two leaders from Muslim countries had to drop their questions.\textsuperscript{164}

Then Prime Minister Thaksin expressed his suspicion against Indonesians travelling to Thailand. This suspicion was partly derived from the recent series of terrorist acts in Indonesia, including the Bali Bombing in October 2002.

\textsuperscript{161} Siam Archives, Vol. 29, April 2004, p. 647.
\textsuperscript{163} Siam Archives, Vol. 29, October 2004, p. 1754.

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Also in August 2003, the mastermind of the Bali Bombing and the Southeast Asian leader of the al-Qaeda network, Riduan Issamuddin, or Hambali, was arrested in Ayuthya, the central province of Thailand, with the cooperation of intelligence agencies from at least four countries, the United States, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. Later in November 2004, Thai police arrested another Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) member, Usman U-Seng and his Indonesian wife in Yala province of Thailand.

Prime Minister Thaksin began to link the Thai-Muslim insurgents with Indonesia as the militants’ hiding place, after Malaysia. He claimed further that the Thai-Muslim insurgents learnt to use the violence as the fighting strategy from Indonesia. Although Prime Minister Thaksin did not blame the Indonesian government directly, (Rather, his suspicion was against the terrorists based in Indonesia), his allegation tarnished Indonesia’s image for being the regional base for terrorists.

Although the dispute of the two leaders was not as severe as the Thai-Malaysian case, the Indonesian government was in the similar position with the Malaysian government in the sense that its constituencies clearly expressed the anger against the Thai government for oppressing the Thai-Muslims, while the Indonesian government had its interests in maintaining the good relations with Thailand, both on the bilateral and regional level. To decide what policy Indonesia should pursue, the Indonesian government needed to estimate first

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how the situation affected its indispensable interests or core values.

**Indonesia’s core values**

To identify the core values of Indonesia, this chapter will study the Pancasila ideology, the Indonesian Constitution, the Indonesian Medium–Term Development Plan, and the Indonesian White Paper or its defense plan.

A ) Pancasila

Pancasila is Indonesia’s national ideology. It is the basis of every following national policy and plan. In the same time, it reflects the contestation between the secular nationalists and the Islamists appearing since the country was established in 1945.

Under the Dutch colonization, “Sarekat Islam”, the Indonesian Islamist and nationalist organization, was the first group which led the mass to demand for Indonesia’s independence. The group combined nationalism and Islam together with the belief that Islam could transcend all ethnicities and classes, and bring about the national unity on fighting with the Dutch for their independence.168 (It is noteworthy that according to the *initial* belief of Indonesian Islamists, Islam can be a tool to serve the political purpose. They accepted the concept of nation-state.)

Although Sarekat Islam disintegrated very soon because of the ideological difference of its leaders, the next generation of Indonesian Islamists carried on the idea of using Islam to unite people and establishing an Islamic State.

However, the secular Indonesian Nationalist Party (Partai National Indonesia or

PNI) which emerged later, led by President Sukarno, disagreed with the Islamists. He stated that “If an Islamic state is created in Indonesia, then … the problem of minorities will arise, the problem of small religious groups, of Christians and others … small religious groups will certainly not be able to feel involved in the state.”

But President Sukarno did not mind working with the Islamists to establish the independence Indonesia, hence, he proposed Pancasila as the compromise between the two trends of ideologies. Pancasila does not directly mention Islam, but it contains the Islamic essence in its principles. Five principles of Pancasila are

1 ) Belief in One Supreme God
2 ) Just and civilized humanity
3 ) The unity of Indonesia
4 ) Democracy which is guided by the inner wisdom of its leaders
5 ) Social justice for the entire people of Indonesia

The first principle of Pancasila includes both Islamic and Christian beliefs which together constitute more than 90% of all Indonesian population. Other principles lay down the ideology needed for creating the harmonious society

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composed of many ethnicities and religions.

President Sukarno disagreed with the Indonesian Islamists because of the religious difference in the country, but the diversity among Indonesians is not just the religion. The country consists of 17,800 islands. People of more than 5 ethnicities\textsuperscript{172} (categorized into more than 500 sub–ethnic groups\textsuperscript{173}), speak over 525 languages.\textsuperscript{174} As mentioned earlier that even among Muslims themselves, they practice Islam differently. Islam spread through Indonesia via the marine route from the West to the East, beginning the first contact in Aceh. Therefore, Muslims in the Eastern provinces, like Aceh, tend to observe Islam more strictly than Muslims in the eastern provinces.\textsuperscript{175} And Muslims living in the coastal areas are more exposed to Islam than ones who live deep inside the islands.\textsuperscript{176} Islam is also observed in combination with Buddhism, Hinduism, and local traditions. As a result, Indonesian Muslims comfortably venerate some apostles (wali), the supernatural power of some individuals, and the magical power.\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{172} Peter A. Poole, “Indonesia” in \textit{Politics and Society in Southeast Asia}, (Jefferson and London : McFarland & Company Inc., 2009), p. 126. The majority of Indonesians are Javanese which is 45 \% of the whole population, followed by 14 \% of Sudanese, 7.5 \% of Madurese, 7.5 \% of coastal Malays, 3 \% of Chinese, and 2.3 \% of other ethnicities.
\textsuperscript{175} Paul J. Carnegie, “Political Islam and Democratic Change in Indonesia,” \textit{Asian Social Science}, Vol. 4, No. 11, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{176} From the map shown in Greg Fealy, Virginia Hooker and Sally White, \textit{Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia : a Contemporary Sourcebook}, (Singapore : Seng Lee Press, 2006), no page number.
In the general analysis, Indonesian Muslims’ engagement in politics are described through the Abanagan-Santri dichotomy. “Abangan” Muslims are nominal or less serious Muslims, for example, President Sukarno and President Suharto who both comes from the military background. As for “Santri “ Muslims, they are traditional Muslims who tend to hold on with the fundamental and legal requirements of Islam\textsuperscript{178}, for example, President Abdulrahman Wahid.

With the high linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity of Indonesians, the objective of creating a plural society which will guarantee the national unity reflects in Pancasila ideology. Likewise, the Indonesian national motto is “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” which means “Unity in Diversity.”\textsuperscript{179}

However, not all Islamists accepted Pancasila. Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwirjo was a Javanese Islamists who denied Pancasila, and declared the Islamic State of Indonesia in August 1949, with the Shariah–based constitution. He provoked Muslims to declare Jihad under “the Darul Islam Movement” in


Western Java. Although the movement was heavily suppressed by the government, and he was executed, his idea lives on, and evolves to be Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) today.¹⁸⁰

B) The Indonesian Constitution

Regarding the foreign policy analysis, the Indonesian Constitution can signify the country’s outlook on what could be the threat, what is its core values and how it wants to position itself in the world community.

With the bitter experience from the Dutch colonization, the Indonesian government has strong will to preserve its sovereignty. In the preamble of the Constitution, it reads, “all colonialism must be abolished” The will to preserve the national sovereignty and territorial integrity states in the first article. Article 1 (1) reads “The State of Indonesia shall be a unitary state in the form of a republic.” And Article 1 (2) reads “Sovereignty is in the hands of the people and is implemented according to this Constitution.” This idea becomes the key principle of Indonesian foreign policy, which is “Bebas – Aktiv”, or independence and active.

The country denies to be destined by other countries. Mohammad Hatta who was the first vice president and declared Pancasila with President Sukarno

said that this principle is the “unchallengeable doctrinal basis of foreign policy.”

Due to Indonesia’s archipelagic geography, in which the foreign forces could easily penetrate into its territory, and its local province could possibly separate itself from the central government, the territorial integrity becomes Indonesia’s another core value. Article 25 E states that “The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia shall be an archipelago nation with the concept of Nusantara in character that has a territory with borders and right regulated by laws.” This principle of Nusantara in the Constitution later opened for Indonesia to declare the “Archipelago Concept” as another principle of its foreign policy. The Indonesian government declared that “all waters, surrounding between and connecting the Indonesian state, regardless of their extension of breadth, are integral parts of the territory of the Indonesian state and, therefore part of the internal or national waters which are under the exclusive sovereignty of the Indonesian state.” In 1973, Indonesia affirmed its sovereignty over the sea territory again when the Indonesian Assembly passed “Wawasan Nusantara” or “the Archipelago Outlook” which deems the seawater and the land as one

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182 The Second Amendment to the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, http://confinder.richmond.edu/admin/docs/Indonesia2d.pdf
183 Leo Suryadinata, Determinants of Indonesia’s Foreign Policy: In Search of an Explanation, Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore, 1993, p. 15.
entity. Hence, it provides the Indonesian government the jurisdiction claim over all straits and sea-route between the islands.

Concerning the territorial integrity, although the Constitution sets Indonesia to be a republic state, Article 18 (5) of the Constitution binds the regional authorities to the central government, stating that “the regional authorities shall exercise wide-ranging autonomy, except in matters specified by law to be the affairs of the central government.” In the same time, with the guideline of Pancasila which seeks for the national unity, the Constitution requires the central government to recognize the diversity and exclusivity of its regional provinces. Article 18 B states that “The state recognizes and respects traditional communities along with their traditional customary rights as long as these remain in existence and are in accordance with the societal development and the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.” It is noteworthy that the constitution repeatedly refers to the country as “the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.”

As for the status of the religion in the state, Article 29 of the Constitution complies with Pancasila principle by not directly stating the Islamic religion. But it affirms the recognition for theism. Article 29 (1) reads “The State shall be based upon the belief in the One and Only God.” In the same time, Article

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184 Leo Suryadinata, *Determinants of Indonesia’s Foreign Policy: In Search of an Explanation*, Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore, 1993, p. 16.
29 (2) accepts the freedom of religious beliefs. It reads “The State guarantees all persons the freedom of worship, each according to his/her own religion or belief.” Therefore, Indonesia positions itself as neither theocratic nor secular state\textsuperscript{185} as a result of the compromise between the Abagan nationalists and Satri Islamists.

However, there is another compromise on the status of religion which causes the political conflict until today. When the preamble of the Constitution was drafted, the first principle of Pancasila was initially declared along with the Muslim obligation to Shariah as follows “Belief in One Almighty God with the obligation to implement the shariah for adherents of Islam.”\textsuperscript{186} The Constitution also initially required the president to be Muslim. But due to the objection of the Protestant and Catholic leaders, the nationalists decided to omit the clause requiring Shariah to be enforced (printed in italic letters above) and omit the requirement on the religious qualification of the President. The dismissal of Shariah implementation resulted in the disappointment of Islamists. Nowadays, although the Islamic parties give up on the idea of establishing an Islamic state, they still demand the revival of the clause\textsuperscript{187}

which is known as the Jakarta Charter.

The reason behind the compromise reveals another core value of Indonesia. Muhammad Hatta, the first Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, who along with President Sukarno, decided to omit the clause, explained that, in spite of the risk of the anger from the Islamists, the change was necessary to preserve the unity of the nation composed of many different adherents. The adjusted version of the Constitution would be more acceptable for the non-Muslims in the country. President Sukarno himself rejected to adopt Islam as the basis of the State, because “the state we are building … is a national state consisting of all Indonesia. If we establish a state based on Islam, many areas whose population is not Muslim will secede.

Hence, to conclude from the study on the Indonesian Constitution, the core values which Indonesia needs to protect and become the priority on deciding the policy, are the sovereignty, the territorial integrity, and the national unity, which are not different from other new-born states where the process of nation-building is not completed.

C ) Indonesia’s Medium Term Development Plan 2004–2009

For the new nation-state, the possible threats can originate from inside due to the lack of the sense of the unity, especially the country with high diversity like Indonesia. Even today, Indonesia still faces security problems from separatists and religious fanatics. The government believes that the secessionism results from the unequal economic development. In return, the legitimacy of the central government is based on its performance on improving the well-being of the people as well.\textsuperscript{190}

Hence, to achieve the national unity and the territorial integrity, the Indonesian government sees the development as a strategy.\textsuperscript{191} As a result, the development plan of Indonesia does not focus on the economic growth only. It envisions how the Indonesian society should be and plans to develop the rural area, such as Aceh, rather than the center of the country.

When the Thai–Muslim insurgency began, Indonesia was implementing the National Medium–Term Development Plan (RPJMN) for 2004–2009. This plan pursues the goal of the National Development Programme for 2000–2004 which aims Indonesian society to be “peaceful, democratic, just, competitive, advanced and prosperous.\textsuperscript{192}” With the recognition on the security threats in

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Aceh, Maluku, Central Sulawesi and Papua,\textsuperscript{193} “Developing a democratic political system and maintaining national unity\textsuperscript{194}” is set as the first priority of the National Development Programme for 2000-2004.

As for the Indonesia’s Medium – Term Development Plan 2004 – 2009, it sets three agendas as the goals, which are

- Creating Indonesia that is safe and peaceful.

In order to resolve the regional and sectarian conflicts, Indonesian government plans to work with the civil society to outline the conflict resolution strategy.

- Establishing justice and democracy for all citizens

In order to create the communal trust in the government, and the law–enforcement in particular, the government aims to pursue the judiciary and bureaucracy reform to eliminate the corruption.

- Improving the welfare for all citizens and dealing with economic and social sector policies and programs

In order to improve the administration, the government will clarify the duties of the central and regional governments, while strengthening the governmental and legislative institutions in the regions and seeking for the public participation in the political process.\textsuperscript{195}


With regard to the economic development, the plan aims to create more jobs through the investment, export, tourism, and human resource improvement to achieve the sustainable poverty eradication. However, the main agendas of the development plan turns to concern more on the political dimension, especially improving the relationship between the state and its citizens.

The central government’s effort to outreach to its citizens in the remote areas is obvious in the plan. The difference on the strategies of the present government and the authoritarian government in the past is that the present government adopts the more democratic strategy, such as the co-operation with the civil society, in order to win people’s heart, however, the utmost objective is still the same which is to maintain the national unity and territorial integrity.


The White Paper indicates the main threats against Indonesia. And its perspective goes in line with the development plan in the sense that the majority of its threats are non–traditional threats, either domestic or transnational, such as, separatism, terrorism, radicalism, cross-border crimes, and

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communal conflicts.\textsuperscript{196} (Also, some of these problems are recognized in the Pancasila Principle and the Constitution.)

The White Paper foresees that the traditional threat, like the invasion from other countries, is very unlikely. Rather, it clearly expresses its concern on its own “radical” people, and believes that the globalization can influence the people to stray from Indonesian societal norms, and eventually weaken the unity of the nation.\textsuperscript{197} Consequently, based on these urgent threats, the White Paper defines that Indonesia’s national interests is to guarantee the welfare of all Indonesian people\textsuperscript{198} in order to affirm the legitimacy of the central government. Thus, the Indonesian Defense Plan indicates the unity of the nation and its sovereignty as the permanent national interests or the core values as well.

The White Paper addresses the modern threats, such as terrorism, and relates it to both external and internal factors. Therefore, as a part of defense policies, Indonesia needs to establish the good relationship with other countries\textsuperscript{199} to consolidate the mutual trust, foster the co-operation on resolving the security problems, and enhancing the global and regional stability. And to maintain the

\textsuperscript{196} The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia, “Indonesia : Defending the Country Entering the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century,” \url{http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/IndonesiaWhitePaper.pdf}, P. VII.
\textsuperscript{198} The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia, “Indonesia : Defending the Country Entering the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century,” \url{http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/IndonesiaWhitePaper.pdf}, p. 38
\textsuperscript{199} The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia, “Indonesia : Defending the Country Entering the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century,” \url{http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/IndonesiaWhitePaper.pdf}, P. VII.
good relationship with the neighbors in the region, Indonesia needs to hold on with the principles of equal rights, mutual respect and non–interference.200

**Indonesia’s core values**

To draw the conclusion from the study on the Indonesian ideology, constitution and its development and defense plans, Indonesia’s core interests which must be its priority, when a foreign policy is designed, can be described as follows,

A) The national unity and territorial integrity

The problem of national unity emerged since the birth of the Indonesian nation–state. As mentioned earlier that although majority of the nationalists and Islamists accepted Pancasila Principle as the political compromise, some Islamists totally rejected the principle and declared the Indonesian Islamic state against President Sukarno’s government.201 Furthermore, the Islamists, led by Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwirjo, had their own armies, which launched the fight against the government longer than a decade.

In addition to the resistance from the Islamists, the Indonesian government also continuously confronts with the separatists in Aceh (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka or Free Aceh Movement or GAM), separatists in West Papua (Free Papua Movement), and when Indonesian government annexed East Timor in 1975, it faced with the resistance from Fretilin.

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As for the internal religious conflict, clashes between Muslims and Christians always erupted in Sulawesi. Although the government set up the Inter–Religious Consultation Forum in 1967 to hold the discussion between the religious leaders, the problem has never been completely resolved. Concerning the internal racial conflict, many Chinese living in Indonesia were doubted for their loyalty. Just like in Malaysia, the local Indonesians were uncertain to grant the citizenship to them. After the Communist Party of China expanded their political influence into Southeast Asia, many Chinese Indonesians were the member of the Communist Party in Indonesia which, along with Indonesians’ resentment against the dominant economic role of Chinese minority, brought about the worst racial riot against Chinese in 1965, right after President Suharto had seized the power from President Sukarno. Even now, Chinese are still the victims in many riots, as seen during the national disorder after President Suharto resigned in 1998.

With the security threats from the Islamists, secessionism, and the internal conflicts, so far, Indonesia can exists as a unitary nation–state owing largely to the dictatorial governments under President Sukarno and President Suharto’s administration. During the era of the both presidents, the troop suppressed the separatist groups. All civil servants were required to be members of Golkar, the governmental party, and it was the only party which was allowed to operate below the district level. President Suharto forced the few existing

Islamic parties to merge into one party called Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP or the United Development Party) which had no real political influence on the government. Later, he required all Islamic organizations and party to adopt Pancasila as their basis, in return for not being banned, to make sure that the organizations would not done anything against the regime.

Because all political agencies had been under the strict control of the regime, when the regime’s suddenly broke down in 1998 after the Asian financial crisis, Indonesia was close to be a failed state. Losing East Timor was a clear example. After that, the Indonesian government has to struggle hard to keep the country united. Although the political situation is now stable, the objectives of Indonesian development and defense plan proves that the national unity and territorial integrity are still Indonesia’s core values.

B ) Sovereignty

As mentioned already that Indonesia has high concern on its sovereignty, because of its bitter history under the Dutch colonization and its archipelagic geography which makes the country easy to be penetrated. As already happened in the past, Malaya (presently, Malaysia) and Singapore provided the financial and arms assistance and the operational base to the Indonesian rebels against the Indonesian government. Although now the Indonesian relations

with its neighbors improves, the Indonesian government still acknowledges its disadvantaged geographic features. Moreover, Indonesia is located on the main sea–route of the world which means it cannot avoid thousands of foreign ships navigating through its territorial water daily.

To protect its sovereignty over the sea territory, the Indonesian government declared the “Archipelago Concept” since 1957 to claim its sovereignty over the territorial water between and around its islands equally with its sovereignty over the land. As for the domestic level, Indonesia issued the Indonesian Territorial Law in 1960 and the Continental Shelf Law in 1969 which secure the 3,166,163 square kilometers of the sea territory under Indonesia’s sovereignty.209

In addition to the legislative measures, the Indonesian government also strengthen the bilateral relations with its neighbors and participate in the regional cooperation in order to secure its own border. When Malaya (presently, Malaysia) was firstly established, President Sukarno perceived it as a threat, because both countries had the overlapping claims on the sea and land border. But after President Suharto became the president, both countries solved the problem through the diplomatic relations, and they achieved the Border Crossing Agreement in 1967210 which set up the bilateral cooperation on the checkpoints at the border.

209 Leo Suryadinata, Determinants of Indonesia’s Foreign Policy: In Search of an Explanation, Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore, 1993, pp. 15 - 16.
In the regional level, the Indonesian government asserted its agenda through ASEAN to preserve its sovereignty. Through the Bangkok Declaration which established ASEAN in 1967, the Indonesian government, along with other founding members, laid the codes of conduct of ASEAN, by which the member countries shall interact with each other. And the main principles are non-interference in each other’s domestic affairs and mutual respect on the members’ territorial integrity and sovereignty.\textsuperscript{211} Thus, the assistance from Malaya and Singapore for the Indonesian rebels was subdued. To resist the western imperialism, the Indonesian government also insisted in the Declaration that the foreign military bases can exist in the region with only the consent of the host country, and they can stay only temporarily. Most of all, these bases cannot be used against any ASEAN members.\textsuperscript{212} In 1976, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) under ASEAN context abided the member countries not to use force against one another, when the conflict arises,\textsuperscript{213} in order to guarantee the regional stability.

With the long diplomatic works of the Indonesian government, nowadays, it is almost impossible that Indonesia would face the direct invasion from its neighbors, but sovereignty is still its permanent core value in pursuing the foreign policy.

C ) The economic development

As mentioned above that since the era of New Order under President

\textsuperscript{211} Bangkok Declaration 1967, \url{http://www.asean.org/1212.htm}.
Suharto’s administration, the Indonesian governments believe that the separatism is the result of the uneven economic development. Therefore, the government tends to emphasize the development in the areas where the political conflicts persist. Although the Indonesian economy recovered from the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the unemployment rate and inflation rate are still high. The oil’s price control policy causes the foreign debt to reach 75,000 Million US Dollars in 2005. The terrorism also hinders the growth of the tourism and the foreign investment. Although the GDP of Indonesia grows continuously, the percentage of people living in poverty is still high. A year before the Thai–Muslim insurgency erupted, around 37.2 Million of Indonesian (17.4% of the whole population) living in poverty. In 2009, the figure slightly declined, which is 14.2%, but this means the development plan failed to achieve its goal which aims to reduce the poverty rate to 8.2%. The perpetuated national poverty and the on–going threat from the separatist groups make the development another core value of Indonesia.

D) The internal security

After 9/11 incident, the internal security in Indonesia dramatically changed. In October 2002, two nightclubs in Bali Island were bombed which killed 202 foreign tourists. But the lawsuit took 6 years to execute the wrongdoers due to many appeals and the political–religious pressure in the country. Likewise,

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Abu Bakar Bashir, the religious teacher, who was alleged as a spiritual leader of Jamaah Islamiya or JI, which was the group that planned the bombing, was arrested, but his term of punishment was reduced many times.\(^{220}\) Finally, he was released after only two years of imprisonment.\(^{221}\)

In the past decade, Indonesia has suffered from many terrorist acts. In 2003, JW Mariott Hotel in Jakarta was bombed by JI members.\(^{222}\) Few years later, the Australian embassy in Jakarta was bombed again by the same group.\(^{223}\) And Bali was bombed again in October 2005 by the former JI member who separated himself from the group.\(^{224}\)

The on–going sabotages in Indonesia can deteriorate the national security, economic growth, and human security. Therefore, the government issued the anti–terrorism law in 2002, and adjusted it many times to provide more authority for the police and the soldiers\(^{225}\) to fight with the terrorist groups. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono himself aims to fight with terrorism on both domestic and international level.\(^{226}\) However, JI cells still subsist in the country and intimidate the national security, as the Defense Plan indicates above.

**The Thai–Muslim insurgency and its impact on Indonesia’s core interests**

Coincidentally, the problem of the Thai–Muslim insurgency of Thailand can be

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related to the security problem of Indonesia. Both the Thai–Muslim insurgents
and Jamaah Islamiya have the same ideology which is the establishment of
the great Islamic state in the region. The territory of the Islamic state,
according to JI, would include Indonesia, Malaysia, the south of the Philippines,
Singapore, Brunei, and the south of Thailand.\(^\text{227}\) This is why the members and
the operational areas of JI expand in many Southeast Asian countries. In the
same time, the Great Malay Patani of the Thai–Muslim insurgents composes of
the three Thai southern provinces and Kelantan State of Malaysia.\(^\text{228}\) With the
similarity of their ideology and objective, the military capacity of each group
could inspire or encourage the member of other groups in the region. With
this convergence of the security interest, the Indonesian and Thai governments
have long cooperated on combating the terrorism in the region.

In addition to the security dimension, the Thai–Muslim insurgency could affect
Indonesia’s economic core values. The expansion of violence from the south
of Thailand can destroy the peace and stability in the region which definitely
harms the economic growth of Indonesia. The expanding insurgency would
discourage the foreign investors, obstruct the intra–regional trade, drive away
the tourists, and intimidate the safety of sea–route of Southeast Asia.

The suspicion of Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra against Indonesians
can also sour the bilateral relationship through which both countries have
enjoyed the growing bilateral trade and investment, the energy cooperation, the

educational exchange, and the sharing on the economic and security information.

On the other hand, the Indonesian government relies on Muslim constituencies. And some Indonesians clearly expressed their discontent by protesting against the Thai government after Kreu–Sae Mousque and Tak–Bai incidents. The Indonesian government could step up to protect the Thai–Muslim fellows in order to affirm its Islamic credentials, but it would be on the expense of the bilateral relationship of Indonesia and Thailand.

**Indonesia’s policy toward the Thai–Muslim insurgency**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia addresses three primary objectives on setting its foreign policy. These primary objectives are,

1) To support national development with priority on economic development, as set out in the Five–Year Development Plan

2) To preserve internal and regional stability conducive to national development

3) To protect the territorial integrity of Indonesia and safeguard the people’s place of abode.229

It is noteworthy that although Indonesia positions itself as neither theocratic nor secular state, the objectives of its foreign policy can speak for itself that Indonesia is a very secular state. Two of the three objectives seek to promote the national development. And none of them mentions the religious values.

229 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, “Indonesia’s Foreign Policy / The Principles of the Foreign Policy,” [http://www.embassyofindonesia.org/foreign/foreignpolicy.htm](http://www.embassyofindonesia.org/foreign/foreignpolicy.htm)
To achieve the three objectives, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs lays eight outlines of foreign relations. Among the eight outlines are, for example

1 ) Foreign relations shall be conducted on the basis of the independent and active foreign policy and dedicated to the national interest, especially to supporting national development

2 ) International relations should aim to strengthen international and regional friendly relations and co–operation through various multilateral and regional channels, in accordance with the national interest and potentials

3) Any international developments and changes shall be watched carefully in order that the appropriate steps can be promptly taken to protect national stability and development from any possible negative impact

4) Indonesia’s international role in promoting and strengthening friendly relations and mutual beneficial co–operation among nations should be intensified.230

Again, the outlines of the foreign policy revolve around the national interests, especially the national stability and development. When the issue of the Thai–Muslim insurgency rose, the Indonesian national interests were harmed, especially the internal security and the economic growth. As discussed above that Indonesia and Thailand have the common interests on the regional security and economic development, therefore the Indonesian government

230 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, “ Indonesia’ s Foreign Policy / The Principles of the Foreign Policy,” http://www.embassyofindonesia.org/foreign/foreignpolicy.htm
generally chose to maintain the good relationship with Thailand. But the Indonesian government also had to balance the policy with the religious factor sometimes.

In the beginning of the insurgency, the Thai army suppressed the insurgents with the violence. The killing at Kreu-Sae mosque led to the protest by 50 Indonesians to the Thai ambassador in Jakarta. Just like the Malaysian government, the Indonesian government allowed the Indonesians to protest freely. But in the same time, the Indonesian ambassador in Bangkok joined the trip held by the Thai government to visit the southern provinces of Thailand which demonstrated the Indonesian diplomatic recognition for the Thai sovereignty over the southern provinces.

After Tak-Bai incident, the Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, along with the Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, intended to inquire the Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin Sinawatra about the incident during the ASEAN Summit in Laos. But Prime Minister Thaksin threatened to walk out from the summit if a question about the incident was risen, consequently the question was dropped. But Indonesians knew that the inquiry would not

be serious. Their president just acted politically to respond to the sympathy of
Indonesians for the Thai-Muslims. Jakarta Post, the influential newspaper of
Indonesia, commented about the inquiry that “If Thaksin had simply briefed
the summit for a few minutes …, there is little doubt that the meeting would
have come out with a statement of regional support for Thailand’s effort to
resolve the matter.”

The bilateral relations was affected once more when Prime Minister Thaksin
claimed in his radio show that the Thai–Muslim insurgents adopted the use of
violence as the political strategy from Indonesia. This prompted Juwono
Sudarsono, the Ministry of Defense of Indonesia to demand Prime Minister
Thaksin to provide the evidence on the allegation, otherwise the Indonesian
government would submit the objection to the Thai government. He
complained that the Thai Prime Minister should not have associated Malaysia
and Indonesia with the insurgency, because the separatists exist not merely in
Thailand and Indonesia, but also in other parts of the world. However, it
should be noted that, not different from the Malaysian case, the argument from
Indonesian politicians was to protect the country’s reputation and government’s
popularity, rather than the religious values.

But after the conflicts passed, the Indonesian government continued the even
closer relationship with Thailand. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited
Thailand in December 2005,237 (when Prime Minister Thaksin, whose
administration was responsible for both Kreu-Sea mosque and Tak-Bai
incidents and who alleged against Indonesia about the insurgency, was still in
the office.) In return, President Yudhoyono welcomed three Thai Prime
Ministers during the time of the on-going insurgency.238

Not different from the Malaysian government, the Indonesian government
interpreted the insurgency with the non-religious discourse. It positioned itself
as one who can help both the Thai government and the Thai-Muslims. And its
situation is much easier than that of the Malaysian government, because the
Islamic organizations in Indonesia presented themselves as the moderate
Muslims in the global level, and they actually worked with the Thai
government to “correct” the Islamic education in Thailand.

With the Thai government’s initiative, Hasyim Muzadi, the leader of Nahdlatul
Ulama (NU), the biggest Muslim organization in Indonesia, was invited to visit
the Thai three southern provinces and talk with the clerics, local leaders,

people, and governmental officials there. When he returned to Indonesia, he addressed the poverty and education as the causes of the insurgency, not the religion. According to him, “… there were parties who wanted to give the conflict a religious color. True religion-based conflict is rare. Actually, what usually happens is a misunderstanding of a religion’s teachings and the misuse of it. It would be better to improve the education and address poverty in the south as well as uphold social justice.” Most of all, he objected the use of violence. He urged both the Thai government and the clerics in the southern provinces to stop violence, as acts of terror only invite more terror.

As for Muhammadiyah which is the second largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, Din Syamsuddin, the chairman of the organization, was invited to Thailand in 2007, and he returned to Indonesia with the perception similar to that of NU leader. He insisted not to interfere in the Thai domestic affairs, but his organization can “help” to empower the Thai-Muslims on the education, health and economy. Again, he did not believe that the religion is a root-cause of the conflict. He said “… it should come along with efforts to reduce the wealth gap … conflicts do not always have religious motives, but more social and political factor. Sometimes, religion is only used as a justification.”

he sent the rectors of six Muhammadiyah universities to visit the Thai southern provinces, and offered scholarships to Thai-Muslim students to study in the organization’s universities\(^{242}\) in order to improve the Islamic understanding in Thailand.

The media in Indonesia also presented the news in the way that helped the government pursue the constructive policy easier. While “Berita Harian” a major Malay-language newspaper carried a banner “World condemns Thailand: Excessive use of force against Muslim\(^{243}\)” and another Malaysian newspaper, reported “the Thai government now surpasses Israel’s record of aggression against Muslims,\(^{244}\)” the Indonesian media reported the incident with the softer tone, such as “Moderate Muslims fight radicalism in Thai South\(^{245}\)” which reported on how a Thai Islamic teacher tried to fight with the radical Muslims through the education. Another report “Southern Thailand Conflicts: A Rare Perspective” found that a member of Jama’ah Islamiyah (JI) faction really went to the southern provinces of Thailand to expand the organization’s


operational area.246

The stance of both the Islamic organizations and the media did not put the pressure on the Indonesian government at all. Therefore, the government barely needed to balance between the religious factor and the national interests. The reason is revealed when compare between Islam in Indonesia and in Malaysia. Islam in Indonesia has the different character and function. Not only it is more diverse than in Malaysia, but also it is not a part of Indonesian nationalism. As already discussed in the last chapter that the Malays countered with the great influx of the foreign immigrants before its independence, therefore, they felt the urgency to protect the Malay identity. Since the Islamic religion and Malay ethnicity are used to symbolize the national identity, the Malaysian politics, as Shanti Nair suggests, revolves around the concept of protection, either protection of Islam or protection of Malays.247

On the contrary, in Indonesia the ethnicities are very various through the archipelago. A person’s identity is based on their place of origin and mother tongue rather than on physical traits or religion, as in Malaysia.248 Although the Islamic beliefs lay the ground for Pancasila, the Indonesians do not feel as

strongly as Malaysians that Islam is a part of their national identity, and accordingly needs to be particularly protected. Moreover, the diversity of the religious practices in Indonesia moulds the Muslim-Indonesians to be tolerant.\textsuperscript{249} Rizal Sukma noticed that with this social circumstances, Islam in Indonesia works as the constraining factor on the government’s policy rather than as a motivation or goal of the policy.\textsuperscript{250}

Most of all, Indonesia was, (and perhaps is) in the same position with Thailand. As discussed above that the core values of Indonesia are sovereignty and national unity. The biggest concern of the Indonesian government (and Indonesians who believe in their nation-state) was the Aceh separation. Both Indonesian media and politicians always referred to their Aceh case when they discussed on the Thai-Muslim insurgency, for example, Yuri Thamrin, the Indonesian Foreign Ministry director for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, expressed the support for the peace solution of the Thai government, “We will support a peaceful solution within the framework of Thailand’s territorial integration as we have had some similar experience, such as finding a solution to the conflict in Aceh.”\textsuperscript{251}


Furthermore, the Indonesians cannot fully condemn the Thai government for the unequal development in the south or even violating the human rights of the Thai-Muslims, because the Indonesian government actually has done the same thing to Acehnese, Papuans and people in other far provinces. The worst is that in the Indonesian case, the government of the most populous Muslim country deprived of the natural resources and suppressed against the fellow Muslims themselves. Hence, with the separatists in many provinces, Indonesians tended to be more understanding in Thailand’s complicated situation than Malays did, and they perceived the separatist problem through the politico-economic worldview, rather than the religious approach.

Thus, in the time that no severe human rights violation occurred in the South of Thailand, the Indonesian stance turned to be consultative. The Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono advised the Thai Prime Minister, Surayud Chulanont, that from Indonesian experience in Aceh, he learnt that the military forces would not solve any problem.\(^\text{252}\) The president also informed the succeeding Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva that Indonesia set up the committee which can help on the Thai government’s project regarding the professional training in the south, or provide the scholarship for the Thai-

Muslim students.²⁵³

Moreover, the Indonesian Vice President, Jusuf Kalla, mediated the talk between the representatives from the three Thai provinces and General Kwanchat Klaharn, the former chief of the Thai fourth Army and the former consultant of the Thai Minister of Defense, at the presidential palace in Bogor, Indonesia, in September 2008.²⁵⁴ However, the talk did not achieve any result, because it was reported on the local and world media before all the talk sessions would be completed.

As stated above that the real policy would reveal through the real practices. The continuation of the cooperation between Thailand and Indonesia confirms that the relations of both countries was strong, and the Indonesian government pursued the policy to preserve its national interests, especially the economic development and internal security, with the slight effect from the religious factor.

One year after Tak–Bai incident, while Prime Minister Thaksin was still in the office, President Yudhoyono visited Thailand, and seek for more bilateral cooperation, such as, more Thai investment on the Indonesian natural gas development, the medical information exchange on the bird flu and the

vaccine, the security cooperation against the transnational crimes and pirates on
the sea–route, and increasing the value of bilateral trade and investment. The
Indonesian and Thai governments also reached the Memorandum of
Understanding (MOU) on the agricultural cooperation. The Indonesian
government also extended the concession for Thai fishery in the Indonesian
sea territory.\textsuperscript{255}

When Thai Prime Minister Samak Sudharavej visited Indonesia, President
Yudhoyono agreed to import more rice from Thailand, allowed Thai fishery in
Indonesia, and granted scholarships for 400 – 500 Thai Muslim students. In
return, the Thai government agreed to buy LPG gas from Indonesia for one
million tons per year, and invest on the sea food processing factories, including
transferring the technology in this field to Indonesia.\textsuperscript{256} After the succeeding
Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva visited Indonesia in March 2008, he
came back with the agreement on the intelligence cooperation with
Indonesia.\textsuperscript{257}

In 2010, despite the on-going fighting in the south of Thailand, the Thai-
Indonesian relations got stronger. The Joint Commission of both countries
concluded the MOU on fishery cooperation, the bilateral trade agreement,

\textsuperscript{256} Siam Achieves, Vol. 33, March 2008, p. 320.
\textsuperscript{257} Siam Achieves, Vol. 33, June 2008, p. 784.
setting up the universities’ network, and intelligence sharing.\footnote{The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, \url{http://www.mfa.go.th/web/162.php?id=36692}, September 8, 2010.}

As for the bilateral trade, it got no interruption from the Thai–Muslim insurgency either. In 2004, when the Thai–Muslim insurgency erupted, and the Thai government suppressed it with violence, Indonesia imported more Thai products than the previous year for 62.9\%. Namely, in year 2003, the value of Indonesian import from Thailand was around 1,701.7 Million US Dollars, and it increased to be 2,771.6 Million US Dollars in 2004. It continually increased to be 3,447 Million US Dollars in 2005, and slightly dropped to be 2,983 Million US Dollars in 2006.\footnote{Office of Board of Investment, Thailand, \url{http://www.boi.go.th/thai/asean/Indonesia/capt2_p3n.html}, accessed in June 2011.} As for the investment, Thai investment in Indonesia boosted to be 200 Million US Dollars in 2010, and is predicted to triple within the next five years.\footnote{Petchanet Pratruangkrai, “Indonesia likely to see big leap in Thai investments,”, \url{http://www.nationmultimedia.com/home/2010/10/22/business/Indonesia-liely-to-see-big-leap-in-Thai-investmen-30140586.html}, October 22, 2010.}

In the global level, the Indonesian representative in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) helped the Thai representative team to negotiate with other Islamic member countries to agree that the insurgency did not result from the religious conflict. The Conference supported the Thai government and insisted not to interfere in the Thai domestic affairs.\footnote{Siam Archives, Vol. 30, June 2005, p. 849.}
In sum, if measure the influence of the religion on the Indonesian foreign policy by the indicator (please refer to the table on page 22 of the first chapter), considering any interference in the Thai domestic affairs in favor of the Thai-Muslims on the expense of the bilateral relations as the result of the religious factor, then it is found that the Indonesian foreign policy was even less affected by the religious factor than the Malaysian foreign policy.

The Indonesian President intended to inquire the Thai Prime Minister on the Tak-Bai incident, but he drop the question. He discussed and advised about the insurgency with many Thai Prime Ministers, but according to the indicator, the lowest level of interference is launching the speech against other state, which the Indonesian government did not do so in this case. The Indonesian objection on the Thai allegation claiming that Indonesia was a source of the radicals cannot be considered as the interference driven from the religious factor, since the reaction was actually to protect the country’s reputation as a moderate Muslim country. Therefore, to conclude based on this indicator, the Indonesian policy toward Thailand was not affected by the religious factor.

On the other hand, if consider from the continuation of all bilateral projects, it can be concluded in the same way that the Thai–Indonesian relations were not affected by the Thai–Muslim insurgency. This is because the bilateral
relations are necessary to promote Indonesia’s national interests, especially the economic development. Furthermore, Indonesia needs to hold on with the non-interference principle of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), because the principle is the shelter to protect Indonesia’s own sovereignty as well. Consequently, the Thai–Muslim insurgency did not affect their bilateral relationship.

Conclusion

When compare Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Thai–Muslim insurgency with Malaysia’s policy, one common finding is that the role of the religion on their foreign policy is influenced by the domestic circumstances, for example the position of the religion in the society and the domestic political conditions. Although both countries reacted on the same situation (the Thai-Muslim insurgency), they reacted very differently, despite that both countries position themselves as the moderate Muslim countries. As discussed above that the main factor for this difference is how they re-produce and interpret the religion as a part of nationalism under the framework of the modern nation-state. It is not merely that the religious ties remains from the pre nation-state era. Prior to that age, although people felt the religious similarity or difference between groups, there was no war or interference to save the co-religionists in Southeast Asia. Even though it happened in Europe, it was the
affairs of the elites only. However, after the idea of nation-state spread, the
religion or ethnicity became the popular affairs, - the affairs of the nationals.
The religion and ethnicity are given values as they are the symbol of the
group’s existence. And it provides a claim for a group of people to establish
a nation-state, and protect themselves from an outside threat. (Before the era of
nation-state, there was no clear separation between the “interior affairs” and
“outside threat.”)

When Malays (but not Malaysians) give values to Islam and the Malay
ethnicity, the solidarity with the Thai-Muslims is created through the similarity
of this qualification. Furthermore, in the case of Malay-Muslims in Kelantan of
Malaysia, they really have had the bond through the family ties with the Thai-
Muslims before the nation-state was set up. Therefore, they particularly feel the
strong solidarity with the Thai-Muslims.

On the contrary, Indonesians have the common religion with the Thai-Muslims,
but they are of the different ethnicities. No family ties, nor geographic
proximity to link them together. Most of all, with the influence of the thinking
under the framework of nation-state, Indonesians specially sensed the threats of
the separatists and the radical Muslims who use violence as the political
strategy, because their country has experienced this trouble and still struggles
with it. As analyzed in the part of core value, Indonesia’s prime problem is
the sovereignty and national unity, and this affected much on how the
Indonesians perceived the Thai-Muslim insurgency. With the Indonesian
national experience, they understood the danger of the separatism against the
existence of the Thai state. Not only that the Indonesians had less sympathy
with the Thai-Muslims, when compared to the Malays, but they also perceived
the separatism as the political-economic problem rather than the result of the
religious conflict.

On the other hand, the relationship with the Thai government consolidated the
Indonesian national interests, especially the economic development and internal
security. Also, the Thai and Indonesian governments have long established the
good relationship. They recognize and respect one another’s sovereignty which
is the key of the regional relations in Southeast Asia. Hence, the interference
is always avoided, if the government is not really under the domestic pressure.

But after Kreu-Sae mosque and Tak-Bai incident, it was inevitable for the
Indonesian government, as the government of the Muslim country, to be
pressured from the religious groups. As a result, it decreased the pressure by
letting the religious groups protest as they wanted, while the government
cooperated with the Thai government to “correct” the Islamic teaching in the
South of Thailand. The Indonesian government also provided the consultation
on the insurgency with the political approach. Further, it was also the mediator between the Thai government and the representatives from the tree southern provinces. With the strategy which was similar to that of the Malaysian government, the Indonesian government affirmed its position as a moderate Muslim country in the regional and global level, strengthened the relationship with Thailand, avoided the religious factor in its foreign policy which would obstruct its relations with the non-Muslim countries, and demonstrated to its constituencies that it did help the Muslim fellows in Thailand. And in this meantime, the Indonesian government did not forget to continue on the cooperation with Thailand in many fields without the effect from the religious factor.

The domestic political circumstances made it easy for the Indonesian government to pursue its policy, because the religious parties had long been marginalized. As a result, they were too weak to argue with the government. The religious organizations which are more influential in the society than the religious parties also supported the government’s policy. Furthermore, President Yudhoyono himself comes from the military background, and has long fought with the terrorism and separatism. Therefore, his policy tended to focus more on the national interests.

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If measure by the indicator, which considers the Indonesian interference in favor of the Thai-Muslims on the cost of the bilateral relations as the result of the religious factor, then it can be concluded that the Indonesian foreign policy was not affected by the religious factor, because it did not interfere in the Thai domestic affairs even in the lowest level (speech).

To conclude the finding, the comparison between the Malaysian and Indonesian cases shows the influence of the religion on the foreign policy depends much on how it is positioned under the framework of the nation-state. The national interests also plays the main part on the decision on the policy. The relationship with Thailand helped on promoting the Indonesian economy and internal security. Therefore, the Indonesian government prioritized the bilateral relations with Thailand over the religious factor. Although it had to balance with the pressure from the religious groups, it was very little, due to the socio-political circumstance of Indonesia itself.
CHAPTER 5

THE PHILIPPINES’ POLICY TOWARD

THE DEMAND FOR THE INDEPENDENCE IN EAST TIMOR

The Philippines is a Catholic–predominant country. And its Catholic Church actively engages in politics. It significantly participated in the “people power” in 1986 to end the dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos, and once again in 2001 to depose President Joseph Estrada. Expectedly, in the international level, the Philippine Catholic Church engages in the foreign policy as well. There are only two Catholic-predominant countries in Southeast Asia. Other than the Philippines, another country is East Timor. In 1975, East Timor was invaded by Indonesian troops, and was under Indonesian occupation since then
until 1998, when the referendum on the country’s independence was held. Before and after the referendum, around 2,000 Timorese were killed by the Indonesian troops and the Pro–Jakarta militias.²⁶³ Archbishop of the Philippine Catholic Church, and other Philippine Catholic institutes openly denounced the human right violation in East Timor. On the contrary, the Philippine government stayed silent on their Christian fellows’ sufferings. It is clear that the Philippine government chose its relations with Indonesia over the religious values. This chapter explores the reasons why the Philippines opted for this policy.

The situation

Timor is the Island, located in the Indonesian archipelago. The Portuguese seized Timor in 1642 to be their trading port on their Southeast Asian sea-route.²⁶⁴ Then the Dutch colonizers came to the Indonesian archipelago in 18ᵗʰ century and fought with the Portuguese to occupy Timor. The result was the both countries separated Timor into the eastern and western parts. The Dutch occupied the western Timor along with all other islands of Indonesia, while the Portuguese occupied East Timor since then. Actually, at that time, Timorese had not developed their national identity. But owing to the shared

²⁶³ Peter Church (ed.), A Short History of Southeast Asia, (Singapore : John Wiley & Son. Ltd., 2006), p. 35.
experience under the Portuguese colonization and the wide conversion to Catholicism, East Timorese gradually developed the common history as a foundation of their nation. However, when the Portuguese government planned to relinquish its occupation over East Timor, the East Timorese nationalists could not agree yet on the prospect how their nation should be.  

And this caused the political chaos in the time of transition.

In 1975, there were three main East Timorese political parties. “Fretilin” party demanded the immediate independence from Portugal. But UDT party wanted the progressive autonomy under the Portuguese protection, while “Apodeti” party wanted to be a part of Indonesia due to their historical and ethnic relations. The political disunite in East Timor caused Indonesia’s concern on the possible consequence after the establishment of a new weak state in its archipelago, while Indonesia itself had the problem of the national unity from the beginning. The chaos in East Timor could bring about the repercussion of territorial instability to the nearby provinces of Indonesia. Therefore, the Indonesian government began to interfere in East Timor’s domestic politics, and later planned for the invasion.

Fretilin actually knew the Indonesian

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government’s plan, and therefore, informed the General Secretary of the United
Nations (UN) that Indonesia was about to invade East Timor.\(^{268}\) (At the
time, both the United Nations and Portugal acknowledged the right of self–
determination of East Timor, including the independence.\(^{269}\)

Meanwhile, the fighting between the groups throughout East Timor expelled
hundreds of refugee into Dili, capital of East Timor, and into Indonesia. When
Portugal cannot control the situation any longer, it withdrew all Portuguese
armies, and consequently ended its occupation, in East Timor. As a result,
Fretilin declared the independence of “The Democratic Republic of East
Timor” on 28 November 1975, but the Anti–Communist Movement in East
Timor declared East Timor as part of Indonesia on the next day.\(^{270}\) The
Indonesian government took this opportunity to invade East Timor on 7
December 1975\(^{271}\) and ignored the United Nations’ call for its withdrawal.
The Indonesian government declared East Timor as its 27\(^{th}\) province in year
1976.\(^{272}\) It tried to gain the international recognition on its sovereignty over
East Timor by inviting 23 embassies in Jakarta to send their observers to a


\(^{269}\) The United Nations, “The United Nations and East Timor – A Chronology,”


People Assembly in Dili. But only seven embassies accepted the invitation. Among the embassies which did not answer the invitation were, the United States, Japan, Australia, and the Philippines.273

The Indonesian government can keep East Timor under its occupation owing largely to its military force. Therefore, when the Indonesian government lost its strength after the financial crisis in 1997, thousands of East Timorese demonstrators called for their referendum with the choice of being independent. In this meantime, the United Nations General Secretary, Kofi Anan and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal discussed with Indonesian President B.J. Habibie until they reached the agreement to hold the referendum on the independence of East Timor.

However, the agreement did not decrease the clashes breaking out through East Timor. The fighting between the pro–independence East Timorese and the pro–Indonesia militias forced tens of thousands of the East Timorese to leave their home.274 The United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) was established and sent into the disputed territory to calm down the violence. But the killing continued, and even increased after the result of the referendum was declared, by which 78.5% of East Timorese voters opted for the

independence.  

To effectively stop the violence, the UN urged the Indonesian president to accept the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), which would employ the multinational armed force through East Timor, and to withdraw the Indonesian armed forces from the disputed area. Aside from employing INTERFET, the UN further sent the United Nations Transnational Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). The presence of both UN teams and the withdrawal of Indonesian troops finally recovered peace in East Timor. Through the time of chaos in East Timor, before and after the referendum, the Philippines held on with the non–interference policy. It got involved only after Indonesian People’s Consultative Assembly had recognized the result of the referendum. Then when the UNTAET was set up, the Filipino general took the position as the commander of the force. On the contrary, the Philippine Catholic Church, under the leadership of Archbishop Jaime Sin, stood side by side with East Timorese since the time of the Indonesian occupation. The Philippine Catholic Church had long criticized the Indonesian government for its human right violation against East Timorese, and called for the freedom of East Timor.

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It can be seen that the Philippine government had some pressure from the Church when it decided between the religious values and the secular interests of the relationship with Indonesia. In this chapter, it will be analyzed how the Philippine government came to the decision on the policy regarding East Timor.

**The Philippines’ Core Values**

To address the Philippines’ core values, the thesis will study the Philippines’ Constitution, the Medium–Term Philippine Development Plan and the Philippine Defense Policy Paper.

A) The 1987 Philippine Constitution

The 1987 Philippine Constitution is analyzed here because it was written after the critical change of Philippine politics, which is “People Power Movement” in 1986. The new strong spirit of democracy and the liberal ideology were added into the constitution which guided the country’s foreign policy differently from the previous administration.

Before the 1987 Constitution was adopted, the Philippines was governed by the martial law since 1972. President Ferdinand Marcos justified the martial law and centralized state power based on the threat from the Communists, the Muslim secessionists in the south, and the possible coup. But aside from these threats against the regime, the Philippines has its inherited problem on the
governance.

Before the Spanish arrived the Philippines, the Filipinos were loosely grouped under the village leaders or sultanates. Then the Spanish introduced the feudal system in which the landlords patronized the peasants in their territory. The tie between the local patrons and people formed up, and takes the deep root in the Philippine society. Moreover, the archipelagic geography of 7,107 islands makes it harder for the state power to intervene in the local relationship. Some local patrons have their own small armies. Some hold the positions in the governmental offices, when the state bureaucracy is established, which even blurs the private and the governmental governance. As for Muslims in Mindanao, they accept the tribe leader (Datu), who functions as the law maker, the governor, and the judge, rather than accepting the governmental officials. President Ferdinand Marcos declared the martial law to eliminate the old governance system, but the abuse of power, the corruption, and the economic decline brought the backfire against himself. The “people power” uprising against the regime in February 1986 ousted President Marcos from the country, and Corazon Aquino became the next president. She restored the

democratic spirit, such as the civil rights, the free press, and the rights of minorities. The liberal ideology is obvious in the preamble of the new constitution, “… The blessings of independence and democracy under the rule of law and the regime of truth, justice, freedom, love, equality and peace …”

Section 1 and 3 of Article II of the constitution affirms the democratic ideology of the country, as follows “The Philippines is a democratic and republican State. Sovereignty resides in the people and all government authority emanates from them” and “Civilian authority is, at all time, supreme over the military. The Armed Forced of the Philippines is the protectors of the people and the State.”

The constitution also limits the term of presidency, allows the legislature to revoke the President’s declaration of martial law, and it ensures that the state of martial law will not suspend the operation of constitution, the civil court or the legislative assembly.

Not different from Indonesia, the Philippines recognizes the vulnerability of its territorial integrity due to its archipelagic geography. Therefore, the constitution

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declares the sovereignty over both land and sea, “The national territory comprises the Philippine archipelago, with all the islands and waters embraced therein, and all other territories over which the Philippines has sovereignty or jurisdiction … The waters around, between, and connecting the islands of the archipelago, regardless of their breadth and dimensions, form part of the internal waters of the Philippines.\(^{283}\)

In the same time, with the democratic spirit, the Philippine government knows that to hold many islands together as a nation, the central government has to accept the cultural diversity of the people. Section 14 of Article XIV of the constitution pronounces that “The State shall foster the preservation, enrichment, and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture based on the principle of unity in diversity … \(^{284}\) Likewise, section 22 of Article II of the constitution states that “The State recognizes and promotes the rights of indigenous cultural communities within the framework of national unity and development\(^{285}\)”

Furthermore, to preserve the national unity, the constitution allows the local government the authority to govern itself. Section 25 of the article II declares


that “The State shall ensure the autonomy of local government.” With this article, the autonomous region for indigenous people is established in northern Luzon. Then in 1997, four provinces in Mindanao were set up as the “Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao” and Nur Misauri, the leader of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNFL) was the first elected governor. He is also the president of “Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development” which is responsible for the economic development in other 13 provinces of Mindanao, and later they will be set up as the autonomous region too.

As for the position of the religion in the state, despite that the majority of Filipinos are Catholic, and the Catholicism is the base of Philippine society, the Constitution destines the Philippines to be a secular state. Section 6 of article II of the Constitution indicates that “The separation of Church and State shall be inviolable.” Ms. Teresa L. Taguiang, the Deputy of Chief of Mission of the Philippine embassy in Thailand explained that the Philippines needs to be secular to affirm that the state does not impose any particular

289 Interview with Ms. Teresa L. Tanguiang, the Deputy of Chief of Mission, at the Philippine embassy in Thailand, on October 11, 2011. Ms. Tanguiang wants me to inform that her view on secularism is her personal view, and she is not an expert on secularism, nor on the Philippine relations with Indonesia and East Timor.
religion on its people. Also, secularism means the government recognizes all religious minorities’ rights. If any religion really influences the Philippine politics, it should come from the individuals’ will, but not directly from the Church’s imposition.

B ) The Medium–Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP), 1999–2004

When the fighting in East Timor erupted, the Philippines was in the beginning of its third medium–term development plan. The most important agenda of the plan is poverty eradication. But the Philippine approach is relatively inward–looking, compared to Malaysian and Indonesian development plans. The Philippine government set the missions to eliminate the poverty as follows,

- Developing the rural areas through the agricultural modernized programs and the foreign capital and technology.
- Expanding the access to the social services, for example, education, housing and social welfare to empower the disadvantaged in the society.
- Strengthening the competitiveness of private sector through the privatization, and deregulation. The government will also invest in education, science and technology and information technology. These policies would raise the productivity of the Philippine industry which will sustainably create jobs for Filipinos.
- Improving the infrastructure, for example, water system, transportation and...
telecommunication. This measure is to increase the competitiveness as well.

- Ensuring macroeconomic stability. Due to the Asian financial crisis, the Philippine government needs to control the government’s expenditures, strengthen the banking system, and increase the national saving rate.
- Reforming governance, so that it can work as the partnership with the public sector and civil society, especially in delivery of the public service.\textsuperscript{290}

Because the Philippines needs the foreign investment to drive the national economy, President Fidel Ramos initiated the “Development Diplomacy” since 1992 to attract the foreign capital. In the sub-regional level, he set up the “East Asian Growth Area” (EAGA) which covers Mindanao of the Philippines, Sarawak, Labuan and Sabah of Malaysia, and Moluccas, Kalimantan and Sulawesi of Indonesia, and Brunei. The four countries develop the transportation in the area and simplify the investment procedure which results in the cooperation on the fishery industry, palm oil manufacturing, and real estate.\textsuperscript{291}

However, it seems that the goal of the plan was not well achieved, because in the next medium–term development plan, the objective is still the same, which


is fighting with the poverty. Furthermore, some strategies are not changed, such as, improving the education and fiscal strength of the government’s budget.292


During the time of violence in East Timor, the Philippines was applying the 1998 Defense Policy Paper. The paper recognizes the significance of the economy upon the national stability after the end of Cold War Era. And the international terrorist groups emerge as the new threat which affects the Philippines directly because of the possible connection between the global terrorists and the Muslim secessionists in the south of the Philippines.293

The defense plan sets the main defense objectives, of which could be the core values of the Philippines, especially the first three objectives, -

1. Secure and uphold the sovereignty of the Republic of the Philippines
2. Protect and defend the national territory against the external aggression, and the communities against internal armed threats.
3. Safeguard Filipino lives and property during times of crisis and calamities, here and abroad294

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the Philippines, not different from Indonesia and Malaysia, assesses the national security through the comprehensive aspects which are the political stability, economic development and social cohesion. On the front of the political stability, the plan considers the ending of the insurgency as its immediate national goal, because the Moro Islamic Liberation Front’s (MILF), the breakaway group of MNLF, and Abu Sayyaf’s terrorist acts still threaten the national stability and the regional economic growth in the south. As for the aspect of economic development, the plan believes that the Philippine needs to promote the regional and sub-regional economic cooperation, such as, ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and East Asian Growth Area (EAGA), and the freedom of trade to foster the trade liberation. With regard to the social cohesion, the plan, again, addresses the need to eradicate the poverty. It offers the insightful suggestion on the social harmony which comprises of all classes, all sectors and all genders. Hence, the plan requires the government to care for the women, children, peasants, blue-collared workers, and the disable persons.

The Philippine defense plan indicates the internal and external challenges against its security. Among them are the insurgency of the Communists and the Muslim secessionists, the transnational crime, the dispute over the Spratly

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islands, and the safety of the Filipino working overseas. On the other hand, the defense plan sees the opportunities in dealing with the challenges. To deal with the insurgents, the plan would continue the negotiation in order to bring about the peaceful resolution in the long term. To achieve the economic development, the Philippines shall expand the free trade in both regional and global level. The mutual benefits from the interdependence economy would lead further to the cooperation on security and defense matters. The solidarity among ASEAN members in dealing with the common concerns can also consolidate the cooperation and harmony among the organization’s members.

Interestingly, the plan affirms the Philippines’ obligation to the bilateral and multilateral agreements, seeing them as a means to maintain the peaceful relations with other countries and foster the Philippine national interests in the same time. Among the important obligations which the Philippines deems important are the cooperation with the UN operations and ASEAN activities.

**The Philippines’ core values**

To draw the conclusion from the study on the Philippine constitution and its development and defense plans, the Philippines’ core interests which must be its priority, when a foreign policy is designed, can be described as follows,

A ) The territorial integrity

Similar to Malaysia and Indonesia, the Philippines began to develop the sense of national identity and the political unification under the colonial rule. Before
the Spanish colonization, the biggest political unit in the Philippines was the group of the same kinship in the village.296 Aside from the feudal system as mentioned above, the Spanish used Catholicism as a tool to unite the people. However, through over 350 years of the colonization, the Spanish never fully defeated the Muslims in the south of the Philippines. When the Americans conquered the Philippines after the Spanish, they exacerbated the national disunite by supporting the huge immigration of Catholics in the northern islands to Mindanao island in the south.297 The newcomers were seen as the invaders and exploiters over the natural resources in the south. After gaining the independence, the Philippine government still supported the immigration which finally resulted in the formation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1970s. The unequal development plan of the government also causes the disunite. The southern provinces are the poorest provinces of the country, since the people mainly work in the fishery and agricultural sectors. The infrastructure is not well developed either.

However, the situation slightly improved under the administration of President Fidel Ramos who declared the “development diplomacy” to attract the foreign investment and initiated the East Asean Growth Area (EAGA) to develop the

economy in Mindanao. But the project did not completely achieve its goal due to the lack of the peace and stability in Mindanao.

However, at least, President Ramos can conclude the peace agreement with MNLF in 1996, and now the MNLF becomes the participant in developing the region. Yet, the peace agreement with MNLF brought about the new resistant group, - the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the fraction of MNLF who objects the peace agreement and aspires to establish the Islamic state in the south.\(^{298}\) At present, the Philippine government established the line of communication with the leaders of MNLF to bring them to the negotiation process.\(^{299}\) But the more dangerous group, Abu Sayyaf, emerges. According to Ms. Teresa L. Tanguiang, the Deputy of Chief of Mission of Philippine embassy in Bangkok, the Philippine government does not negotiate with Abu Sayyaf, because they simply kidnap the local and foreign businessmen and demand ransom. The government considers that this act is a threat and unnegotiable. On the contrary, MNLF and MILF resist the government due to their economic disadvantages. Therefore, the government tries to negotiate to settle the resolution with them.

B ) The sovereignty

According to Ms. Teresa L. Tanguiang, the Deputy of Chief of Mission of the


\(^{299}\) Interview with Ms. Teresa L. Tanguiang, the Deputy of Chief of Mission, at the Philippine embassy in Thailand, on October 11, 2011.
Philippine embassy in Bangkok, the more serious threat against the Philippines comes from the instability in the West Philippine Sea, or in Spratly islands. The Spratly Islands are islands located in the South China Sea, on the main sea–route connecting Southeast Asia to East Asia. Under the islands, it is believed to be an abundant source of oil and natural gas. At present, six countries, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, China, and the Philippines, claim their sovereignty over the Spratly Islands. On the Philippine part, it claims only a western part of the Spratly Islands which is called Kalayaan Group of Islands. The conflict over the islands causes the threat against the Philippines. Since it decided not to extend the Military Base Agreement with the United States, and the American military left the Philippines in 1992, the military capacity of the Philippines to defend itself is relatively weak, especially when compared to the military forces of China who claims the sovereignty on the Spratly Islands as well.

Since 1995, few years before the eruption of the violence in East Timor, the Philippines and China had the dispute on the Chinese construction on Mischief Reef (Panganiban Reef) which is a part of Kalayaan Islands on which the Philippines claims the sovereignty. The reef is approximately 1,000 kilometers from the Chinese coast, but only 300 Kilometers from the nearest
Philippine coast. So far, the Philippines tries to negotiate with China through the ASEAN security cooperation along with other claimant ASEAN members to gain more leverage on dealing with China.

C ) The economic development

Since President Ferdinand Marcos enforced the Martial Law in 1972, the Philippine economy was continuously declined due to the wide corruption and crony capitalism. Although President Fidel Ramos can accelerate the economic growth, it was interrupted by the Asian financial crisis in 1997. By the time that the violence in East Timor erupted, the poverty was one of the most severe problems of the Philippines, because it could lead to the political instability and the social disintegration.

Just like in Malaysia and Indonesia, the economic development is used by the Philippine government as a strategy to decrease the social disharmony, calm the resentment of the secessionists and boost the legitimacy of the government. Therefore, the economic development becomes another Philippine core value, because it contributes to the utmost national interests, which are the national unity and territorial integrity.

D ) Democracy

The distinguished character of the Philippines, compared to other Southeast Asian countries, is that the Filipinos value democracy very much. Normally, democracy is seen as a strategy to achieve the national stability, because through the real democratic system, different sectors and individuals in the society can express themselves freely and participate together in the political process. And the bottom-up governing system that allows the citizens’ determination on the direction of the country would eventually achieve the common solution and consequently, the common development.

This is why the democracy is the guideline, when the government negotiates with the insurgents, for example, the negotiation with MNLF, which ends with agreement on the autonomy of Muslim–predominant provinces and the former insurgents become the participants in the “Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development” in order to together develop the country.

The demand for the independence in East Timor and its impact on the Philippines’ core interests

The demand for the independence of East Timorese cannot be related to the Philippine separatist group, like the Thai–Muslim insurgents are related to JI of Indonesia. Although the Philippines territorial integrity is intimidated by

MILF and Abu Sayaaaf, East Timorese have nothing which can link to the both groups. They have no convergence in the political ideology, nor strategy. In East Timor, the demand for the independence originated from the popular level, and was driven mainly through the demonstration. Moreover, the East Timorese are Catholic, and they called for the democratic secular state, while MILF aims to establish an Islamic state.

The East Timorese and MILF also demand for the independence with the different historical background. As mentioned already that East Timor’s right of self-determination, including the independence, was recognized by both the UN and Portugal since 1974, - before it was invaded. When Indonesia annexed East Timor as its 27\textsuperscript{th} province, the UN never recognizes this integration.\textsuperscript{305} Hence, the independence of East Timor would not affect the problem of the territorial integrity in the south of the Philippines.

The newly–independent East Timor cannot harm the sovereignty of the Philippines either. But the fighting in East Timor can negatively affect the economic development of the Philippines, because the fighting destroyed the regional peace and stability which the Philippines needed to promote the economic growth. The fighting in East Timor can also decrease the Indonesian -Philippine bilateral trade and Indonesian investment in the Philippines. On the other hand, the severe violation of human rights in East Timor conflicted with the democratic value of the Filipinos. The victims of this violation were also their Catholic fellows. In the policy setting, it seems that the Philippines

pursued the different policy when compared to its own policy toward the similar situation in other ASEAN countries.

The Philippine policy toward the demand for the independence in East Timor

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, the “Philippine Foreign Service Act of 1991” set three pillars for the Philippine foreign policy, as follows:

1) Preservation and enhancement of national security

2) Promotion and attainment of economic security

3) Protection of the rights and promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas

From the three pillars, the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines projects seven objectives when setting the policy. The first three objectives are

1) To continue to the enhancement of national security and the protection of the territorial integrity and national sovereignty

2) To participate in the national endeavor to sustain development and to enhance the Philippines’ competitive edge in a global milieu

3) To protect the rights and promote the welfare of Filipinos overseas and to mobilize them as partners in national development

The first two principles of both pillars and objectives of the Philippine foreign policy go in line with the Philippines’ core values which are the territorial integrity, the sovereignty and the economic development. As for the third principle, the well-being of Filipinos overseas becomes another pillar and objective of the Philippine foreign policy, because the country exports the skilled labors working around the world. And their remittances to their country contribute greatly to the Philippine balance of payments. Therefore, their well-beings abroad become a priority of the Philippine foreign policy.  

Aside from the pillars and the objectives, the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines also drafts the eight “realities” which the Philippines has to consider in pursuing the policy. Among them are:

- China, Japan and the United States and their relationship will be a determining influence in the security situation and economic evolution of East Asia
- Philippine foreign policy decisions have to be made in the context of ASEAN
- The international Islamic community will continue to be important to the

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Philippines

- As an archipelagic state, the defense of the nation’s sovereignty and the protection of its environment and natural resources can be carried out only to the extent that it asserts its rights over the maritime territory and gets others to respect those rights
- The country’s economic policy will continue to be friendly to both domestic and foreign direct investments
- Overseas Filipinos will continue to be recognized for their critical role in the country’s economic and social stability.\(^{309}\)

When the East Timorese called for their independence, the Philippine government had to assess how the situation would affect its interests and decide the policy. The Philippine foreign policy, based on the outlined pillars and objectives, not different from the Malaysian and Indonesian foreign policy, focuses on preserving the national security, sovereignty, and the national prosperity. As found in the part of core value analysis, the Philippines’ main concern are the operations of the separatists in the South and the country’s sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea or the Spratly Islands. Indonesia has greatly helped the Philippines on preserving these interests.

With regard to the separatists in the South of the Philippines, Indonesia has been the mediator between the Philippine government and MNLF and MILF. The relationship with Indonesia greatly contributed to the achievement of the peace agreement with MNLF, and the Philippines was on the process of negotiation with MILF. In the stage of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), to which the Philippines was not a member and the situation in the south of the Philippines was monitored by the organization, Indonesia always defended for the Philippines and negotiated with the secessionists through the OIC channel.310

With regard to the Spratly Islands, the Philippine military capability cannot compare to the Chinese armed force. Therefore, the Philippine government tries to keep the negotiation with China on the Spratly issue in the ASEAN context where the Philippines has the ASEAN claimant countries as its collaborators. So far, the strategy of multilateral negotiation works well. In 1992, ASEAN issued the “Declaration on the South China Sea” which abides the ASEAN countries to resolve the problem of sovereignty in the South China Sea through the peaceful means, and without resort to force.311 China, as ASEAN’s partner through the cooperation ASEAN + 3, signed this declaration in 2002. Indonesia, as the biggest member of ASEAN, has always supported the Philippines in the negotiation on Spratly Islands, and lately has just urged the ASEAN members and partners to officially adopt the declaration, after it was signed long ago.312

The two countries also have the defense cooperation. Through the “Philippine–Indonesia Joint Defense Cooperation Committee” (JDSCC), the Philippine and Indonesian officials meet annually to update one another on their defense situation. Furthermore, they pursue on the border patrol operation, intelligence exchange and educational exchange between military personnel of the two countries.313

With regard to the economic development, Indonesia was a main investor in the Philippines. Before the Asian financial crisis, the value of Indonesian investment in the Philippines reached 2,940.4 Million Pesos,314 (approximately 67.178 Million US Dollars). It was also the main investor in the East Asian Economic Growth (EAGA) which the Philippine government established to develop the economy of the disputed area in Mindanao. Although the investment was suspended due to the financial crisis in 1997, the Philippines hoped that the investment from Indonesia would get back to normal when it recovers from the crisis.

With the Indonesian contribution on the Philippines’ national interests, the Philippine government chose to overlook the human rights violation in East Timor which actually contradicted to the Philippine stance on the human right issue. Ms. Teresa L. Taguiang, the Deputy of Chief of Mission of the

Philippine embassy in Thailand, gave the reason that the Philippines was abided by the non-interference principle of ASEAN which guarantees the sovereignty of all country members. Therefore, it cannot say anything which could be perceived as the interference. But normally even in ASEAN, the Philippines is the main proponent of human rights, for example, the Philippines supported the “constructive intervention” (constructive engagement) policy which would allow the ASEAN member countries to express an opinion or concern over the domestic affairs of other member countries. The main target of the policy was Myanmar which has the worst records on the human right violation. Likewise, in the same period, the Human Right Committee of the Philippine Parliament voted to object the Malaysian state’s assault against Anwar Ibrahim, the former Vice President of Malaysia. President Joseph Estrada initially decided not to attend the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting held in Kuala Lumpur, but he changed the decision after discussion with the senators. Still, he proposed the “ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism” to prevent the human right violation in ASEAN, but his proposal was denied.

However, when it concerned the Indonesian assaults against East Timorese, the Philippine government always stayed silent, although the Philippine government was under the pressure from the influential Philippine Catholic Church. Not

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315 Interview with Ms. Teresa L. Tanguiang, the Deputy of Chief of Mission, at the Philippine embassy in Thailand, on October 11, 2011.
only the Philippine government did not comment anything on the Indonesian suppression against East Timorese, it also denied to issue visa for Jose Ramos–Horta, the Nobel Laureate and East Timorese activist, to enter the Philippine during the APEC Summit in 1996 in Manila, for fearing that it would irritate the good relations between Indonesia and the Philippines.

On the contrary, many Filipino Catholic organizations, such as, the society of the Divine World and Religious of the Virgin Mary, sent the Filipino missionaries to provide the shelter for the homeless and the education for children in East Timor. When the Asia–Pacific Conference on East Timor (APCET) was held in Manila in May 1994 by the Catholic Institute of International Relations, the Indonesian government pressed Manila to stop the meeting. As a result President Fidel Ramos banned the foreign participants to join the conference, for example, the Nobel Peace Prize Winner Mairead Maguire was stopped at the Manila airport and was sent back by the next plane to Amsterdam. Susan Castillo, a university professor who was scheduled to speak in the conference was stopped at the airport and was sent out too.

The Archbishop, Jaime Sin, strongly criticized his government in his letter to Bishop Carlos Felipe Ximene Belo in Dili, East Timor, “As a Filipino citizen

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and as brother in the faith, I apologize for the ineptitude of my political leaders to spearhead the growth of freedom and human dignity in our region … I’m sorry to see the political leaders of my own nation giving in to the pressure of a foreign nation. (Indonesia)321” In the letter which was distributed to the public by the conference organizers, Archbishop Jaime Sin further criticized the Indonesian assaults against East Timorese, “I know how much your people have suffered all these years on account of the illegal Indonesian occupation of East Timor … I know that this has resulted in abominable human rights violations inflicted upon your flock.322” Many Philippine clergies supported Archbishop Sin on his solidarity for the Catholic fellows expressed in his letter. Moreover, the conference issued the statement calling for the UN intervention, the release of all East Timorese political prisoners, and the international pressure to end the Indonesian occupation.323

Different from the Malaysian and Indonesian cases, the Philippine government did not do anything to decrease the pressure from the Church. It just stayed silent, and responded to the Indonesian government rather than the Church. The reaction of the Filipinos was the main variable in this case. Normally the Philippine Catholic Church has the high influence on the Philippine society.

80.9% of the Filipinos are Catholics,\(^\text{324}\) and the Church is the official center of the Catholic adherents. In the international level, the Philippines is the third-largest Roman Catholic country after Brazil and Mexico. With its large Catholic population, the Church receives the high attention from the Vatican. The late Pope John Paul II visited the Philippines twice.\(^\text{325}\) In the domestic level, according to John Leddy Phelen, the Roman Catholicism is “the cement of social unity”\(^\text{326}\) for the Philippines. Due to the archipelagic geography, the Philippine population is very diverse on both the ethnicity and language. Although the majority of the sub-ethnic groups can be categorized under the same Malay-ethnic group, they speak different eighty-eight local languages.\(^\text{327}\)

Furthermore, the local people tend to be loyal to the local patrons rather than the central government, and the Philippine presidents have to ensure that their relationship with the local influential persons stays healthy in order that the government’s policy would be carried out.

Among the cleavage in the country, most Filipinos have one thing in common,

\(^{324}\) Peter A. Poole, *Politics and Society in Southeast Asia*, (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company Inc., 2009), p. 157, however, the other source gives the difference percentage. Fabio Scarpello claims in his article “Philippines: Pray, put politics aside,” (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/HA06Ae02.html) that only 67% of the Philippine population is Catholics.


and that is they are Roman Catholics. Coupled with the fact that the 
Philippine society has no other strong social organization or institution, the 
Philippine Catholic Church always has the high power in domestic politics. 
The Church can show (or not show) its support for any candidate, and this 
really affects the vote that the candidate would receive. The Church had a 
role on attracting the participants in demonstrations in 1986 to oust the 
former President Ferdinand Marcos, and on impeachment of President Joseph 
Estrada in 2001. But when it comes to the East Timor case, the Church 
cannot draw the popular support on its agenda. Aside from the Philippine 
religious organizations themselves, the Filipinos did not protest on the 
Indonesian occupation or express the solidarity for the East Timorese.

As it is found in the previous chapters that the position of the religion under 
the framework of the nation-state can affect on how the people relate 
themselves to the co-ethnics or co-religionists across the border. And 
nationalism in the Philippines is not very powerful like that of Malaysia. 
It is not promoted heavily by the state as the tool to create the 
national unity. This is because before the independence the Philippines had 
been the Spanish colony for 377 years (from 1521 to 1898, starting even 
before the nationalism would originate in Europe). Then it was occupied by 
the U.S. for another 48 years (from 1898 to 1946). Not only that the
Philippines gained the independence quite early when compared to its
neighbors, but it also gained the domestic self-rule since 1935 before the
formal independence. Through the hundred years of western colonization, the
Filipinos absorbed the religion, educational system, the political ideology,
namely the western culture, to be a part of the Philippine daily life. By the
time that the country gained its independence, it did not feel the resentment
against the invaders any longer, except in the South of the Philippines where
the Spanish and American authority never reached. This does not mean that
there is no Philippine nationalism. It does exist, but its impact is not
predominating in the modern nation-state of the Philippines like it happens in
other Southeast Asian states.

Since the Philippine nationalism is not very strong or heavily promoted in the
age of nation-state, it never takes the specific ethnicity or religion as a core
or symbol of its nation. Actually, it cannot do so either due to the extremely
ethnic diversity in the country (in the level of the sub-ethnic groups). And
such ethnic policy would be risky to drive the Muslims in the South to
secede. Hence, although majority of the population are Catholics, the Philippines
has no “national religion.” Furthermore, the Constitution specifically
destines the country to be a secular state.

Thus, when Catholicism is not particularly valued and affirmed as the national
identity in the society, the Filipinos did not relate themselves to East Timorese simply because of the common Catholic identity. With the secular structure of the Philippine politics, the Church can propose its agenda to the society as a moral guidance, but it cannot impose the agenda directly on the government. Hence, when the people were not convinced by the Church regarding the East Timorese, the Philippine government did not really have to balance against the pressure from the Church, and can pursue its policy easily.

The Philippine policy toward East Timor changed only after the Indonesian government itself had recognized the result of East Timor’s referendum. The Philippines sent the troop to join the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). The Philippine general, Jaime de los Santos, became the first commander of the multi-national forces. And the general eagerly conducted his duty. He protested to Alwi Shihab, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, when the pro–Indonesia militias sneaked through the border to attack East Timorese. He signed two Memorandums of Understanding with the Indonesian Army Commander to affirm the code of conduct along border of East and West Timor. Ms. Teresa L. Taguiang, the Deputy of Chief of Mission of the Philippine embassy in Thailand, explained that Philippine soldiers in UNTAET can freely perform their duty. This is not


considered as the interference. And it should not cause any disturbance on the relations with the Indonesian government either, because the Indonesian government already recognized the independence of East Timor. Therefore, it did not violate the non-interference principle of ASEAN.\footnote{Interview with Ms. Teresa L. Tanguiang, the Deputy of Chief of Mission, at the Philippine embassy in Thailand, on October 11, 2011}

As for the Philippine government’s stance, after East Timor’s independence was recognized, it no longer denied to issue visa for Timorese leaders. Both Xanana Gusmao, the President of East Timor, and Hose Ramos Horta, his Minister of Foreign Affairs, obtained visa in many occasions, despite the Philippine government knew that the two leaders would publicly raise the topic of their struggle for the independence in the past\footnote{The East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, “Timor Leste president pays tribute to Sin,” http://www.etan.org/et2008/8august/16/12cardinal.htm, and “Timor independence leaders thank Philippine church for support,” Abilene Christian University, http://cathnews.acu.edu.au/002/72.html.} which inevitably referred to the Indonesian suppression.

In sum, to measure the influence of the religious factor on the Philippine foreign policy, when compare the policy with the indicator (please refer to the table on page 22 of the first chapter), it is found that the Philippine policy toward East Timor was not affected by the religious factor at all, because the Philippine government did not interfere in the Indonesian domestic affairs to save the East Timorese, in spite of the hard pressure from the Philippine Catholic Church.

**Conclusion**

One finding which can be extracted from the Philippine case is that the
strength of the religious institution does not merely fortify the religious factor on the foreign policy. With the idea of secularism predominating in the country, the Philippine government responded to the constituencies rather than the religious institution. However, the situation could have changed, if the people had joined with the religious institution.

Secondly, the Philippine case affirms the finding from the previous chapters that the religious commonality does not automatically lead to the religious solidarity. Rather, the imposition of the religion relating to the national identity of the country, through which the state gives values to a particular religion or ethnicity, can cultivate the ethno-religious bond across the border through the similar ethno-religious identity of the people. The imposition of the religion or ethnicity is important, because it forms up the worldview of the people on how they perceive themselves or their group through the ethno-religious identity in relation to “others.” However, as seen from the Indonesian case, aside from the imposition of the religion (and ethnicity) in the nation-state paradigm, many other factors, such as, the root-cause of the conflict, the geographic proximity, or the ties of the kinship, can also have the influence on forming the religious solidarity.

Thirdly, in the era of the nation-state, the government is the agent which pursues the foreign policy. And the government sets a policy under the guideline of the national interests, because the protection of these interests could affect both the stability of the state and the government itself. In the Philippine case, the government still has to term with the immediate problems of the new state, such as the territorial integrity and the sovereignty. With the
limited military capacity of the Philippines, it cannot deal with the Chinese navy in the Spratly Islands or control the separatists in the South. Hence, it needs to maintain the good relationship with Indonesia in order to consolidate its own prime interests. This point affirms the finding from the previous chapters that the indispensable national interests can directly affect the foreign policy.

Therefore, it leads to the conclusion that in the Philippine case, in spite of the hard pressure from the Philippine Catholic Church, the Philippine government did not allow the religious factor to affect its foreign policy toward East Timor when East Timorese called for the independence. It carried out the policy aiming to preserve the relationship with Indonesia, because the bilateral relations contributed to the national interests of the Philippines themselves. And it did not need to create the balance between such policy against the religious pressure, because simply the religious commonality did not automatically make the Filipinos have the religious solidarity for the East Timorese. Hence, the relationship between the two countries concerning the East Timor issue was not affected by the religious factor.
CHAPTER 6
INDONESIA’S POLICY TOWARD THE ROHINGYA REFUGEES

Rohingya is a Muslim minority group living in the Buddhist–predominant nation of Myanmar. In a country where the government violates the citizens’ rights as common, it is difficult for the people to live a normal life, and it is almost impossible, if these people are minority of the country. Rohingyas are marginalized from the society and the political process because of both their Islamic religion and their Indian-mixed descent. The cruel living conditions drive hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas to flee from the country. Their situation in Myanmar was specifically worsen in 2009, because the junta government wanted to get rid of any resistant groups before the national election in 2010. Through 2009, hundreds of Rohingyas were frequently found drifted with broken boats in Bangladesh, Thailand, and mostly in Aceh, the eastern province of Indonesia. While the Aceh local government welcomed them, the Indonesian government insisted not to shelter any refugee.

The Rohingya case can prove how secular–oriented the Indonesian foreign
policy is. Compared to other assaults against the religious minorities in Southeast Asia, Rohingyas suffer the worst oppression simply because of their religion, but the Indonesian government avoided to get involved, because their fellow Muslims’ sufferings did not really affect Indonesia’s national secular interests.

The situation

Around 4 percents of 50 million Burmese are Muslims. They are roughly composed of Rohingya, Panthy, Pashu and the mix of Indian, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Rohingyas originally live in Arakan, the northwestern state of Myanmar, neighboring Bangladesh. The local people got to know Islam from Arab merchants since 712. Some local people converted to Islam, while some Arab merchants settled down and married the local women. In fifteenth century, the Muslim empire expanded from Dacca to Arakan. In this period, many Bangladesh immigrated to Arakan too. Therefore, the ethnicity of Rohingyas is mixed from the beginning, and this causes the vulnerability against Rohingyas. While they see themselves as local Burmese, the government and other Burmese perceive them as “foreigners.”

The ethnic combination increased when the British seized Myanmar, and later Arakan State as a part of the Burmese kingdom at that time. Under the colonization of the British, Indian labors flooded into Myanmar. Many new-

coming Indian moneylenders gained their control over the land of the poor Burmese peasants.\footnote{Syed Serajul Islam, \textit{The Politics of Islamic Identity in Southeast Asia}, (Kuala Lumpur: Thomson Learning, 2005), p. 103.} The conflict of the economic benefit led to the racial riots between the Indian Muslims and Burmese Buddhists. When the British were about to relinquish their control in Myanmar, the Muslim leaders in Arakan State were afraid that they would become the minority under the Buddhist Burmese governance. So, they offered Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the newly–established Pakistan, to incorporate their land with Pakistan,\footnote{Khin Maung Yin, “Ethnicity among Burman Muslims,” \textit{Intellectual Discourse}, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2005, p. 165.} but Jinnah refused the proposal. This incident made the Rohingyas become the object of the Burmese government’s mistrust. Consequently, the Rohingyas formed up the Mujahid Movement which aimed to establish the Muslim State of East Pakistan.\footnote{Carl Grundy – Warr and Elaine Wong, “Sanctuary Under a Plastic Sheet – The Unresolved Problem of Rohingya Refugees,” \textit{IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin}, Autumn 1997, p. 81.} Although the movement did not achieve its goal, it rendered the Muslims in Arakan more conscious on their autonomy.

On the other hand, when Myanmar obtained its independence, the central government used the religion as a tool to unite the nation. Buddhism was declared as the state’s religion. Further, the government migrated Buddhists into Arakan State to dilute the Muslim majority there.\footnote{Syed Serajul Islam, \textit{The Politics of Islamic Identity in Southeast Asia}, (Kuala Lumpur: Thomson Learning, 2005), p. 104.} Just like in other Southeast Asian countries, the nationalist policy brought about more Resistance from minorities. The Mujahid Movement transformed to be the “Rohingya Independence Front (RIF).” In return, the Burmese government responded by the ethnic cleansing operation called “Naga Min” or Dragon King in 1978
which expelled approximately 200,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh.  

The turning point of Rohingyas’ status was in 1982 when the government issued a new citizenship law. Before this law, Rohingyas had been given “Foreign Registration Card”, while the Burmese had had the “National Identification Certificate.” But the 1982 Citizenship law classified the inhabitants into two groups which were the members of the 135 state–recognized indigenous groups and the “associated” groups. The Burmese government did not consider Rohingyas as its indigenous group. According to the press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, “In actual fact, although there are (135) national races living in Myanmar today, the so–called Rohingya people is not one of them. Historically, there has never been a “Rohingya” race in Myanmar.” As for the second choice, which is being registered under the category of the “associated” groups, a person has to prove that his/her ancestors resided in Myanmar dated back to 1948, which is difficult to do in the case of Rohingyas, because the Arakan State is an isolated state, surrounded by the mountains, in which their ancestors had not registered with the government yet at that time.

As a result, many Rohingyas hold the status of “foreign resident” which leaves them vulnerable to the state’s abuses, such as forced labors and forced migration. In turn, the government’s ethnic–nationalist policy provoked

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Rohingyas to fight back. Many resistant groups emerged in this period, such as, the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), and the Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO).  

However, the groups cannot overcome the inner fractions due to the lack of the financial support and the strong suppression of the Burmese government.  

In 2009, the Burmese government launched the attack against the armies of minorities throughout the country as a preparation for the national election in 2010. Also, the mission was a part of the constitution’s fulfillment, as the Article 338 of Burmese constitution states that all armed forces in the country must be under the command of the national defense. The harsh suppression drove Rohingyas to flee from Arakan State by the self–made boats, because the Arakan state is located by the sea, and the movement by land is strictly controlled by the army.

Hence, in the beginning of 2009, the Southeast Asian countries witnessed hundred of Rohingyas in the almost–dead conditions drifted onto the Thai, Malaysian, and Indonesian coasts. The biggest waves of Rohingya refugees were found in Aceh province of Indonesia, where 193 Rohingya refugees were found in January 2009, and another 220 of them landed in Aceh again in February of the same year. Then, 129 Rohingya refugees were rescued again in March 2011.

Compared to other cases concerning the violation against minorities in Southeast Asia, Rohingyas suffer the worst hardship, since they do not even have the legal citizen status. While the local people in Aceh provided the reliefs to the Rohingya refugees,\textsuperscript{347} the Indonesian government, as the biggest Muslim country, tended to avoid the problem of their Muslim fellows. This chapter tries to try to find the reasons with which the Indonesian government pursued such policy.

**Indonesia’s core values**

As already stated in the first chapter that this chapter will skip the study on the Indonesian main policies and ideology, because the thesis already did so in chapter 4, in which the thesis found that the Indonesian core values which must be considered in the policy setting, are the national unity and the territorial integrity, the sovereignty over its archipelago, the economic development, and the internal security. With this finding, the thesis will analyze further how the problem of Rohingya refugees affected the core values of Indonesia.

**The Rohingya refugees and its impact on Indonesia’s core value**

Approximately 800,000 Rohingyas are now in Arakan State. Although they form up some insurgent groups, but there is no record of their sabotage activities. So far, they only wrote a few letters to some international organizations.\textsuperscript{348} The weakness of the Rohingya insurgent groups results from the harsh military suppression of the Burmese regime, and the lack of support

\textsuperscript{347} Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), “Indonesia: Aceh embraced Rohingya refugees,” \url{http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,IRIN_IDN,49a660d727.0html}, February 24, 2009.

from the Muslim fellows in other states of Myanmar. Even Burmese Muslims in other states perceive Rohingyas as the foreigners too, due to Rohingya’s Indian descent.\textsuperscript{349} Therefore, their insurgent groups are too weak to post any threat against the Burmese regime, nor the regional peace and stability. The number of Rohingya refugees was also too little to influence the whole economic structure of Indonesia. Hence, the economic core interest of Indonesia was barely affected from the Rohingya issue.

However, when consider the Indonesian core interests on security, the Rohingyas might be able to cause some security impact. Rohingyas came to Indonesia as refugees. Almost all of them were found in the poor health condition due to the dehydration and malnutrition. In fact, 22 of 220 refugees, drifted onto Acehnese coast on 3 February 2009, were reported to die during floating in the sea.\textsuperscript{350} This means, it was almost impossible for Rohingyas to post any threat against Indonesia’s security, when they firstly arrived ndonesia. But after they recover to the healthy condition, and especially if the number of the refugees rises, they can start the political activities which cause the troubles for the host country, like it now happens in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In Pakistan and Bangladesh, there are around 350,000 and 200,000 Rohingya refugees respectively. In Bangladesh, the Rohingya refugees provide the financial support for the insurgent groups in their home. Some Rohingya refugees who are members of the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) are

alleged to link with the local Islamist groups in Bangladesh, such as Jamaat El-Islami and Harakat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami. In Pakistan, they are alleged to join with the Pakistani–Kashmir organizations, such as, Harakat–ul–Mujahdeen. 351

As for in Indonesia, the representatives of the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) were reported to attend the meeting held by Abu Bakr Bashir, the spiritual leader of Jamaah Islamiya (JI), which discussed the establishment of an international Mujahidin association. Another representative from the Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF) attended the same meeting, but he expressed the objection against the use of violence. 352

The Indonesian government’s concern on the merge of the Rohingya refugees into the local insurgent groups was due to the fact that most of Rohingya refugees arrived in Aceh, the province where the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM or Aceh Liberation Movement) has long called for the independence. (In fact, it was predicted that it would be the next province to leave Indonesia after East Timor.) But Tsunami, happening on 24 December 2004, swept away 167,000 Acehnese in one day, made another 500,000 Acehnese homeless, and destroyed all the infrastructure. 353 The devastation rendered the GAM to easily settle the peace negotiation with the Indonesian government. But the Indonesian government still has to be cautious on any threat from the insurgents both in Aceh and in other provinces. Therefore, although the

Rohingya refugees cannot harm the Indonesian security at present, the Indonesian government needs to consider any possible threat against its internal security and territorial integrity in the future.

**Indonesia’s policy toward the Rohingya refugees**

As already found in the previous chapters that the religion is not the influential factor in the Indonesian foreign policy, because Islam is not valued as the national identity, although it is the ground of the national ideology, Pancasila. The Rohingya case affirms this finding and adds that the degree of the suppression against the religious minority does not directly relate to the religious solidarity either. Compared to the previous case study or any other cases of minorities around the world, the Rohingyas have been severely suppressed, but the Indonesians barely paid attention to the case. Only Muhammadiyah, the second largest Islamic organization demanded the Indonesian government to treat the Rohingya refugees better. Din Syamsuddin, the chairman of the organization said, “Indonesia should deal with them [Rohingya refugees] properly. I hope the Rohingya refugees will be looked after until there is an appropriate solution based on humanitarian principles. … If Indonesia will not help, Muhammadiyah is ready to cooperate and assist the refugees with what they need."\(^{354}\)

The media did not report much on the Rohingya refugees either, (when compared to the Thai-Muslim insurgency). Either because it was difficult to access the refugees kept in the Indonesian naval bases or enter Myanmar to seek for the information sources, the result was the Indonesians did not know

much about the conditions of Rohingyas in Myanmar. Accordingly, the pressure from the people on the Indonesian government was less than in the Thai-Muslim insurgency case. The Rohingya case demonstrated the role of the media on how each issue would be perceived by the public, and the public perception would later affect the level of the religious solidarity.

Rather, the pressure on the Indonesian government came from the international level, when the case appeared in the international media. This means the Indonesian government was much less constrained on its policy decision, because the government’s stability did not rely on the international support anyway. However, the Indonesian government responded by assigning the Indonesian immigration office to conduct the interview with the refugees under the coordination of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).355

With this management, the Indonesian government demonstrated the compliance with the international organizations, while its officials gained the control over the mobility of the refugees. Moreover, it created the opportunity to leave the decision to the international level, because no country would like to solve to the refugee problem by itself. Providing the shelter for the illegal immigrants would cause the economic burden and security problem in the long run. In the same time, with the humanitarian standard, it cannot push the refugees away either.

The Islamic organization, Muhammadiyah, and the Indonesian media realized this and offered the solution which was cooperation of the ASEAN to which Myanmar is the member. Din Syamsuddin, the chairman of Muhammadiyah suggested the Indonesian government raise the issue in ASEAN summit in Thailand in February 2009, “This is the right time for the issue to be raised at a regional forum. We have so far been too lenient toward the military junta in Myanmar.”

The Jakarta Post, the prominent newspaper of Indonesia, offered the same solution, “We do sympathize with the Rohingya people. ASEAN needs to improve international cooperation, especially among the nations in the region, to overcome this refugee problem. Indonesia alone will not be able to do the job.”

In the international level, the International Concern Group on Rohingya (ICGR) openly expressed its hope that Indonesia would discuss the issue of the Rohingya minority group, (it should be noted here that the organization did not limit the issue to the refugee problem only.) in the ASEAN Summit. The group urged that “We hope the Indonesian government will propose that the issue of Rohingya ethnic group be discussed at the ASEAN Summit.”

However, in spite of the suggestion on the ASEAN Summit from many sides, the Indonesian government decided to raise the issue of Rohingya refugees in Bali Process, which is a ministerial conference of 31 countries established in 2002 to solve the problem of human trafficking and related transnational crimes. Not only because the Rohingyas took asylum in many countries in and outside Southeast Asia, for example, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, but the Indonesian government also wanted to push away the responsibility to solve the problem of Rohingya minority from Indonesia’s and ASEAN’s shoulder. Since the attempt to comprehensively solve the problem of Rohingya minority group would need the closer engagement in Myanmar’s domestic affairs which would violate the non-interference principle of ASEAN, and would hinder the mutual trust among members in the organization, the Indonesian government decided to leave the issue to Bali Process, in spite of knowing that there would be no real resolution, because the forum does not really concern the refugee problem. And it also has no enforcement power on the non-member country. In the same time, with this decision, the Indonesian government still maintained its full authority to control the activities and mobility of Rohingya refugees residing in the country. Furthermore, in this meantime, it can also send the refugees back, once the host country agree to accept them, as it sent 114 Rohingyas back to Bangladesh.  

On the other hand, the Rohingya case proves that the religious factor did not

really affect the Indonesian foreign policy. In spite of no promise on the improvement on the conditions of the Rohingyas, the Indonesian government still maintain the good relationship with Myanmar as normal. In 2009, after the Indonesian government raised the issue of Rohingya in Bali process, in which Myanmar denied to accept Rohingyas as its citizens, but was ready to “talk” with Indonesia about the refugees, the Indonesian government celebrated the 60th anniversary of their relations with Myanmar in the same year.\textsuperscript{360}

The Indonesian government, along with other ASEAN members, called for the democracy in Myanmar, but its discourse focused on democracy in general, rather than stopping the persecution against the Rohingya minority, as seen from the steps of the road map starting from releasing the political prisoners, especially Aung San Suu Kyi, and the participation of the opposition in the Burmese politics.\textsuperscript{361} Indonesia and other ASEAN countries pressured Myanmar to forgo its turn of ASEAN chairmanship,\textsuperscript{362} in order to preserve ASEAN’s image and economic benefits on negotiations with the western partners, such as the United States and the European Union (EU). The pressure partly came from the democratic aspiration which flourished in Indonesia after 1998. Then again, the pressure was pursued under the principle of non–interference which left the final decision to the Burmese government, which means it did not really achieve any change in Myanmar’s political process.

Aside from the urge for the democracy in Myanmar, the Indonesian government maintained the good relationship with Myanmar as normal. The bilateral economic cooperation continued without any hindrance. The Indonesian government aims to increase the bilateral trade volume to 500 Million US Dollars by 2015.\(^{363}\) In 2009, the year when the Burmese government’s torture against Rohingya emerged, Indonesia imported from Myanmar slightly less than the previous year, from 29.67 Million US Dollars in 2008 to 29.05 Million US Dollars in 2009. And the total bilateral trade decreased from 280.44 Million US Dollars in 2008 to 203.82 Million US Dollars in 2009. But the bilateral trade boosted again in 2010, when it rose to 316.01 Million US Dollars.\(^{364}\)

In 2010, when U Thein Sein became Myanmar’s president, he chose to make the first state visit in Indonesia. During the visit, he invited Indonesia to increase the investment in the agricultural, mining, and oil and natural gas. Their joint commission will also meet to increase the bilateral cooperation on tourism.\(^{365}\)

Most of all, President Susio Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia used to urge Myanmar to release the political prisoners and stated that the gross violation of human rights cannot be considered as the domestic affairs.\(^{366}\) Not only that


\(^{364}\) The Ministry of Trade of Indonesia, [http://www.kemendag.go.id/statistik_neraca_perdagangan_dengan_negara_mitra_daga](http://www.kemendag.go.id/statistik_neraca_perdagangan_dengan_negara_mitra_daga)

the Burmese government proceeded on the national election in 2011 while Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) the opposition party, was detained in her residence. After the election President Yudhoyono himself expressed with President U Thein Sein of Myanmar that he “appreciates the significant development in Myanmar recently and supports the Myanmar government to continue reconciliation effort (with the Burmese opposition).”

To be assured about the finding, the thesis compares the Indonesian policy on the Rohingya refugees with the indicator, (please refer to the table on page 22 of the first chapter), it found that the Indonesian policy was not affected by the religious factor. According to the indicator, the lowest level of the interference is launching speeches. The Indonesian government had some speeches against the junta government, but its content did not involve the religious solidarity for Rohingyas. The Indonesian government did not interfere in the Burmese domestic affairs to save the Rohingyas. It just aimed to create democracy in Myanmar in general. Indonesia and other ASEAN members discussed the road map to democracy for Myanmar before the Rohingya refugee issue would rise. Hence, according to the indicator, the Indonesian foreign policy was not affected by the religious factor. Moreover, the urge was not really serious. On the other hand, the increasing volume of the bilateral trade and investment and the political support proves that the relationship between Indonesia and Myanmar was not affected by the issue of Rohingya.

Conclusion
The study on the Indonesian policy toward Myanmar on the Rohingya refugees affirms the finding in the previous chapters that normally the government carries out the foreign policy to serve the indispensable national interests. As already discussed that the Rohingya refugees could affect the Indonesian interest on the internal security in Aceh province. The Indonesian economic benefits in Myanmar was actually not enormous, hence the Indonesian government could pressure the Burmese government to treat the Rohingyas better in order to decrease the number of the refugees. But the Indonesian government chose to overlook the Rohingya issue and hold on with the non–interference principle of ASEAN, because the non–interference principle in turn guarantees the utmost interest of Indonesia which is the sovereignty.

The reaction of Indonesians, the religious organization, and the media on the Rohingya refugees did not exert any serious pressure on their government. The case demonstrated that the religious similarity does not automatically lead to the religious solidarity across the border. The religious worldview of the people shaped through the nation-state framework also plays a part on creating the solidarity among the co-religionists, as already discussed that for Indonesians Islam is not asserted as the national identity as strongly as in Malaysia. It is interesting that Acehnese who practice Islam more strictly than other Indonesians and called for the Aceh independence had more sympathy for the Rohingyas than the Indonesians did. The Aceh online community
raised 5.1 Million Rupiahs (approximately 428 US Dollars) for the Rohingyas within two weeks\textsuperscript{368} which was a relatively high amount when consider the very poor economy in Aceh. They also provided foods and a public kitchen for the refugees. The Aceh bloggers also raised the awareness of the Rohingyas in Myanmar through their blogs and Facebook.\textsuperscript{369}

The Rohingya case also proves that the degree of the suffering of the co-religionists does not directly affect the level of the religious solidarity. When compared the Indonesian policy toward the Rohingya refugees and the Thai-Muslim insurgency, it is found that although the Indonesians have no ethnic ties with either the Thai-Muslims or the Rohingyas, the Indonesians expressed more solidarity for the Thai-Muslims. The media could be the reason here. The frequency and how the issue was raised in public influences the perception of the people toward the issue, and it consequently affected the strength of the religious factor which the government had to term with.

In the governmental level, the Indonesian government was more responsive on the Thai-Muslim insurgency than the Roingya refugees, (in the sense that it was eager to solve the issue, although not through the religious approach). This is because the economic and security interests in the Thai-Indonesian relations was much more than the interests in the Indonesian-Burmese relations. And the Indonesian government could not let the issue of the Thai-Muslim insurgency damage the enormous benefits in the Thai-Indonesian


\textsuperscript{369} Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), “Indonesia : Aceh embraces Rohingya refugees,” \url{http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,IRIN,,,IDN,,49a660d727,0.html}, February 24, 2009.
relationship. So, the point leads back to the finding that the national interests really guide the foreign policy and they are more influential factor than the religious factor as seen from the comparison on the reaction of the Indonesian government on the Thai-Muslim insurgency and the Rohingya refugees.

To conclude the finding from the chapter, the Indonesian government chose to solve the Rohingya refugees via the Bali Process rather than ASEAN cooperation in order to avoid the interference in the Burmese domestic affairs which would violate the key principle of ASEAN. The principle of non-interference needs to be protect in order to guarantee the sovereignty of Indonesia itself. And the Indonesian government can pursue the policy almost without balancing against the religious factor, because the Indonesians did not pay much attention to the Rohingya refugees. As a result, the religious factor did not affect the Indonesian policy toward the Rohingyas as seen from the indicator that the Indonesian did not interfere in Burmese domestic affairs to save them. Thus, the Burmese-Indonesian relationship was not affected by the refugee case.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The thesis “Religion, Nationalism, and Regional Politics in Southeast Asia: The Relations between Thailand and Malaysia” aims to study the influence of the religion on the foreign relations in Southeast Asia by taking the Malaysian relations with Thailand toward the Thai–Muslim insurgency as a case study, then comparing it with the similar cases in Southeast Asia in order to draw a conclusion on whether and how the religion affects the foreign relations in Southeast Asia.

The thesis sets the hypothesis that the religious factor hardly affects the foreign policy of countries in Southeast Asia, because the Southeast Asian countries prioritize the national interests over the religious factor. And the thesis seeks to elaborate on:

1) What would be these national interests which the Southeast Asian countries prioritize over the religious factor? And why are these interests indispensable?

2) How do the Southeast Asian governments balance the religious factor against the national interests?
Through the answers of both research questions, the hypothesis is proven and clarified. From the study on the states’ policies and strategies, the thesis finds that many Southeast Asian countries have the similar indispensable interests to protect, such as the national cohesion, the territorial integrity and sovereignty. Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines have the separatist groups. Malaysia does not have the separatists, but has the severe problem on the racial disharmony in the nation. Based on these concerns, the national interests are set, and they are the ground of all public policies, including the foreign policy. The national interests of the national unity, the territorial integrity and sovereignty determine the existence and stability of the states, therefore they are indispensable when the states pursue the policy.

The problems of the state-formation are perpetuated in the Southeast Asian countries not only because they have emerged as the nation-states less than a century, but also their formation did not come from the popular level. As discussed in the beginning of the thesis that the borderlines in Southeast Asia which include and exclude many groups of people to form up the states were not initiated by the inhabiting people. Rather, the borderlines were decided by the western colonizers and the ruling elites.

The state-formation in Southeast Asia contradicts the conventional belief on the concept of nationalism that each nation should have a state of its own. After the borderlines between states were set, the people became either majority or minority in their own homes. But the problems of the state-formation arose after that.
To consolidate the existence of the nations, many Southeast Asian states imposed the idea of nationalism on their population. The nationalist programs tried to conceptualize the “nation.” They drew the basic qualifications of the majority of population, such as the ethnicity, religion, and language, as the “national” symbols which represented the whole country. Hence, the minority was missing in the nationalist framework. The problem of minority-majority is not about the number of each group of people. But it is about how they perceive and treat each other in the nation-state. David Brown claims that the resistance from the minority against the central government would surface only after the central government interferes in the power structure of the local societies which would affect the power of the local rulers.\(^{370}\) This surely does not mean the political interference only, it includes the interference on the resource management or the cultural dominance.

On the other hand, when the nationalist programs were imposed in a country, some specific qualifications of the majority, such as their religion and ethnicity, were politically valued and affirmed as the national core. They were valued, because they were now re-produced as the symbol of the authenticity and significance of the people living on the specific territory. The ethnic and religious qualifications of the majority link to the history, the glory in the past in particular. Through this process, the nation claims the right to exist as a nation-state, the authority over the territory, and the right to protect itself from the “outsider.”

However, when the ethno-religious qualifications are valued and affirmed, the connectedness could be felt among people with the same qualifications either within or outside the borders. Hence, it could lead to the common sympathy or solidarity, if their religious or ethnic fellows are in difficulties. Surely, this sympathy involves the same network of kinship. But the *popular* sympathy or solidarity based purely on the similar religion or ethnicity did not exist in Southeast Asia before the era of nation-state. The Malays did not interfere to liberate Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat when sultans of these provinces paid yearly tributes to Bangkok before the British would enter the region. But after the ethno-religious qualifications are adjusted through the nationalist framework, people do not only feel the family ties among them which may exist before the establishment of borders and nation-states, but also the significance of a particular religion or ethnicity which needs to be protected.

But the paradox of nationalism is that when a state promotes the values of a particular ethnicity or religion as the core of the nation, it cannot pursue the absolute policy to serve the particular ethnic or religious group, because the government represents the whole nation. It needs to create the legitimacy to claim the authority over other ethno-religious groups in the state as well. Moreover, with the fact that none of the Southeast Asian countries have the political loyalty from *all* of their population, whether the problem would be severe to the extent of separatism or not, the Southeast Asian states cannot extremely pursue the policy which responds only to the specific ethno-religious group. Even though Malaysia applies the Bumiputera policy which benefits Malays, its utmost objective is the national cohesion and social
harmony. The policy is enforced because the well-being of Malays affects the stability of Malaysia on the whole.

Furthermore, as mentioned above that the national interests of the Southeast Asian countries are the national unity, the territorial integrity and sovereignty, to preserve these interests in the international level, a country needs the good relationship with its neighbors. The territorial integrity and sovereignty would not be achieved without the political recognition on the sovereignty from the neighbors. Hence, the non-interference is the mutual interests among the Southeast Asian countries, especially Southeast Asia is the region with high ethnic and religious diversity, and most states lack the legitimacy, which means the threats could come from within rather than outside. This is why the principle of non-interference is the grounding principle of ASEAN, and valid until today. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, S. Jayakumar, commented that “the surest and quickest way to ruin is for ASEAN countries to begin commenting on how each of us deals with these sensitive issues, like race, religion, language.”371 Thus, although the conflict between the government and the religious minority exists in many countries in Southeast Asia, the neighbors barely step in to save their religious fellows.

Therefore, in order to claim the state’s authority over all ethno-religious groups and to gain the good relationship with neighbors which would protect the indispensable and immediate interests of the state, the Southeast Asian countries need to limit the influence of the religious and ethnic factor on

their policies when interacting with the neighbors with the different ethnicities or religions. However, as discussed above that people could have sympathy for their co-religionists or co-ethnics across the borders, consequently the governments need to sometimes term with the pressure from the constituencies, the religious organizations/institutions or the opposition in order to prevent the ethno-religious factor to override the national interests.

The answer to the second research question explains how the Southeast Asian governments term with the ethno-religious factor, and it reveals how ethnicity and religion function under the framework of nation-state. Actually, as seen from the findings of the case studies, only the Malaysian government really needed to handle with the religious pressure. The Indonesians did not demand their government as heavily as the Malaysians did to save the Thai-Muslims or the Rohingyas. And the Filipinos did not show the solidarity for the East Timorese. The lack of the ethnic similarity could be the reason here, as normally nationalism relates to both ethnic and religious qualification. Also, in Indonesia and the Philippines, the conflicts were not politicized by the oppositions. The media also had its role on how the people perceive the rising issue whether it was the religious conflict or not. However, this is beyond the scope of the research questions. The point here is how the governments dealt with the looming religious factor.

Timing was the basic strategy. After the incidents in which the Thai soldiers suppressed the insurgents with the excessive use of force, both Malaysian and Indonesian governments allowed the people and religious groups to protest freely. The leaders of both countries also intended to inquire Prime Minister
Thaksin during the ASEAN Summit in Laos after Tak-Bai incident. The Malaysian Parliament condemned the Thai government on the incident too. However, this was just a political reaction in the time that the solidarity of Muslims for the Thai-Muslims in both countries was high. After time had passed for months, both Malaysian Prime Minister and Indonesian President exchanged the visits with Thai Prime Minister as normal. Likewise, when 131 Thai-Muslim refugees fled to Malaysia, the Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that the refugees would be sent back to Thailand only when the Thai government guarantees their safety. But three months later after the attention of the media faded away, the Malaysian government sent one of the refugees whom the Thai authority identified as a insurgent back to Thailand.372

However, the main strategy which the Malaysian and Indonesian governments dealt with the religious factor was the contestation on the religious interpretation. While the religious groups or parties in Malaysia presented the religious discourse on the Thai-Muslim insurgency as the dominating Buddhist government against the suppressed Muslim minority, the Malaysian and Indonesian governments interpreted the issue as the outcome of the unequal development and the misuse (or misunderstanding) of the religion. Both governments avoided the dichotomous view which would present the insurgency as the fight between the two opposite religions. With the pressure from the Muslim constituencies on the governments to do “something,” the Malaysian and Indonesian governments did reach out to help the Thai-Muslims, but through the cooperation with the Thai government, such as the

3E strategy of Malaysia which aims to improve the education, employment and entrepreneurship of the Thai-Muslims and the Islamic educational cooperation with Indonesia. (It is noteworthy that both Malaysia and Indonesia focused on the “correction” on the Islamic education.) With this strategy, the Malaysian and Indonesian governments can claim that they did help the Thai-Muslims (and help the Thai government in the same time.) They demonstrated as the Muslim governments that solving the conflict was not about fighting against anyone or any religion. Muslims can have a constructive and cooperative approach in engaging a problem.

With this discourse, the governments imposed their own religious interpretation and marginalized the radicals in their countries (especially Indonesia) in the same time. The cooperative approach was consonant with Islam Hadhari policy of Malaysia and Pacasila ideology of Indonesia which emphasize on the peacefully co-existence between Muslims and other religious adherents. In the end, this approach was also supportive to the national interest regarding the national unity of both countries too.

Finally, the thesis finds that in fact the religion and ethnicity are neutral, but they are re-produced, interpreted and valued in accordance with the political needs of the elites in the different times. When the huge influx of foreign immigrants fled to Malaysia, the Malaysian Constitution classified the Malays separately from other races through identifying the Malay identity based on their religion and language. (“A Malay is a person who professes the Muslim
religion, speaks the Malay language, and practice the Malay customs.\textsuperscript{373}) But when the Malaysian government wanted to position the country in the global level as a moderate Muslim country and mend the racial disharmony in the country, it imposed “Islam Hadhari” (“Muslims believe that God has commanded them to accept and tolerate diversity … The need to maintain national harmony is paramount in a racially and religiously diverse country like Malaysia. At the same time, the approach accords totally with the injunctions of Islam which require man to be compassionate and kind to their fellow human beings.\textsuperscript{374}) and “Melayu Baru” or “New Malay” (“… who could transcend Malay ethnocentrism and accept reduced Malay dependence on the state’s affirmative action.\textsuperscript{375}) David Brown notes that the imposed nationalism in Southeast Asia excluded some ethno-religious minorities which fuelled the ethno-religious mobilization. Thus, now the Southeast Asian states promote the more inclusive national identity to reduce the sense of marginalization of minorities.\textsuperscript{376} Hence, the value and interpretation on the ethno-religious qualification of the national identity change through the domestic situation and decision of the regimes.

However, with the current predomination of the nation-state worldview, the states do not have to worry much either about the pressure from the ethno-religious factor, because in the end people need to think of the interests of

\textsuperscript{373} The Ferderal Constitution of Malaysia, Article 160, \url{http://confinder.richmond.edu/admin/docs/malaysia.pdf}.
\textsuperscript{374} P.M. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, “Islam, Modernization and Globalization” the speech addressed in Jakarta, Indonesia, July 24, 2006, the Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, \url{http://www.pmo.gov.my/?menu=page&page=1902}.
their countries too. No-one wants to sacrifice the interests of their own countries in the interference across borders to save the ethno-religious fellows. The constituencies in each country also assess their governments based on more than just the protection of the religious values. Dato’ Nazirah Hussain, the Malaysian ambassador in Thailand, comments that the Thai-Muslim insurgency is not the issue that the constituencies consider in the national level. In the election, people think about the domestic prices of the foods or oil rather than the insurgency in other country. Therefore, it can be seen that even with the pressure from the religious factor, and the Malaysian government responded by the 3E strategy, it is enough to calm down the religious factor, despite that the strategy did not really achieve anything in improving the conditions of the Thai-Muslims. The fighting in the South of Thailand is still on-going, but PAS and the Malaysian religious organizations stopped their protest for the Thai-Muslims’ causes many years ago.

In conclusion, the hypothesis of the thesis that the religious factor hardly affects the foreign policy of countries in Southeast Asia is affirmed through the findings that

1) the Southeast Asian countries are not only new countries, but their formation was not established by the popular level. Hence, they still have the problem on the stability of the states such as national unity, the territorial integrity and sovereignty. These concerns determine the existence of the states. Thus, they are the indispensable and immediate interests when the states

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377 Interview with Dato’ Nazirah Hussain, the Malaysian ambassador in Thailand, at the Malaysian embassy in Thailand on 23 September 2011.
pursue the foreign policy. To achieve these interests, the Southeast Asian states need the cooperation from their neighbors who are of different ethnicities and religions. Therefore, in pursuing the foreign policy, the Southeast Asian states need to control the ethno-religious factor so that it would not impede the regional cooperation which contributes to their mutual interests. Also, with the ethno-religious diversity in countries, the states cannot pursue the policy by giving weight to a specific ethno-religious group either.

2) But the states have to sometimes term with the religious factor, and they balance it through the discourse on the assessment of the conflict and contestation on the religious interpretation. As for the assessment of the conflict, the states tend to propose that the rising conflict is not a religious conflict. Rather, the conflict could be the result of the economic and/or educational problems. However, with the discourse of the religious groups, if the engagement with the conflict involves some religious dimension, the states emphasize the religious teachings on tolerance, kindness, and the ability to peacefully co-exist with other religions. Therefore, the Malaysian and Indonesian governments tried to cooperate on correcting the Islamic education in Thailand.

With these two findings, the thesis concludes that the religion hardly affects the foreign relations in Southeast Asia.
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