

**LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS  
AND POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Malaysia's Security Practice in Relation to Conflicts  
in Southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro Region:  
The Ethnic Dimension**

**Jafri Abdul Jalil**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations**

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## **Abstract**

Although many works exist on the role of ethnicity in the domestic securitisation processes in Malaysia, far less attention has been given to the significance ethnicity has in shaping the country's external security outlook. The central aim of this thesis is to analyse the relationship between national security and ethnic kinship. More specifically, it analyses whether ethnicity has had a major impact on Malaysia's external security practices in Southeast Asia. In geographic terms, the thesis asks how the Malaysian government has approached the ethnic conflicts in (1) southern Thailand, (2) Aceh, Indonesia, and (3) the Moro Region in the Philippines. In substantive terms, the thesis explores in particular to what extent the Malaysian government has been concerned about the *societal security* of the Malay's ethnic kin. Societal security includes the protection of physical survival, economic well-being and in some instances their political rights in their homeland.

The argument of this thesis is that Malaysia's approach towards the ethnic conflicts in southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro region is best understood with reference to the role that shared ethnicity has played for Malaysian policy-makers. This thesis concludes that the Malaysian government has not only promoted the Malays' ethnic interests within its own territorial boundaries, but also sought to protect the distinct identity of ethnic kin groups in cases where the latter have been caught up in conflict in Malaysia's immediate regional neighbourhood. However, contrary to arguments by many scholars - whereby involvement in ethnic conflicts by third parties being of the same ethnicity as one of the conflict parties tends to both make such conflicts more intense and create tensions that are likely to increase the probability of interstate conflict - Malaysia's "involvement" has neither led these conflicts to deteriorate nor fomented major interstate tensions, let alone war.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ABIM	<i>Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia</i> (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia)
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AMM	Aceh Monitoring Mission
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BIAF	Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces
BIMP-EAGA	Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines – East ASEAN Growth Area
BNPP	<i>Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani</i> (Patani National Liberation Front)
BRN	<i>Barisan Revolusi Nasional</i>
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya
DAP	Democratic Action Party
EU	European Union
GAM	<i>Gerakan Aceh Merdeka</i> (Free Aceh Movement)
GAMPAR	<i>Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya</i> (League of Malays of Greater Patani)
GMIP	<i>Gerakan Mujahidden Islam Patani</i>
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
ICG	International Crisis Group
IMT	International Monitoring Team
IMT-GT	Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle
JDS	Joint Development Strategy
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association

MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MIM	Mindanao Independence Movement
MNLF	Moro Nationalist Liberation Front
MP-GAM	<i>Majelis Pemerintahan-Gerakan Aceh Merdeka</i>
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NEP	New Economic Policy
NOC	National Operations Council
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conferences
OPAPP	Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process
PAS	<i>Partai Islam Se-Malaysia</i> (Islamic Party Malaysia)
PGPO	Perdana Global Peace Organisation
PULO	Patani United Liberation Organisation
UN	United Nations
SBPAC	Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre
SUQUI	Malaysian Chinese Organizations Elections Appeal Committee
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees
US	United States of America
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
ZOFPAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

## Chapter 1: National Security and International Relations

### *Introduction*

National security is normally linked to the protection of the country's core values, which include, among others, the survival of the people and the state's territorial integrity.<sup>1</sup> Societal security, on the other hand, only concerns the ability of a society to maintain its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual risks.<sup>2</sup> Due to the concern by the Malaysian government for the Malay ethnic group's societal security in the country, the preservation of their interests has been identified as one of Malaysia's main national security objectives. This thesis explores whether the concern by the Malaysian government for the societal security of the Malay ethnic group is limited to Malays residing in Malaysia or also extends to their ethnic kin living in neighbouring countries; especially those in southern Thailand, Aceh, Indonesia,<sup>3</sup> and the Moro Region in the Philippines (please refer to Map 1). The thesis examines in particular how the objective of protecting the Malay ethnic group's societal security has been pursued and applied vis-à-vis their ethnic kin located in all of the respective bordering countries. Besides analysing in general terms Malaysia's security practice in relation to the ethnic conflicts in the aforementioned areas, the thesis also examines how the Malaysian government has related to the major ethno-nationalist movements operating in these countries, such as the Patani United Liberation Front (PULO) in Southern Thailand, the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* – GAM) in Aceh, Indonesia, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Kalevi J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis* (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1995), pp. 124-27.

<sup>2</sup> Ole Wæver, "Societal Security: The Concept," in *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*, ed. Ole Wæver, et al. (London: Pinter Publishers, 1993), pp. 17-40.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the Indonesian government and the Acehnese ethno-nationalist organisation signed a peace treaty (the Helsinki Peace Accord) in August 2005.

Moro Nationalist Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Moro Region in the Philippines. In short, the thesis analyses whether the ethnic factor has an effect on the Malaysian security practice in South-East Asia, and in so doing, it examines the relationship between ethnicity and the international relations of Southeast Asia.



Map 1: Ethnic Conflict Involving the Malay Ethnic Group in Southeast Asia (Source: [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/southeast\\_asia\\_ref\\_2002.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/southeast_asia_ref_2002.jpg))

This chapter begins by outlining the significance and the contribution of the study to International Relations. The second section reviews the basic concepts that will be used in the thesis. The third section highlights the rationale and the argument of the study. The fourth section analyses the literature on Malaysia's approach towards all the conflict areas, and discusses the limitations of this literature for addressing these issues. The fifth section introduces the methodological approaches applied in this research. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis structure.

### ***1.1 The Significance and the Contribution of the Study***

The thesis attempts to make four main contributions. First, it seeks to make an empirical contribution to the literature on the influence of the ethnic factor on Malaysia's security practice. Although many works exist on the role of ethnicity in either the domestic securitisation process or ethnic politics in Malaysia,<sup>4</sup> little attention to date has been given to the role of ethnicity in shaping the country's external security outlook, particularly as regards the ethnic conflicts in Malaysia's regional neighbourhood. The thesis systematically discusses the ethnic factor with reference to Malaysia's security practice towards ethnic conflicts and to some of the major ethno-nationalist movements in Southeast Asia.

Second, the thesis contributes to the research of the role of ethnicity in international relations, especially in Southeast Asia. Although ethnic groups, ethnicity and ethnic issues are favourite subjects among anthropologists and sociologists, political scientists and especially International Relations experts have in the main tended to pay

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<sup>4</sup> See for example, David Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 1994), M. Shamsul Hagee, "The Role of the State in Managing Ethnic Tensions in Malaysia," *American Behavioral Scientist* 47, no. 3 (2003), K.S. Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation," in *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 513 - 48.



little attention to these issues.<sup>5</sup> Third, the thesis aims to make a contribution to the analysis of the international politics of Southeast Asia. Malaysia's security practice towards these ethno-nationalist movements has regional implications since the country is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which still requires all member states to adhere to the principle of non-interference in each other's affairs. Some works on this regional grouping have focused on apparent breaches of the non-interference principle, but not so much on the transnational-ethnic alliance.<sup>6</sup> In spite of the dominant ethnic group in Malaysia and the membership of the ethno-nationalist movements struggling against their government's shared common ethnic identity, there are very few scholars who have analysed in detail how the Malay kinship has influenced Malaysia's security practice. The fourth contribution of the thesis is that it examines to some extent the interaction of the ethno-nationalist movements with the national governments they are in conflict with and, more importantly, also the former's interaction with the Malaysian government.

## **1.2 Basic Terms and Concepts**

National security has been perceived by almost all sovereign countries as the highest priority issue in their national agendas. Before the end of the Cold War, the focus of national security was primarily directed towards the protection of the state from foreign threats, which were considered to be primarily military in nature. In response to these

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<sup>5</sup> For exceptions, see David Davis and Will Moore, "Ethnicity Matters: Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1997), Stephen M Saideman, Beth K Dougherty, and Erin K Jenne, "Dilemmas of Divorce: How Secessionist Identities Cut Both Ways," *Security Studies* 14, no. 4 (2005).

<sup>6</sup> See for example, John Funston, "ASEAN and the Principle of Non-Intervention - Practices and Prospects," in *Non-Intervention and State Sovereignty in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. David Dickens and Guy Wilson-Roberts (Wellington: Centre for Strategic Studies in association with the China Centre for International Studies and Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 2000), p. 9-22, David Martin Jones and Mike Lawrence Smith, "The Changing Security Agenda in Southeast Asia: Globalization, New Terror, and the Delusions of Regionalism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 24 (2001): pp. 271-88, Samuel Sharpe, "An ASEAN Way to Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia?," *The Pacific Review* 16, no. 2 (2003): pp. 231-50.

threats, states had to have sufficient military capability to defend their national sovereignty. However, there is also a non-military definition of national security.

Robert McNamara, for instance, defines national security as follows:

Security means development. Security is not military hardware, though it may include it; security is not military force, though it may involve it; security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it. Security is development, and without development there can be no security.<sup>7</sup>

The term ethnicity, on the other hand, derived from the Greek *ethnos*, originally meant heathen or pagan.<sup>8</sup> Ethnicity implies a sense of a shared common descent, political solidarity vis-à-vis other groups, and common customs, language, religion, values, morality and etiquette that always has a 'political dimension'.<sup>9</sup> In addition, ethnicity functions both as an interest resource and as an emotional loyalty.<sup>10</sup> In other words, shared ethnicity or ethnic identity by its very nature creates loyalty, interest, and fear of extinction, which even international boundaries do not dilute.<sup>11</sup> It has been argued, therefore, if the ethnic group's kin across international borders are being ill-treated and oppressed, and their right of self-determination is being violated by their governments, due to the ethnic affinity between them, the people in that particular ethnic group would then offer external support to their ethnic kin.<sup>12</sup> According to Gurr, the concept of external support refers to the entire range of active and passive support an

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<sup>7</sup> Robert S McNamara, *The Essence of Security: Reflections in Office* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1968).

<sup>8</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana/Croom Helm, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> Max Weber, C. Wright Mills, and Hans Heinrich Gerth, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 159-74.

<sup>10</sup> Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*, p. xviii.

<sup>11</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), Chapter 4.

<sup>12</sup> Rajat Ganguly, *Kin State Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts: Lessons from South Asia* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 14, Stephen M Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), Astri Suhrke and Lela Garner Noble, *Ethnic Conflict in International Relations* (London: Praeger, 1977).

ethnic group can receive from outside the country.<sup>13</sup> Ethnic groups may receive support from other states, from kindred groups in neighbouring states, or from international movements such as the Indigenous People's Movement.<sup>14</sup> Major types of support include access to weaponry and supplies, mercenary and military advisers, the provision of safe havens for exiles and refugees, financial support and verbal encouragement and advice.<sup>15</sup>

The term ethno-nationalist movement generally refers to a movement that is based on a regionally concentrated ethnic group having a history of organised political autonomy. Usually, an ethno-nationalist movement aims at seeking either complete withdrawal from state-imposed socio-economic and political arrangements or seeking ethnic autonomy, and in some cases, political independence and self-determination.<sup>16</sup> In order to achieve its objective, the ethno-nationalist movement tends to seek assistance from their ethnic kin.<sup>17</sup> Ganguly defines the ethnic kin state as follows:

Ethnic kin states are typically those states which border or are close to the secessionist region and which contain co-nationals of the secessionists with whom the secessionists share and maintain strong ethno-cultural and ethno-religious bonds.<sup>18</sup>

According to King and Melvin, the kin state may establish cultural centres, consulates, or quasi-governmental support institutions in foreign territories with sizeable ethnic

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<sup>13</sup> Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2003), pp. 95-116.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Wan Kadir Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), Deepa Khosla, "Third World States as Interveners in Ethnic Conflicts: Implications for Regional and International Stability," *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 6 (1999): p. 1146.

<sup>17</sup> In this thesis, the terms 'ethnic kin' and 'ethnic group' are used interchangeably because they refer to the same thing. The only difference is that the term 'ethnic kin' specifically refers to those who are separated from their ethnic group by international borders.

<sup>18</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, the term ethno-nationalist is regarded as synonymous with the term 'secessionist' and 'insurgents'. Ganguly, *Kin State Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts: Lessons from South Asia*, p. 9.

brethren populations.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the kin state may advocate the rights of its ethnic brethren in international forums, or may intercede directly with the host state to ensure that the cultural and political rights of the ethnic kindred are respected.<sup>20</sup> The attitudes of the kin state, where the ethnic group in question is more empowered, tend to be more hostile toward the country where their ethnic kin are disadvantaged or persecuted.<sup>21</sup>

The reasons for such intervention however, are varied. Analysts such as Byman have argued that the primary motivation for states to support 'insurgents' (or for the purpose of this thesis, ethno-nationalist movements) is based on geopolitical considerations rather than on ideology, ethnic affinity, or religious sentiment.<sup>22</sup> The geopolitical motivations include a search for regional influence as well as a desire to destabilise neighbourhood rivals. According to Carment, in conflicts where ethnicity is salient, the leaders in kin states are influenced by a combination of factors: political pressures from domestic constituencies, affective and instrumental motivations, and uneven and underdeveloped domestic political structures.<sup>23</sup> Affective motivations include considerations of justice, humanitarian, ethnic and religious concerns, and the leadership's ideological affinity with the ethno-nationalist organisations.<sup>24</sup> The instrumental motivations for supporting an ethnic kin group, on the other hand, are rooted in *realpolitik*. In other words, an ethnic kin state may decide to support its ethnic brethren's political objectives in another state in order to promote its own self-interest.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Charles King and Neil J Melvin, "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia," *International Security* 24, no. 3 (1999-2000): p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Will H. Moore and David R. Davis, "Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy," in *Ethnic Fears and Global Engagement: The International Spread and Management of Ethnic Conflict*, ed. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), p. xiv.

<sup>23</sup> David Carment, "The Ethnic Dimension in World Politics," *Third World Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1994): pp. 551-82.

<sup>24</sup> Alexis Heraclides, *The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics* (London: Frank Cass, 1991), n. 3 p. 52.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995), n. 4, p. xvi.

The conventional perception on this issue is that when ethnic kin groups are threatened in another state, this could lead to interstate tensions and third party intervention.

### **1.3 Rationale and Argument**

As stated by Sandler, the pursuit of Malaysia's national security not only emphasised state survival, requiring such strategies as deterrence and the balance of power, but also ethno-national security doctrines that evolved from long-term considerations of group survival, which inform the nation's mission in domestic and international relations.<sup>26</sup> Malaysia engages in serving above all the interest of the majority ethnic group, the Malays, by implementing policies that are favourable to them.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, Malaysia's security doctrines are overwhelmingly translated into policies and strategies that are shaped to advance the interests of the Malay ethnic group.<sup>28</sup> Generally, each ethnic group tends to develop its own collective identity based on its ethnic values and interests instead of national ones. As mentioned earlier, by nature, ethnic identity creates feelings of loyalty and common interest among its members regardless of international boundaries.<sup>29</sup> In other words, if the interests of their ethnic brethren are threatened, the ethnic group is likely to press their government to intervene.<sup>30</sup> However, it should be noted that the Malaysian government has not defined which ethnic groups living outside its borders as its ethnic kin. The view of who is Malaysia's ethnic kin is actually based on the perception by the country's political leaders and the Malay ethnic group in Malaysia. These perceptions are normally based on both historical and anthropological

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<sup>26</sup> Shmuel Sandler, "Ethnonationalism and the Foreign Policy of Nation-States," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 1, no. 2 (1995): p. 263.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Suzaina Kadir, "Ethnic Conflict, Prevention and Management: The Malaysian Case," in *Ethnic Conflicts in Southeast Asia*, ed. W. Scott Thompson and Kusuma Snitwongse (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), Matthew Hoddie, *Ethnic Realignment: A Comparative Study of Government Influences on Identity* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 87-105.

<sup>28</sup> Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation," p. 517.

<sup>29</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Chapter 4.

<sup>30</sup> Moore and Davis, "Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy," pp. 89-103.

accounts. In other words, any ethnic groups that are located outside Malaysia's territories but are native to the region and have established historical links and also share a very akin ethnic identity with the Malays in Malaysia, can be classified as their ethnic kin. Following this reasoning, one would expect Malaysia to become engaged in these conflicts, since the country is an ethnic kin state to the Malay communities involved in some of the ethnic conflicts in Southeast Asia.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, globally, it was a relatively common phenomenon during the 1990s for states to offer assistance to ethnic kin abroad. As a matter of fact, the kin states that extended support to insurgent groups due to ethnic ties during ethnic conflicts throughout the world in the 1990s are well documented.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the decade, forty-four insurgencies benefited from foreign state support, and in seventeen of those cases, the fate of the ethnic kin was one of the key factors motivating this support. Among the most prominent cases is Rwanda's intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaïre), which occurred in part to protect the Banyamulenge against Hutu repression. Other prominent interventions in the 1990s are related to the collapse of the Soviet Union and include Uzbekistan's support for Uzbeks in Afghanistan, Armenia's support for Armenians in Azerbaijan, and Russia's support for ethnic Russians in Moldova. Ryan reinforces this argument by showing that an ethnic kin state may decide to render assistance to its ethnic brethren's movements in another state in order to

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<sup>31</sup> For a discussion on how these groups related to the Malay World/ethnic group, refer to Timothy P. Barnard, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity across Boundaries* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, National University of Singapore, 2004), Clive J. Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), pp. 140-41, Ganganath Jha, *Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia and Quest for Identity* (New Delhi: National Book Organisation, 1997), p. 68.

<sup>32</sup> Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, Davis and Moore, "Ethnicity Matters: Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior," pp. 148-63, David R. Davis, Keith Jagers, and Will H. Moore, "Ethnicity, Minorities and International Conflict," in *Wars in the Midst of Peace: The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict* ed. David Carment and Patrick James (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1997), Moore and Davis, "Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy," pp. 89-103.

promote its own self-interest.<sup>33</sup> According to Ryan, the self-interest at stake may include both domestic and international political considerations, short and long-term economic gains, and reasons of security (both internal and external security) and short and long-term military advantages.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Ryan has argued that external involvement by other states in ethnic conflict will escalate rather than de-escalate this type of conflict.<sup>35</sup> According to Moore and Davis, the level of conflict between states will be elevated if both states contain people of the same ethnic group, and one of the co-ethnics is politically and/or economically advantaged in its society, in comparison to its ethnic kin in the other state.<sup>36</sup>

On the basis of the point put forward by the scholars mentioned above, one would expect the involvement of the ethnic kin state in ethnic conflict to possibly capture Malaysia's experience insofar as Malaysia is expected to advance the interest of the Malay ethnic group and its status as an ethnic kin government/state. Indeed, one might expect the government to be very likely to intervene in all the ethnic conflicts in which Malays are caught up. As it happens, Malaysia has indeed been involved in these conflicts. However, Malaysia's "involvement" has neither led the conflict to deteriorate nor has it led to war. As such, its involvement defies the understanding and predictions by many scholars whereby third party involvement in ethnic conflicts tends to intensify these conflicts and create tensions that are likely to increase the probability of interstate conflict.<sup>37</sup> Significantly, existing explanations of Malaysia's security practice have not been persuasive. The scholars mentioned above only analysed the role and motivations for ethnic kin states in ethnic conflicts that took place in their neighbouring countries.

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<sup>33</sup> Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*, n. 4, p. xvi.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Stephen Ryan, "Ethnic Conflict and the United Nations," *Ethnic Racial Studies* 13, no. 1 (1990): pp. 24-28.

<sup>36</sup> Davis and Moore, "Ethnicity Matters: Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior," p. 174.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Ibid, Ryan, "Ethnic Conflict and the United Nations," pp. 24-28.

Their studies did not examine the role of a regional grouping, either in restraining its members from becoming involved in ethnic conflicts or in whether it has any influence over the behaviour of its member countries especially with regard to ethnic conflicts involving their ethnic kin.

One of the possible ways to explain Malaysia's behaviour towards these ethnic conflicts - which is indeed very different from what was predicted by scholars - is the constraints imposed by ASEAN on Malaysia. Malaysia attaches great significance to ASEAN in the sense that the government has listed its commitment to ASEAN as the first priority of its foreign policy.<sup>38</sup> However, despite the existence of ASEAN's norms - which basically aim at preventing all member states from interfering in the domestic affairs of other members - Malaysia has been involved in these conflicts. The thesis seeks to analyse why Malaysia has been engaged in these conflicts despite ASEAN's norms. Officially, Malaysia has been actively engaged with all of the respective governments in finding solutions to the conflict. In the case of the conflict in the Moro Region, for instance, Malaysia has been leading the International Monitoring Team (IMT) that has aimed to maintain the agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) since 22 June 2001. Malaysia was also among the core members of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) after the Acehese separatist movement agreed to accept a political settlement with the Indonesian government on 15 August 2005. The AMM was in Aceh until December 2006. In addition, Malaysia has also been actively approached

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<sup>38</sup> See, for instance; Mahathir Mohamad, *Reflections on ASEAN* (Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn Bhd, 2004), Wan Abdul Rahman Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," in *Malaysia and the Islamic World*, ed. Baginda Abdul Razak Abdullah (London: Asean Academic Press, 2004), pp. 218-19.



by the Thai government to attain a peaceful resolution to the conflict in southern Thailand.<sup>39</sup>

The thesis also seeks to examine whether there are any other forms of support that Malaysia has offered to the Malays in these conflict areas in addition to those mentioned above. However, it should be noted that rather than analysing the *impact* of Malaysia's support on security policy, as influenced by the ethnic factor, the thesis examines how the ethnic factor has shaped Malaysia's actual security practice toward the ethno-nationalist movements in the region. The reason for this is that although Malaysia has officially identified the objectives of its foreign policy and the ways in which the country is supposed to achieve these policies, the federal government in Kuala Lumpur, on the other hand, does not have any officially documented security policy.<sup>40</sup> The thesis argues that, despite being a member of ASEAN, where members are expected not to "interfere" in other member states' domestic affairs, Malaysia somehow has played some role in assisting the Malay ethnic kin located in neighbouring countries. The various form of assistance extended to them are the derivative of the Malaysian government's concern about their societal security (physical survival, economic well-being and in some instances their political rights in their homeland). However, such assistance has not resulted in interstate armed conflict between Malaysia and all of its neighbouring countries.

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<sup>39</sup> See, for instance; "KL 'Willing to Help in Talks with Thai Rebels' " *Straits Times Interactive*, 23 March 2007 , Ian Storey, "Malaysia's Role in Thailand's Southern Insurgency," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 5 (2007), "Thai PM Seeks Peaceful End to Insurgency," *Straits Times Interactive* 19 October 2006, "Thai PM Urges Malaysians to Invest in Troubled South," *The Nation*, 24 February 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with the Director General, National Security Division, Prime Minister's Department, Dato' Muhammad Hatta Abdul Aziz, 12 March 2007.

#### 1.4 Literature Review

Within the existing literature on Malaysia's position on the ethnic conflicts involving the Malay ethnic group in the region, there are primarily two strands of argument. The first argues that since movements in all the three respective countries are religiously motivated, and the Malays in Malaysia share a sense of common religion with the members of these movements, Malaysia has offered some assistance.<sup>41</sup> However, these forms of assistance are said to be limited more to welfare-oriented programmes rather than expressing political concern.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, the second argument claims that although the Malaysian government is said to sympathise with its fellow Malays, who have separatist leanings in neighbouring countries, their existence and activities are unable to divert Malaysian foreign policy from the promotion of regionalism through ASEAN.<sup>43</sup> In other words, the argument is that, for Malaysia, the most important concern is to secure cordial bilateral and multilateral relations with all the individual ASEAN member states, including the three countries chosen as case studies here (Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines). This position is supported by Yegar, who argues that due to the sensitive inter-ethnic relations that happen to be characteristic of the relationships between many ASEAN members, all member states are expected to favour the maintenance of a rigorous territorial status quo, as the region would become

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), p. 82, Baiq Wardhani, "External Support for Liberation Movements in Aceh and Papua" (paper presented at the 15th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, Canberra, 29 June - 2 July 2004), Donald E. Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," p. 217.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, David Carment, "Managing Interstate Ethnic Tensions: The Thailand-Malaysia Experience," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 1, no. 4 (1995): p. 16, Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, p. 202, Guy J. Pauker, "Government Responses to Armed Insurgency in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Examination of Failures and Their Implications for the Future," in *Governments and Rebellions in Southeast Asia*, ed. Chandran Jeshurun (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1985), p. 90, Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy*, p. 34.

unstable if member countries accepted the principle of ethnic self-determination to be “practised” in the region.<sup>44</sup>

ASEAN is a regional grouping that was formed with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration in August 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.<sup>45</sup> ASEAN was established with the aim of creating a loose structure of regional cooperation that would help to prevent or at least contain tensions and conflicts among the member states, without infringing member states’ national sovereignty. Among the main objectives of ASEAN are the enhancement of the social, economic, and political stability and the cohesion of its member states.<sup>46</sup> As a member of ASEAN, Malaysia is a signatory of the regional grouping’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). The Treaty stipulates that member countries “shall not, in any manner or form, participate in any activity, which shall constitute a threat to the political and economic stability, sovereignty or territorial integrity of another member.”<sup>47</sup> Any unfavourable policies towards them will be perceived as an act that violates the treaty. In fact, one of the key founding principles of ASEAN is that of non-interference in domestic affairs by outside powers, including even (or especially) close neighbours.<sup>48</sup>

As outlined by Haacke, ASEAN operates in such a way that all of its member states adhere to the six main norms of the organisation which are: sovereign equality; the non-recourse to use of force and the peaceful settlement of conflict; non-interference

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<sup>44</sup> Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 166.

<sup>45</sup> Currently, ASEAN has 10 members after the admission of Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, as well as two countries with observer status (Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea).

<sup>46</sup> William T. Tow, *Subregional Security Cooperation in the Third World* (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990), p. 37.

<sup>47</sup> See Article 10 to 15 in the *Text of the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC)*, Bali, 1976. For further detail discussion, see Ralf Emmers, *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF* (London: Routledge, 2003), Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development and Prospects* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

<sup>48</sup> Bjørn Møller, *Security, Arms Control and Defence Restructuring in East Asia* (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1998), p. 83.

and non-intervention; the non-involvement of ASEAN to address unresolved bilateral conflict between members, quiet diplomacy; mutual respect and tolerance.<sup>49</sup> In other words, ASEAN should be regarded as a form of cooperative security because the organisation “has promoted norms and principles leading to an intramural code of conduct and established a mechanism for conflict management based on conflict avoidance rather than resolution.”<sup>50</sup> In fact, ASEAN can be considered as the most successful Third World regional organisation because it has developed a tangible set of informal but effective procedures for achieving continuity in policy behaviour by the leaders of its respective member-states and has been built on shared visions and expectations related to regional security.<sup>51</sup> The success of ASEAN can be proven by analysing the ability of the organisation to ensure that member countries have not settled their disputes by military force since the organisation was created.

Furthermore, most of the members of ASEAN, especially Malaysia, perceive ASEAN as “a form of political defence for constraining a potential menacing neighbour”.<sup>52</sup> Malaysia believes that the existence of ASEAN has encouraged patterns of behaviour that reduce risks to security by enhancing multilateral relations as well as fostering habits of open dialogue on political and security matters including establishing confidence building measures. Consequently, Malaysia has made ASEAN the main priority in its foreign policy.<sup>53</sup> In fact, Weatherbee argues that at the state-to-state level, the Malaysian government has acted properly by denying any official interference in the

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<sup>49</sup> Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development and Prospects*, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Emmers, *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF*, p. 39.

<sup>51</sup> Tow, *Subregional Security Cooperation in the Third World*, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> One of the original reasons that contributed to the establishment of ASEAN was political reconciliation between Malaysia and Indonesia. Emmers, *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF*, p. 55, Hari Singh, "Malaysia's National Security: Rhetoric and Substance," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 26, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>53</sup> See, for instance, Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," p. 217.

affairs of its ASEAN partners.<sup>54</sup> However, at the same time, as in many developing countries, several 'irreducible identities' such as religion and ethnic group may spur citizen's interest in the formulation of the foreign policy making of their country.<sup>55</sup> When a state loses its ability to regulate an ethnic conflict, the problem can become a regional security dilemma because it invites external intervention. In this context, this thesis will analyse to what extent ASEAN has shaped the behaviour of Malaysia when it comes to the issue of ethnic conflict in the region. This is an important question because, although Malaysia is an active member of ASEAN, the majority of the Malaysian population share the same ethnic identity with those facing ethnic conflicts in several ASEAN member states. Also, many of these states have become suspicious of Malaysia's role in these conflicts. In short, with respect to ASEAN, this thesis will analyse whether this regional organisation has imposed any constraint on Malaysia's security practice towards these conflict or whether Malaysia has circumvented the hindrance by securing the Malay interests in these areas under the ASEAN framework itself.

The following sub-sections will briefly illustrate the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines respectively, especially the affect the ethno-nationalist movements in these countries have had on the bilateral relations with Malaysia.

#### Malaysia's Bilateral Relations with Thailand

Both Thailand and Malaysia are strong supporters of ASEAN and bilateral relations between the two states remain cordial. In fact, historically, the good level of cooperation between Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok led the Communist Party of Malaya to

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<sup>54</sup> Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy*, p. 34.

<sup>55</sup> Steven Friedman, "The Forgotten Sovereign: Citizens, States and Foreign Policy in the South," in *Diplomacy and Developing Nations: Post-Cold War Foreign Policy-Making Structures and Processes*, ed. Maurice A. East and Justin Robertson (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 241.

end its insurgency in 1989.<sup>56</sup> However, despite the cementing of bilateral relations and the importance of ASEAN for both parties, mutual suspicions over the problems in Southern Thailand have been an enduring source of bilateral friction between the governments.<sup>57</sup> The lasting tensions between these two countries stem partially from Thailand's repeated condemnation of Malaysia for its lack of assistance in suppressing Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations and its failure to prevent sympathetic elements in Malaysia from extending support to the Thais of ethnic Malay origin across the border.<sup>58</sup> These tensions persist, although it was reported that there is a "*quid pro quo*" understanding between Thailand and Malaysia, whereby the former would deny sanctuary to communist guerrillas and the latter would not support the irredentist cause of elements of the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations to "reunite" with Malaysia.<sup>59</sup> In other words, both countries are obliged to respect each other's territorial integrity, a principle that was to become a part of ASEAN norms. At the same time, it should also be noted that there is an argument according to which Thailand's cooperation with Malaysia has been based on Kuala Lumpur's willingness to withhold support for Thai Muslim secessionists in southern Thailand.<sup>60</sup> This argument is substantiated by a few scholars who argue that although many Malaysians sympathise with the Thais of ethnic Malay origin and have also supported political interference of

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<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Saroja D. Dorairajoo, "Violence in the South of Thailand," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>57</sup> For detailed discussion on how the ethnic conflict in southern Thailand had affected Malaysia-Thailand bilateral relations, see, Carment, "Managing Interstate Ethnic Tensions: The Thailand-Malaysia Experience.", Surin Pitsuwan, "The Ethnic Background of Issues Affecting Bilateral Relations between Malaysia and Thailand," in *Ethnicities and Nations: Processes of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific*, ed. S. J. Tambiah, Remo Guidieri, and Francesco Pellizzi (Houston: University of Texas Press, 1988).

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Joseph Chinyong Liow, "The Security Situation in Southern Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Domestic and International Dimensions," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27 (2004), Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 175, Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 166.

<sup>59</sup> Anthony L Smith, "Trouble in Thailand's Muslim South: Separatism, Not Global Terrorism," *Asia-Pacific Security Studies* 3, no. 10 (2004): p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan, *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p. 328.

their country in the conflict, the Malaysian government has not offered any tangible support to the Southern Thailand insurgents.<sup>61</sup> In addition, Storey has argued that since the Malaysian government worries about the possibility of the spillover effect of the conflict in Southern Thailand to the country and the risk of regional terrorist groups such as Jemaah Islamiya (JI) becoming central to the conflict, the Malaysian government does not support the Thai Malays' insurgency.<sup>62</sup>

### Malaysia's Bilateral Relations with Indonesia

In 1966, Indonesia and Malaysia signed an agreement ending the state of "*Konfrontasi*" (confrontation) between the two countries that had lasted from 1963 - 1965.<sup>63</sup> For ideological and domestic political reasons, President Sukarno objected to Sabah and Sarawak's merger with Malaya in 1963 and sought to prevent this "neo-colonist plot" by military force that involved Indonesian commandos in infiltration, sabotage and terrorist attacks in Malaysia.<sup>64</sup> A year after the ending of *konfrontasi*, ASEAN was established. Ever since then, bilateral relations between Malaysia and Indonesia have often been characterised as 'special' due to similarities based on common roots of racial grouping, Islam and a common history.<sup>65</sup> The basis of this 'special' relationship can be traced to the Indo-Malay history written by nationalist ideologues and local historians that attempt

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<sup>61</sup> Aruna Gopinath, "International Aspects of the Thai Muslim and Philippine Moro Issues: A Comparative Study," in *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*, ed. R. J. May and K. M. de Silva (London: Pinter, 1991), p. 139, S. P Harish, "Changing Conflict Identities: The Case of the Southern Thailand Discord," in *IDSS Working Paper Series* (Singapore: 2006), p. 15, Andrew T. H. Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2004), p. 15.

<sup>62</sup> Storey, "Malaysia's Role in Thailand's Southern Insurgency," pp. 7-10.

<sup>63</sup> For detailed discussions on *Konfrontasi*, see, J.A.C. Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute, 1963-1966* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975), Greg Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, 1945-1965* (Bathurst [N.S.W.]: Crawford House Publishing, 1997).

<sup>64</sup> For discussions on this issue, see, Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development and Prospects*, pp. 36-38, 40-43, Matthew Jones, *Conflict and Confrontation in South East Asia, 1961-1965: Britain, the United States and the Creation of Malaysia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> Al Baroto, "Similarities and Differences in Malaysia-Indonesia Relations: Some Perspectives," *Indonesia Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1993).

to highlight commonalities of race, ethnicity, and culture from a historical vantage point.<sup>66</sup> However, although the notion of kinship that often revolves around the idea of ‘blood brotherhood’ has been a prominent feature in the discourse of bilateral relations of the two countries,<sup>67</sup> the existence of the Acehese ethno-nationalist movement has caused occasional irritations in Jakarta-Kuala Lumpur relations. In fact, it was reported that Indonesia has long harboured suspicions that Malaysia has discreetly supported the Acehese ethno-nationalist organisation.<sup>68</sup> This was primarily due to Malaysia’s unwillingness to launch crackdowns on Acehese refugees, or to support directly the Indonesian government over Aceh despite repeated pledges by Malaysian government authorities that the country has not supported the cause of the Acehese ethno-nationalist movement. A number of scholars have reflected on the phenomenon whereby the Acehese were able to seek refuge in Malaysia. However, while most of them have not specified why the Acehese were able to do so,<sup>69</sup> there are some who have highlighted religion as a factor. For instance, Tan has argued that, “Malaysia’s refusal to surrender those accused of rebelling against the Indonesian government belied considerable sympathy in Malaysia for its Acehese co-religionists”.<sup>70</sup> Barber shares the same view when he argues that Malaysia has been made by the Acehese as their place for sanctuary due to the “history of religious links” with the Malay Peninsula.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Joseph Chinyong Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: One Kin, Two Nations* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> N. Ganesan, *Bilateral Tensions in Post-Cold War ASEAN* (Singapore: Regional Strategic and Political Studies Programme, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999), p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Edward Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2005), Priyambudi Sulistiyanto, "Whither Aceh," *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>70</sup> Andrew T. H. Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 23 (2000): p. 278.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh* (Bangkok: Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), 2000), p. 40. Kingsbury also claims that the Acehese have traditionally close links with their “Muslim counterparts” on the Malay Peninsula. Damien Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 152.



### Malaysia's Bilateral Relations with the Philippines

In the past, territorial disputes between the two countries have been the most serious sources of bilateral tension between Malaysia and the Philippines. The Philippines, during the administration of President Diosdado Macapagal, claimed Sabah in 1962, when it learned that Sabah was to become part of the Malaysian federation.<sup>72</sup> The claim resulted in the abrogation of diplomatic relations between the two countries from 1963-1966. Historically, the Sultan of Sulu, Mohammed Jamalul Alam, leased Sabah to Messrs. Overbeck and Dent, both British nationals, on 22 June 1878. According to the lease agreement, both of them were required to make some payment of money annually "till the end of time," for the lease. In fact, the Malaysian government still adheres to its financial obligations to the Sulu heirs for the lease of Sabah because Malaysia made a distinction between sovereignty and proprietary rights over the state.<sup>73</sup> In other words, while Malaysia acknowledges that the Sulu Sultanate has the proprietary rights over Sabah, it claims sovereignty over Sabah.<sup>74</sup> Sabah joined the Malaysian Federation in 1963 together with Sarawak after Britain decided to relinquish its right over both states to Malaysia, and this decision was supported by international bodies such as the United Nations.<sup>75</sup> In addition, the international community has recognised Sabah as part of Malaysia.<sup>76</sup> In fact, ASEAN had facilitated reconciliation between the two countries

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<sup>72</sup> Paridah Abdul Samad and Darusalam Abu Bakar, "Malaysia-Philippines Relations: The Issue of Sabah," *Asian Survey* 32, no. 6 (1992): p. 554, Lake and Morgan, *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, p. 329.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Malaysia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Syed Hamid Syed Jaafar Albar, 21 December 2006. See, for example, Abdul Samad and Abu Bakar, "Malaysia-Philippines Relations: The Issue of Sabah," p. 567, Nasser A. Marohomsalic, *Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines* (Marawi City: N.A. Marohomsalic, 2001), p. 161.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Syed Jaafar Albar.

<sup>75</sup> For a more detailed explanation, see, Frances L Starner, "Malaysia and the North Borneo Territories," *Asian Survey* 3, no. 11 (1963): pp. 513-34.

<sup>76</sup> For example, the International Court of Justice awarded Sipadan and Ligatan islands near Sabah to Malaysia at the end of 2002. The decision was made based on the "effective occupation" displayed by Great Britain and the absence of any other superior title. The Philippines had intervened in the proceedings on the basis of its claim to Northern Borneo, but the Court turned down its request in early 2001.

mandating President Suharto of Indonesia to play the role of third party mediator seeking to move Kuala Lumpur and Manila toward a consensus.<sup>77</sup>

Although the claim to Sabah has not been resolved, both countries seem to be cooperating well with each other. For instance, Malaysia is said to have played an instrumental role in the signing of the peace agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and one of the key Moro ethno-nationalist organisations in 1996 (the Moro Nationalist Liberation Front - MNLF), and is currently sponsoring the peace talks between the GRP and another Moro ethno-nationalist organisation (the Moro Islamic Liberation Front – MILF). However, it should be noted that similar to the case in Southern Thailand and Aceh, the ethnic conflict in the Moro region has also become one of the biggest irritants in the relationship between Malaysia and the Philippines. This is mainly brought about by the fact that although Malaysia acknowledges that the conflict in the Moro region is a domestic affair of the Philippines, the Malaysian government has repeatedly expressed concerns over the Moros' predicament, especially during the height of the conflict in the 1970s.<sup>78</sup> In addition, there were also accusations that the Malaysian government had indeed supported both the key Moro ethno-nationalist organisations against the Philippine government. Some scholars have sought to explain the reasons why Malaysia or, in some cases, Malaysian citizens offer assistance or sympathise with the Moros. Rabasa, for instance, claims that Malaysia is supporting the Moros mainly because turning against "co-religionists" in the Southern Philippines would be a very unpopular government decision.<sup>79</sup> This is mainly

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<sup>77</sup> Lake and Morgan, *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, p. 329.

<sup>78</sup> Mohamad Abu Bakar, "Islam in Malaysia's Foreign Policy: The First Three Decades (1957-1987)," in *Malaysia and the Islamic World*, ed. Baginda Abdul Razak Abdullah (London: Asean Academic Press, 2004), p. 24, "Muslim in Southern Philippines," *Foreign Affairs Malaysia* 7, no. 2 (1974): p. 148, Lela Garner Noble, "Ethnicity and Philippine-Malaysian Relations," *Asian Survey* 15, no. 5 (1975): p. 462.

<sup>79</sup> Rabasa and Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia*, p. 82.

because the Moro cause has been seen as legitimate in Muslim circles in Malaysia.<sup>80</sup> However, there is also an argument that claims that although the Moros have looked to Malaysia as a possible source of support, for the regional stability of Southeast Asia, the ASEAN norms reinforce the Malaysian government's determination to refrain from activities that could cause conflicts with the Philippines.<sup>81</sup>

#### 1.4.1 The Limitations of the Literature

By adhering fully to ASEAN's principle of non-interference, Malaysia would be expected not to engage in any direct activities that are perceived as interfering in another ASEAN member's internal affairs, as this could jeopardise the cooperation of the regional grouping. However, if this is the case, how can one explain the fact that in addition to the ordinary members, a number of key leaders of the Acehnese, Thai Malay and Moro ethno nationalist organisations have been able to find refuge in Malaysia? In addition, questions also arise concerning the ability of these movements to carry out their activities for such long periods and the possibilities of their receiving external assistance - especially from their ethnic kin state. However, despite offering assistance to its ethnic kin in the manner expected of an ethnic kin state, there have been no incidences of interstate military conflict involving Malaysia and any of these three countries. This phenomenon has not been explained by most of the analysts who have previously examined the possible outcomes resulting from intervention by an ethnic kin state. In addition, so far there is no comparative case study conducted that links all of these three ethnic conflicts with Malaysia's external security practice.

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<sup>80</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 247.

<sup>81</sup> Pauker, "Government Responses to Armed Insurgency in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Examination of Failures and Their Implications for the Future," p. 90.

In addition, most scholars classify all the ethno-nationalist movements in neighbouring Malaysia as religiously motivated. Since the Malays in Malaysia are Muslims, these scholars argue that the Malays have rendered assistance to the other Malays in the conflict areas based on religious grounds. To some extent, the analyses made have some validity, mainly due to the fact that those who are involved in separatist movements in Southern Thailand and the Moro Region are indeed in conflict with non-Muslims. However, this argument cannot be applied to the case of the Acehese movement because here the conflict is not with non-Muslims, given that Indonesia is recognised as the state with the largest Muslim population in the world. In other words, there are other elements besides common religious faith that link the Malays in Malaysia to the Acehese. In fact, this thesis argues that most of the key separatist organisations in these conflict areas are not religiously motivated but are instead motivated by their distinct ethnic identity. In other words, the thesis argues that Malaysian assistance, both official and unofficial provided by state and non-state actors, have not been motivated solely by religious considerations. Instead, such assistance is primarily the consequence of the common ethnic identity between the Malays in Malaysia and their ethnic kin in the conflict areas.

### **1.5 Methodology**

The main methodological approach of this research is based on a comparative study. The ethnic conflicts in Southern Thailand, Aceh, Indonesia, and the Moro Region are selected as case studies. There are two main reasons for choosing these particular cases. First, the conflicts in these areas involve people who are ethnically very close to the Malaysian Malays. Second, the aforementioned three ethnic conflicts are in effect the only conflicts involving the Malay ethnic group in South East Asia. Therefore, the

focus of the thesis is comprehensive, especially when it comes to explaining the influence of ethnic factors in Malaysia's security practice. In order to ensure that a comprehensive view of the voices of the various Malay ethno-nationalist organisations/movements is taken into account in the research; interviews were also held with the key leaders of the major ethno-nationalist/separatist movements. The interviews were conducted during fieldwork in Malaysia, the Philippines and Sweden. The main purpose for the fieldwork in Sweden was to hold discussions with key leaders of the ethno-nationalist organisations from Aceh and Southern Thailand who are now living in exile there. The fieldwork took the form of interviews, which were primarily semi-structured. In Malaysia, interviews were conducted with Malaysian government officials, such as the former Prime Minister, the current Foreign Minister and senior government officers dealing with both security and foreign policy issues, including officials from the National Security Council in the Prime Minister's Department. Interviews and discussions were also carried out with academics from the National University of Malaysia (*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* – UKM) and with government officials from the Philippines and Thailand.

These interviews constitute valuable primary sources on Malaysia's assistance specifically towards the Malays in the region and the ethno-nationalist movements in general. The thesis is also supplemented by the examination and analysis of secondary sources including documents from the governments, international development organisations and civil society, and international conferences. The relevant information, particularly on the Malaysian government's assistance to the Malays in these conflict areas, could not be gathered from the government officials although interviews were also conducted with them. This is primarily because the government's "official policy"

is that Malaysia adheres fully to the norm of non-intervention as prescribed by ASEAN.<sup>82</sup>

There is perhaps one main limitation of this research. The research only focused on a very limited number of actors, i.e. the Malaysian government and the main Malay opposition party, the Islamic Party of Malaysia (*Partai Islam SeMalaysia* - PAS) and also to some extent, the Malaysian-based Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Although the thesis also looked at other actors such as the armed forces, the police and the diaspora communities, the thesis does not explore in extensive detail their role in influencing Malaysia's security practice towards these conflicts. The thesis does not analyse the attitude of the armed forces and the police primarily because both of these forces operate as part of the government agencies whose attitude towards the conflict will be in conformity with the government's stance. In addition, both of these - especially the armed forces and in some measure the police - are simply the main agencies that implement the government's security policy. In other words, their actions with respect to these ethnic conflicts are actually derives from the government's instructions. With respect to the diaspora communities, the thesis does not examine the level of pressure that they have on influencing the government's security practice towards all the respective conflicts mainly because it is rather difficult to distinguish them from the rest of the Malays in Malaysia. All of these diaspora communities in Malaysia are citizens of the country and they are actually categorised as belonging to the Malay ethnic group. Chapter 3 will explain in detail the characteristics of Malays in Malaysia.

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<sup>82</sup> It should be noted that information on this issue are classified as secret and government officials are not allowed to disclose any of this information because of the Official Secret Act (OSA).

## ***1.6 Thesis Structure***

The following 6 chapters are organised as follows. Given the general observations made above, the following chapter presents in detail the analytical framework by laying down the definitions of the key concepts and terms used in the thesis. Specifically, Chapter 2 explores the relationship between national security, ethnic politics and foreign policy. The chapter briefly looks at the origins, development and meaning of national security. In addition, the chapter also reviews the concept of foreign policy as perceived by both the developed and the developing countries and examines the definition of ethnicity and its formation. Finally, the chapter analyses the theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy. Chapter 3 analyses Malaysia's conception of national security. This chapter analyses the formation and elite reconstruction of the Malay identity and examines how ethnicity informs the country's internal security practice. The chapter also illustrates how the Malaysian government has protected the interests of the Malay ethnic group in the country against foreign threat.

Chapter 4 marks the first of the three chapters that looks specifically at Malaysia's external security practice by analysing the nature of ethnic ties that exist between the Malays in Malaysia and those residing in southern Thailand, Aceh and in the Moro Region and examining whether the Malaysian government has been concerned about their societal security. The first case study, discussed in Chapter 4, analyses the conflict in Southern Thailand. The second, examined in Chapter 5, addresses the conflict in Aceh, Indonesia. Finally, Chapter 6 explores Malaysia's stance towards the conflict in the Moro Region of the Philippines. All of the case study chapters offer a brief historical overview of the Thai Malay (Chapter 4), Acehnese (Chapter 5) and the Moro ethnic groups (Chapter 6) in their respective countries and also analyses their ethnic ties with the Malays in Malaysia.

Moreover, all the respective case study chapters also discuss the ethno-nationalist movements operating there and focus particularly on the relations that these movements have with Malaysia. Above all, however, these cases examine in considerable depth the significance of the ethnic factor in shaping Malaysia's security perceptions towards these conflicts. In addition, these chapters analyse how the ethnic conflicts affect Malaysia's bilateral relations with all the respective countries. In this context, the three chapters also examine the influence of ASEAN norms on Malaysia's approach towards the conflicts in the three case studies. Chapter 7 summarises the major findings of this study and evaluates the differences and the similarities in terms of Malaysia's security practice towards the ethno-nationalist conflicts involving the Malays in the region.



## **Chapter 2: Ethnic Politics and Foreign Policy**

### ***Introduction***

The central theme of this thesis is to analyse the relationship between national security, ethnic politics and foreign policy. Insights of the literature on ethnic politics are particularly valuable for the development of the analytical framework applied in this thesis, given that in Malaysia almost all domestic policies have been influenced by the ethnic factor. This chapter therefore examines the theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy. The chapter is divided into five major sections. The first section [2.1] briefly reviews the origins, development and concept of security and also the notion of societal security.<sup>1</sup> Rather than analysing all the different schools of thought on security, this section only focuses on conceptions of security in the western or western-influenced literature (particularly by the Realist theorists) and the developing countries/Third World. In general, the developing countries' conceptions of security stand in contrast to the western countries. The second section [2.2] reviews how both the western countries and the Third World countries perceive the concept of foreign policy. The third section [2.3] explores the meaning and the definition of ethnicity and the formation of ethnic identity. Against the backdrop of these definitions and illustrations, the section defines the concept of ethnic politics. The fourth section [2.4] summarises the different perspectives of ethnic separatism and relates the issue to the concept of ethnic kinship. Finally, this section examines the basic assumptions that evolve around the theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy.

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed analysis, see, Muthiah Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

## 2.1 *National Security*

National security has been perceived by almost all sovereign countries as the utmost issue in their national agendas. However, there is no agreement on a single definition of the concept. As several scholarly investigations of the usefulness of the national security concept have indicated, the phenomenon of security is hardly precise. The term “security” is a contested concept, i.e. there is no universally accepted definition.<sup>2</sup> According to Alagappa, the contestation relates to the components relative to security such as the referent, the core values, the type and the nature of threats, and the approach to security.<sup>3</sup> In short, the lack of agreement on the nature of the phenomenon under investigation adds more complexity to an already ambiguous and complex subject; it is one of the reasons why according to Al-Mashat, “national security theory is less advanced and less coherent than other areas of the theory of International Relations”.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1.1 Concept of National Security

A group of Americans who served in the U.S. military during World War II coined the term national security.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when they first introduced the term, the concept evolved around American circumstances whereby the Soviet military threat was perceived as the primary threat to national security, especially during the height of the Cold War era. Therefore, when the term ‘national security’ was first introduced, it did not include a domestic component and only referred to the assessment of external threats

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, p. 28, Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security in the Post-Cold War Era* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 7, Robert Mandel, *The Changing Face of National Security: A Conceptual Analysis* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 16, Caroline Thomas, "Third World Security," in *International Security in the Modern World*, ed. Roger Carey and Trevor C. Salmon (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Abdul-Monem M. Al-Mashat, *National Security in the Third World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 17-19.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Philip Cohen, "Leadership and the Management of National Security: An Overview," in *Leadership Perceptions and National Security: The Southeast Asian Experience*, ed. Mohammed Ayoob and Chai-Anan Samudavanija (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), pp. 29-56.

to the state and the marshalling of various instruments of power to counter those threats.<sup>6</sup> This particular interpretation of national security has become the main perspective, especially among Realists (traditionalist). According to the latter, there are two major assumptions of what constitutes a threat to national security. First, threats to a state's security principally arise from outside its borders, and second, these threats are primarily, if not exclusively, military in nature and usually need a military response if the security of the target state is to be preserved.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the concept of security in International Relations, up to the end of the 1980s, was in essence a product of the Realist School. The concept was given its classic formulation in 1943 by Walter Lippmann. According to Lippmann;

A state is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such war.<sup>8</sup>

The "core values" include in particular the survival of a state's inhabitants, the survival of a state itself as a sovereign and territorial entity, economic welfare, the preservation of its socio-political institutions, ideology and culture, and national unity.<sup>9</sup> These values are referred to as the "core values" mainly because these are the values that states would be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to preserve.<sup>10</sup> Values are also emphasised by Wolfers when he defines security as the "protection of values previously acquired."<sup>11</sup> In addition, Wolfers classifies two different views; namely the objective and the subjective view. According to him, in the objective view, security "measures the absence of threats

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> For detailed analysis of the traditional conception of national security, see, Mohammed Ayoob, "The New-Old Disorder in the Third World," in *The United Nations and Civil Wars*, ed. Thomas G. Weiss (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner Publishers, 1995), pp. 13-30, Edward E. Azar and Chung-in Moon, *National Security in the Third World: The Management of Internal and External Threats* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1988), pp. 277-80.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little Brown, 1943), p. 51.

<sup>9</sup> Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, pp. 124-27.

<sup>10</sup> Azar and Moon, *National Security in the Third World: The Management of Internal and External Threats*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), pp. 147-65.

to acquired values” whereas in the subjective view, security is “the absence of fear that such values will be attacked”.<sup>12</sup> These perceptions have made the concept of security synonymous with the protection of a state’s vital interests and core values from external threats. As a result, the dominant strands of security thinking (in their many variations) define the concept of security in external or outward-directed terms that consequently has led to the state as the commonly accepted unit of analysis in International Relations.<sup>13</sup>

However, after the Cold War, the perceptions of what needs to be protected have been broadened. Many scholars have reached a broad consensus that with the end of the Cold War came a shift in focus of national security to a multidimensional one.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, there are numerous suggestions that the security of a nation, which was once devoted to coping with external military threats, now incorporates non-military threats such as domestic poverty, educational crisis, industrial competitiveness, drug trafficking, crime, international migration, environmental hazards, resource shortages, global poverty, and so on.<sup>15</sup> In general, most of the diverse contributions to the debate on ‘new thinking on security’ can be classified in one of three themes. The first theme attempts to broaden the conception of security from simply safeguarding the state’s core values from outside threats to including a wider range of potential ‘threats’ ranging from economic and environmental to human rights or migration.<sup>16</sup> The second theme

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>13</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, "The Security Problematic of the Third World," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991).

<sup>14</sup> Tobias Debiel, "Human Security: More Than Just a Good Idea? Comments on the Need for an Integrated Security Concept" (paper presented at the BICC 10-year Anniversary Conference Promoting Security: But How and For Whom?, Haus der Geschichte, Bonn, 1-4 April 2004).

<sup>15</sup> See Graham T. Allison et al., *Rethinking America's Security: Beyond Cold War to New World Order* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), Joseph J. Romm, *Defining National Security: The Nonmilitary Aspects* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> *Inter alia*, see, Keith Krause, "Theorizing Security, State Formation and the 'Third World' in the Post-Cold War World," *Review of International Studies*, no. 24 (1998): pp. 125-36, Jessica Tuchman Mathews, "Redefining Security," *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 2 (1989): pp. 162-77, Theodore Moran, "International Economics and National Security," *Foreign Affairs* 69, no. 5 (1990/1): pp. 74-90, Richard Ullman, "Redefining Security," *International Security* 8, no. 1 (1983): pp. 129-53, Myron Weiner, "Security, Stability and International Migration," *International Security* 17, no. 3 (1992/3): pp. 91-126.

embraces attempts to deepen the agenda beyond its state-centric focus by moving either down to the level of individual or human security, or up to the level of international or global security (with regional and societal security as possible intermediate points).<sup>17</sup> The third theme has remained within a state-centric approach, but deploys diverse terms (e.g. common, cooperative, comprehensive) as modifiers to 'security' in order to assess different multilateral forms of interstate security cooperation.<sup>18</sup> One example is the ASEAN Regional Forum that includes ASEAN's dialogue partners such as the EU, the United States, Japan, China, Australia and Russia, and aims to discuss security issues within the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>19</sup>

Despite efforts to expand the concept of security, there is no existing theory that can capture and explain every aspect of the practice of security in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia. Therefore, this thesis synthesises multiple theories from the fields of International Relations and Politics to address the central research question. Alagappa, for instance, has argued that research on Asian security practice must be more broad-based, thereby integrating history, culture, economics, domestic politics, and international politics, than the concept of security used in the developed world (i.e. western countries).<sup>20</sup> In addition, according to Ayoob, 'the three major characteristics of the concept of state security as developed in the western literature namely its external orientation, its strong link with systemic security, and its binding ties with the security of the two major alliance blocs during the Cold War, have meant that the explanatory

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<sup>17</sup> Contributions to this include: Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security in the Post-Cold War Era*, United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Report 1994," (New York: 1994), Wæver, "Societal Security: The Concept," pp. 17-40.

<sup>18</sup> For overview, see, David Dewitt, "Common, Comprehensive and Cooperative Security," *The Pacific Review* 7, no. 1 (1994): pp. 1-15.

<sup>19</sup> For detailed discussion of the ARF, see, Emmers, *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF*.

<sup>20</sup> Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*.

power of the concept has been vastly reduced when applied to Third World context'.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, he proposed that 'security-insecurity is defined in relation to vulnerabilities (both internal and external) that threaten or have the potential to bring down or weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and governing regimes'.<sup>22</sup> While an external threat is normally best understood as a threat that originates from outside the country's borders and is normally military in nature and consequently requires a military response, internal threats, on the other hand, are most of the time derived from within a state's borders. The kind of response towards the internal threat normally depends on what kind of values are at risk. For example, if a country's social harmony is at risk due to grievances over distributive justice, the government may tackle the issue by formulating a new policy that aims to address the issue.

Since the central topic of this thesis is Malaysia's security practice, it will adopt a concept of national security that is more appropriate to the Third World or a developing country's situation.<sup>23</sup> The term 'Third World',<sup>24</sup> originally coined by Frenchmen Alfred Sauvy in 1952, is supposed to refer to a bloc of countries. Despite the diversity of its members, the bloc is recognised as sharing enough common characteristics to merit being considered as a group.<sup>25</sup> The common characteristics and similarities that the Third World countries share are: the experience of conquest and domination, a particular sort of economic development, a fractured social order, and

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<sup>21</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System, Emerging Global Issues* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> In this chapter, the terms 'Third World', 'developing country', 'small state', and 'new states' are used interchangeably mainly due to the fact the Malaysia satisfies all the characteristics of the term. However, it should also be noted that there is literature that argues that Malaysia is a middle power. See, for example, Jonathan H. Ping, *Middle Power Statecraft: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Asia Pacific* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of the term 'Third World' see, Joseph Love, "Third World: A Response to Professor Worsley," *Third World Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1980), L Wolf-Phillips, "Why Third World?," *Third World Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1979), P Worsley, "How Many Worlds?," *Third World Quarterly* 1 (1979).

<sup>25</sup> Jacqueline Anne Braveboy-Wagner, *The Foreign Policies of the Global South: Rethinking Conceptual Frameworks* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner, 2003), p. 4.

extreme weakness vis-à-vis the developed world on most indices of economic, military or technological capabilities.<sup>26</sup> According to Collins, the term “Third World” is not purely an economic one relating to issues of underdevelopment, resource scarcity and poverty, but also refers to the primacy of internal threats to security and the dependence on external actions for security guarantees.<sup>27</sup> The term has also come to be used interchangeably with terms such as ‘South’, ‘developing countries’ and ‘underdeveloped countries’.<sup>28</sup> Although Malaysia is an emerging market, it still shares important characteristics of a Third World country. In addition, the concept of national security in developing countries fits better for Malaysia than the traditional concepts. Therefore, the following section analyses in more detail how the Third World countries conceive national security.

### 2.1.2 National Security in the Developing Countries

According to Azar and Moon, since the traditional concept of national security of a nation state is largely founded on the historical evolution of the modern western state system,<sup>29</sup> the concept is based on the aggregation of homogenous individual securities.<sup>30</sup> This has led to the understanding that national security is security for a nation-state, which is composed of citizens who share a common destiny through extended nation building and political socialisation.<sup>31</sup> However, this perception is inapplicable to many developing countries. This is mainly because the “national security” policy makers in the developing countries have to look inward towards domestic threats and the mixture of domestic vulnerability and outward meddling primarily because they are faced with a

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<sup>26</sup> Ayooob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>27</sup> Alan Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner, 2003), p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas, "Third World Security," p. 91.

<sup>29</sup> Azar and Moon, *National Security in the Third World: The Management of Internal and External Threats*, pp. 277-80.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 277-80.

combination of weak political institutions, heterogeneous societies, wide disparities in income and predatory neighbours (or at least the perception of predatory neighbours).<sup>32</sup>

Since many of the developing countries have a heterogeneous society, the issue of integration has been one of the main concerns in these countries. However, according to Azar and Moon, the issue of integration has not been given adequate attention in the traditional conception of national security.<sup>33</sup> The issue of integration is considered vital to developing countries as this is a means to ensure harmony within their multiethnic societies, given that ethnic clashes have the potential to threaten the collapse of the state.<sup>34</sup> The issue of integration is normally traced to conflict over two issues: national identity and political legitimacy.<sup>35</sup> Even though national identity has several components, only two components are important here, namely: the identity of the nation (the nation has become the accepted basis for political community) and the political ideology of the state. According to Alagappa,

The identity of the nation defines the basis for the collective self as well as the national purpose, heritage, symbols, and character, whereas the political-legal organizing ideology of the state (democratic, socialist, secular, theocratic, and so on) defines the structure of political domination.<sup>36</sup>

In other words, national identity serves as a symbol that distinguishes the particular nation-state from the rest of the international community that would significantly affect its international orientation and its definition of national interest. National identity is a powerful character and basis for classification that commands deep passion, extending to the sacrifice of lives. However, national identity is a conscious construction rather

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<sup>32</sup> Cohen, "Leadership and the Management of National Security: An Overview," pp. 29-56.

<sup>33</sup> Edward E. Azar and Chung-in Moon, "Legitimacy, Integration and Policy Capacity: The 'Software' Side of the Third World National Security," in *National Security in the Third World: The Management of Internal and External Threats*, ed. Edward E. Azar and Chung-in Moon (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1988), pp. 86-90.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation," p. 514.

<sup>35</sup> Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, p. 611.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.



than a given, and the process of the construction of a national identity has in some cases led to intense conflict.<sup>37</sup>

The fragmentation and disintegration of a nation-state into several ethnic groups adds new dimensions to the complex Third World national security question, mainly because deep-rooted ethnic division does not provide any unified national values and interests.<sup>38</sup> Each ethnic group develops its own collective identity based on their ethnic values and interests instead of national ones. If the ruling elites do not take into account the ethnic minorities' values and interests in the construction of a national identity, the very formation of the state's national identity may also lead to instability. For example, if there were a dominant group in a country that constituted the majority of the total population, the ethnic identity formation of this group would eventually shape the national identity formation process of the nation.<sup>39</sup> This process of nation building, however, will be resisted especially if the minority ethnic group view this exercise as a threat to their own identity. Subsequently, the dominant ethnic group in power will be perceived as a threat to the minority ethnic groups.<sup>40</sup> This is because the national identity, which is invariably defined in terms of the dominant group's values and culture, will tend to leave out the values of the other ethnic groups, especially those of the minority.<sup>41</sup> Among the cases where minority ethnic groups have organised themselves to challenge the legitimacy of their government's assimilation policies by forming their own ethno-nationalist/separatist organisations are those such as the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Thai Malays in Southern Thailand and the Kurds in Turkey.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Azar and Moon, "Legitimacy, Integration and Policy Capacity: The 'Software' Side of the Third World National Security."

<sup>39</sup> For this definition see, Ma Shu-yun, "Reciprocal Relation between Political Development and Ethnic Nationalism," *Social Science Journal* 36, no. 2 (1999): pp. 369-79.

<sup>40</sup> Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications," pp. 267-88.

The existence of ethnic separatist movements in these countries indicates that the governments' efforts to assimilate, accommodate and contain them do not work and consequently have led to violent secessionist or partition movements.<sup>42</sup> Contending ethnic values often erupt into explicit political actions, especially in the form of secessionist or separatist movements demanding a separate territorial identity in terms of independence or autonomy from a larger territorial unit.<sup>43</sup> Such political moves then pose immediate threats to the core values shared by the majority of the national population. They endanger the territorial and political integrity of the state. Thus, in addition to the reduction in order and stability, threats from ethnic division and political disintegration constitute the core concern in maintaining the 'internal security' of many developing countries. Caroline Thomas is one of the first authors to explore the need to move toward state making and nation building and away from focusing on external threats to the state – military threats in particular – in order to appreciate Third World security problems. She writes:

Security in the context of the Third World [...] does not simply refer to the military dimension, as is often assumed in the Western discussion of the concept, but to the whole range of dimension of a state's existence which are already taken care of in the more developed states[...] for example, the search for internal security of state through nation building, the search for secure system of food, health, money and trade.<sup>44</sup>

Acknowledging the diversity of the dimensions in Third World security, this thesis also looks at the dimension of nation building. According to Collins, nation building entails the creation of common cultural traits among the populace, which in turn produces a sense of community and solidarity.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, "Patterns of Ethnic Separatism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (1981): pp. 165-95.

<sup>43</sup> Azar and Moon, "Legitimacy, Integration and Policy Capacity: The 'Software' Side of the Third World National Security."

<sup>44</sup> Caroline Thomas, *In Search of Security: The Third World in International Relations* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1987), p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, p. 12.

In view of the different ethnic groups within these Third World states, successful nation building usually involves a degree of acculturation where an overriding national identity is adopted to supplement the ethnic groups' traditional identities.<sup>46</sup> In addition to Collins, the importance of the construction of national identity through nation-building is also highlighted by Bloom when he defines the term as follows:

By nation building we mean both the formation and establishment of the new state itself as a political entity, and the processes of creating viable degrees of unity, adaptation, achievement, and a sense of national identity among the people.<sup>47</sup>

However, one should be reminded that nation building, or the process of national identity construction, is a long process because according to Bloom, "there are always individuals and ethnic groups who, for one reason or another based in previous identification, do not identify with the nation-state".<sup>48</sup> In effect, in many Third World states, the lack of domestic political consensus means that core values of the populace can be hard to identify, and even the territorial boundaries of the state may come under challenge from groups within the state as well as from outside. Therefore, one cannot speak of national security in most of the Third World because there are instances whereby nations and states do not coincide in these countries.<sup>49</sup> In sum, in many Third World countries, particularly those that have multiethnic groups within their society, the issue of nation building can be considered as the most important aspect of national security, given the fact that disgruntled ethnic groups in the country would want to see the nation-state disintegrate.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 55.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>49</sup> Caroline Thomas and Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, *The State and Instability in the South* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).

The question of nation building in the Third World thus relates directly to what the Copenhagen School calls societal security.<sup>50</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver first introduced the concept of societal security in 1993.<sup>51</sup> The concept places emphasis on society rather than on the state. In other words, the Copenhagen School has identified an alternative referent for security. Instead of emphasising only the security of the state, which primarily concerns territorial integrity and sovereignty, societal security looks at how a society is threatened. For the Copenhagen school, society is a social unit that is a large, self-sustaining identity group. Since identity is the most important aspect to the concept of society, the Copenhagen School treats societal security as synonymous with identity security.<sup>52</sup> In addition, societal security concerns the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity and custom.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, concerning ethnic security problems, the referent object in security is identity. Since identity security lies at the heart of the Copenhagen School's notion of societal security, it is particularly useful in understanding the dynamics behind ethnic security problems. Barry Buzan writes:

Societal Security can be threatened in ways ranging from the suppression of its expression to interference with its ability to reproduce [...] The reproduction of a society can be threatened by sustained application of repressive measures against the expression of its identity. If the institution that reproduces language and culture are forbidden to operate, the identity cannot be transmitted effectively from one generation to the next.<sup>54</sup>

The concept of societal security, which is formulated by the Copenhagen School, works very well with the concept of comprehensive security that is now being practised in many Third World countries, especially among the countries in Southeast Asia.

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<sup>50</sup> For detailed analysis on societal security, see, Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Chap. 6, Wæver, "Societal Security: The Concept."

<sup>51</sup> Ole Wæver, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1993).

<sup>52</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, p. 120.

<sup>53</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security in the Post-Cold War Era*, p. 19.

<sup>54</sup> Barry Buzan, "Societal Security, State Security and Internationalization," in *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*, ed. Ole Wæver, et al. (London: Pinter Publishers, 1993), p. 43.

The members of ASEAN adopted the concept in the mid-1980s; a decade after the Japanese introduced it. As in Japan, the idea of comprehensive security among the ASEAN member states is broader than the more traditional concept of security. Under the concept, threats towards states are not limited to external ones, such as the traditional military threat, but also include internal violence and disorder, such as threats that arise out of ethnic conflicts.<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that the concept of comprehensive security can be viewed as part of a broader approach based on the concepts of national resilience and regional resilience. In the concept of national resilience, countries are required to strengthen themselves not only to their security instruments, but also in other aspects such as in their economics, politics, psychology and social.<sup>56</sup> Regional resilience, on the other hand, referred to the strength of the region as a whole through national resilience, avoidance of bilateral conflicts, and regional cooperation.<sup>57</sup> With regards to the concept of comprehensive security, Mohamad Jawhar Hassan has proposed that it should encompass the security of individual persons and their families and communities, as well as the security of the state.<sup>58</sup> Rolfe, who also looks at the linkage between national and regional concepts of comprehensive security, proposes that comprehensive security should include political and social stability, economic development, migration and the health of the population.<sup>59</sup> The Southeast Asian concept of comprehensive security thus acknowledges the potential of both internal and external sources, military and non-

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<sup>55</sup> Zarina Othman, "Human Security Concepts, Approaches and Debates in Southeast Asia" (paper presented at the Fifth Pan-European International Relations Conference on "Constructing World Order", The Hague, Netherlands, September 9-11 2004).

<sup>56</sup> Daljit Singh, "ASEAN Counter-Terror Strategies and Cooperation: How Effective?," in *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Kumar Ramakrishna and See Seng Tan (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2003), p. 202.

<sup>57</sup> For an analysis of the concepts of national and regional resilience, see, Dewi Fortuna Anwar, "National Versus Regional Resilience," in *Southeast Asian Perspectives on Security*, ed. Derek Da Cunha (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), pp. 81-97.

<sup>58</sup> Mohamad Jawhar Hassan, "The Concept of Comprehensive Security," in *Conceptualizing Asia-Pacific*, ed. Mohamad Jawhar Hassan and Thangam Ramnath (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1996).

<sup>59</sup> Jim Rolfe, "Pursuing Comprehensive Security: Linkages between National and Regional Concepts, Some Application," in *Conceptualizing Asia-Pacific*, ed. Jawhar Hassan and Thangam Ramnath (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1996).

military, as threats to their survival.<sup>60</sup> All Southeast Asian states have identified domestic matters as important to meet their national security goals, and those goals generally include political stability, economic wellbeing and social harmony.<sup>61</sup>

While the concept of national security in developing countries consists of many different dimensions, the scope of this thesis will be limited to the issue of foreign security policy. The term 'security' in this thesis will be discussed in a broader sense whereby threats to 'security' are not seen merely as threats to the physical existence of a state but also as threats to ethnic identity.

## 2.2 *Foreign Policy*

Foreign policy has been given various definitions by scholars in International Relations.

Holsti, for example, conceives foreign policy as follows:

Ideas or actions designed by policy makers to solve a problem or promote some change in the policies, attitudes or actions of other states or states, in non-state actors (e.g. terrorist groups), in the international economy or in the physical environment of the world.<sup>62</sup>

Cohen and Harris have warned that no two people define foreign policy in the same way mainly because of the varying approaches and methodologies used.<sup>63</sup> For instance, some scholars see foreign policy as the interplay of domestic and external forces and others see it simply as an extension of domestic policy.<sup>64</sup> As a result of having various definitions, foreign policy may also be approached in a number of different ways. Central to the western or western-influenced literature is the assumption that states are

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<sup>60</sup> Othman, "Human Security Concepts, Approaches and Debates in Southeast Asia".

<sup>61</sup> Muthiah Alagappa, "Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN Countries," in *Asian Security Issues: Regional and Global, Research Papers and Policy Studies*; 26, ed. Robert A. Scalapino (Berkeley: University of California Institute of East Asian Studies, 1988), pp. 50-78.

<sup>62</sup> Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, p. 83.

<sup>63</sup> Bernard Cohen and Scott A Harris, "Foreign Policy," in *Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson Woolf Polsby (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1975), p. 318.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Francis Pym, "British Foreign Policy: Constraints and Opportunities," *International Affairs* 59, no. 1 (1982), Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51 (1998): p. 15.

the primary actors in world politics (if not the only actors), and that foreign policy is pursued by governments on behalf of the state and that a sharp distinction exists between domestic policy making and foreign policy making.<sup>65</sup>

### 2.2.1 Concept of Foreign Policy

In terms of the objectives of foreign policy, since the international system is viewed by the western-influenced literature as being in a state of anarchy characterised by distrust and competition, the most important objective according to this perspective is enhancing the state's national security.<sup>66</sup> In fact, during the Cold War era there was a strong tendency in many countries to identify foreign policy very closely with 'national security policy', and to see the military security of the state as the principal if not the only objective of foreign policy. However, scholars have also generally agreed that foreign policy has objectives other than security. For example, according to Holsti, these objectives include maintaining autonomy, welfare, status and prestige, although the premium placed on these concerns varies from state to state.<sup>67</sup> In order to achieve all of these objectives, Hill has listed seven main expectations that any country's foreign policy is supposed to accomplish. These are: protecting the country's citizens abroad, projecting the country's identity abroad, homeostasis or the maintenance of territorial integrity and social space against external threats, advancing prosperity by promoting

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<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Maurice A. East and Justin Robertson, *Diplomacy and Developing Nations: Post-Cold War Foreign Policy-Making Structures and Processes* (London: Routledge, 2005), p.6, Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 7-9, Mark Webber and Michael Smith, *Foreign Policy in a Transformed World* (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2002), p. 11.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), John J. Stremlau, *The Foreign Policy Priorities of Third World States* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982), p. 1, Webber and Smith, *Foreign Policy in a Transformed World*, p. 341.

<sup>67</sup> Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, p. 84.

the country's economic well being, making decisions on interventions abroad, negotiating a stable international order and protecting the global commons.<sup>68</sup>

Acknowledging that foreign policy is supposed to achieve a number of different objectives, International Relations scholars have generally reached a consensus that there should also be other factors that have to be taken into consideration when formulating a country's foreign policy, besides the systemic/structural factors. In other words, it is generally agreed that various geographical, historical, social and political determinants may contribute to shaping a country's foreign policy and the conduct of the country's international relations. One influential approach in this vein is Keohane and Nye's notion of 'complex interdependence'.<sup>69</sup> According to this approach, world politics are increasingly characterised by an agenda of 'multiple issues' which consequently move foreign policy towards economic, social, environmental and other concerns rather than simply its traditional concern (i.e. military and security matters).<sup>70</sup> The emergence of these new issues has led to a higher level of inter-dependency among governments. Consequently, links between governments have multiplied and areas of cooperation have emerged resulting in a rise to new forms of international organisation and regional cooperation.

Another key characteristic of this context is that international issues affect much wider parts of domestic populations, and thus a range of 'private' or non-governmental organisations can become interested in foreign policy making. As a result, the pressure groups such as the non-governmental organisations, organised interest and other domestic forces can gain a role in the shaping of foreign policy, particularly on

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<sup>68</sup> Christopher Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp. 44-46.

<sup>69</sup> Robert O Keohane and Joseph S Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (London: Longman, 2001).

<sup>70</sup> Webber and Smith, *Foreign Policy in a Transformed World*, p. 22.



economic and social issues.<sup>71</sup> The attempt to understand the domestic influence on foreign policy making was first introduced by Robert Putnam's theory of the two level game.<sup>72</sup> The two level game analyses foreign policy making as the outcome of interplay between the domestic and international context of decision making.<sup>73</sup> Overall, foreign policy is now seen in many ways as the 'international dimension' of domestic policies. Ostrom and Job, for instance, argue that domestic political factors are more important in explaining foreign policy choices than international factors.<sup>74</sup> Although James and Russett subsequently claimed that international factors have a larger impact than Ostrom and Job initially estimated, they also conclude that domestic factors have the largest impact on foreign policy decision-making.<sup>75</sup> Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson also argue that political leaders shape their foreign policy choices with a view towards keeping themselves in office.<sup>76</sup> As put by Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson:

The leader, whether President, Prime Minister, or President for Life, who adopts policies that reduce the security of the state does so at the risk of affording his or her political opponents the opportunity of weakening the leader's grasp on power. Put differently, a leader's search for the security of the state intertwines with the search for policies that will maintain the leader in power against domestic opposition. The desire to remain in power hence provides the linchpin between the threats and uncertainties of the international system and the inevitable imperatives of fending off domestic opposition.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organisation* 42, no. 3 (1988).

<sup>73</sup> Jörn Dosch, *The Changing Dynamics of Southeast Asian Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), p. 21.

<sup>74</sup> Charles W. Ostrom Jr and Brian I. Job, "The President and the Political Use of Force," *American Political Science Review* 80 (1986): pp. 541-66.

<sup>75</sup> Patrick James and Bruce Russett, "The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President's Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35 (1991): pp. 307-32.

<sup>76</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Randolph M. Siverson, "War and the Survival of Political Leaders," *American Political Science Review*, no. 89 (1995).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.: pp. 853.

In short, according to Bueno Mesquita and Siverson, if a leader of a country wants to formulate a particular foreign policy, the leaders would have to consider domestic factors.

Persaud argues that foreign policy is not only about what states do outside their territorial borders because to begin with, the division between the external and internal aspects of policy is always blurred.<sup>78</sup> According to Persaud, the category “intermestic” was specifically developed to deal with this amorphous area, which is neither inside nor outside the nation-state boundary.<sup>79</sup> More directly, there is increasing recognition that foreign policy is as much about development within the nation-state as it is about the outside world. As Van Klaveren puts it, “In some sense, a state’s foreign policy is the international expression of a society, but it also serves to integrate the world at large into that society”.<sup>80</sup> While recognising that domestic politics may be one of the sources for shaping a country’s foreign policy, many of the scholars (especially among the neo-realists) do not agree that this factor has a role among the small states.<sup>81</sup> This is mainly due to their perception that small states are more preoccupied with survival than the great powers, and in turn, the international system offers the most plausible point of entry for explaining their foreign-policy choices.<sup>82</sup> The next section illustrates the foreign policy of small states/developing countries.

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<sup>78</sup> Randolph B Persaud, "Reconceptualizing the Global South's Perspective: The End of the Bandung Spirit," in *The Foreign Policies of the Global South: Rethinking Conceptual Frameworks*, ed. Jacqueline Anne Braveboy-Wagner (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner, 2003), pp. 48-63.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>80</sup> Alberto Van Klaveren, "Understanding Latin America Foreign Policies," in *Latin American Nations in World Politics*, ed. Herardo Muñoz and Joseph S. Tulchin (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 35-60.

<sup>81</sup> For detailed discussion on the definition of small states, see, Jeanne A. K. Hey, *Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), Robert Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," *International organisation* 23, no. 2 (1969): pp. 210-19, Roderick Pace, "Small States and the Internal Balance of the European Union," in *Enlarging the European Union: The Way Forward*, ed. John Redmond and Jackie Gower (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 107-19, Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 29.

<sup>82</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 184-5, 95.

### 2.2.2 Foreign Policy in the Developing Countries

The received wisdom in International Relations suggests that the foreign policies of small states can be best explained by simply examining structural/systemic rather than domestic level factors. Miriam Elman, however, argues that to explain small state foreign policy, scholars should look to domestic institutional choices rather than international determinants.<sup>83</sup> Domestic institutions, she claims, are more important than international or individual forces because they define the paths of available options open to a government in a foreign policy situation. This argument had already been brought forward earlier by Stremlau when he wrote that:

Among many variables that may be salient in shaping a developing country's foreign policy the following checklist is suggested. At domestic level the analyst needs to consider: political/ethnic/religious cleavages; economic disparities; resources endowment; the stage of industrial development; the effectiveness of governmental institutions – civilian and military; the country's size and location; and the personal characteristics of key members in the ruling elite. Regionally there are important relations among states and ethnic groups that need to be carefully identified in terms of the: historical record of conflict and cooperation; the prevalence and intensity of civil strife; interstate disparities of political/military/economic power; the extent of major power involvement in regional affairs.<sup>84</sup>

In other words, Stremlau argues the variables mentioned above will determine the core of the foreign policy of the Third World countries rather than just the international environment.<sup>85</sup>

Contrary to the developed countries where their foreign policy aimed at manipulating the external environment in ways suitable to the "national interest"<sup>86</sup>, foreign policy in the developing countries predominantly seeks to affect the internal environment in ways favourable to the building of the state and to the maintenance of its

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<sup>83</sup> Miriam Fendius Elman, "The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in Its Own Backyard," *British Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 2 (1995).

<sup>84</sup> Stremlau, *The Foreign Policy Priorities of Third World States*, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, pp. 23-27.

government's power. Furthermore, according to Waltz, the small state is likely to take international constraints for granted, since nothing it does can significantly affect the international system.<sup>87</sup> Since great powers tend to focus their attention towards states that are most likely to pose security threats, they will be less interested in small states. Consequently, the developing countries will face fewer external constraints and their behaviour will be more likely to reflect domestic political influences.<sup>88</sup> Since the main preoccupation of the Third World states is nation building, their foreign policy tend to focus towards obtaining internal order, bridging economic and social disparities, repairing ethnic, religious and regional fissures, building unconditional legitimacy of state boundaries, institutions and governing elites, managing internal and inter-state conflicts, or correcting distorted and dependent patterns of economic and social development.<sup>89</sup>

In countries where the ruling elites are still preoccupied with their own nation building, any external interference in their domestic affairs is always perceived as endangering the stability of the country.<sup>90</sup> One of the main ways to ensure that there will be less external interference is by creating a regional grouping. A peaceful regional environment is expected to allow member states to devote their resources to domestic development aimed at enhancing their national stability, which in turn would contribute to the stability and security in the region. However, at the same time, a common ethnic identity among groups located in different countries may contribute to the ethnic group's interest in the formulation of the foreign policy making of their country, especially when there is an ethnic conflict involving its ethnic kin. Since ethnic identity has been identified as being among the most powerful motives, especially among the developing

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<sup>87</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, pp. 1-13.

<sup>90</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *Regional Security in the Third World: Case Studies from Southeast Asia and the Middle East* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 3.

countries' foreign relations, the next section analyses how ethnic identity influences the ethnic politics and foreign policy of a state.

### 2.3 *Ethnic Identity*

According to Esman, ethnic identity provides a set of meanings that individuals attribute to their membership in an ethnic community, including those attributes that bind them to that collectivity and which distinguish it from others in their relevant environment.<sup>91</sup> Ethnic identity normally conveys strong elements of continuity by evoking powerful emotional responses, although its properties can shift to accommodate changing threats and opportunities.<sup>92</sup> As stated by Davies, ethnic identities are able to mobilise large numbers of people, evoking high degrees of allegiance and playing important roles at the sub-national, national, transnational and global levels.<sup>93</sup> These common features among the ethnic groups create a sense of ethnic identity among the group. By nature, ethnic identity creates feelings of loyalty and common interest among its members, and fears of extinction.<sup>94</sup>

#### 2.3.1 Ethnicity

Just like 'security', ethnicity is also a much-debated concept.<sup>95</sup> For Max Weber, ethnicity implies a sense of a shared common descent, political solidarity vis-à-vis other groups, and common customs, language, religion, values, morality and etiquette.<sup>96</sup> According to Eriksen, the term ethnicity refers to the relationship between groups whose members consider themselves distinctive, and these groups may be ranked hierarchically

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<sup>91</sup> Milton J. Esman, *Ethnic Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 27.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Richard Davies, "Ethnicity: Inside out or Outside In?," in *Identities in International Relations*, ed. Jill Krause and Neil Renwick (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 87.

<sup>94</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Chapter 4.

<sup>95</sup> Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991).

<sup>96</sup> Weber, Mills, and Gerth, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*.

within a society.<sup>97</sup> In other words, ethnicity becomes the character or condition of belonging to an ethnic group, or it is the ethnic group itself.

However, ethnic group is a vague and general term. Numerous definitions appear in anthropological and sociological works.<sup>98</sup> Schermerhorn, for example, defines an ethnic group as follows:

An ethnic group is defined [...] as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their people hood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these.<sup>99</sup>

Despite the differences in terminology, most of the features of an ethnic group contained in this definition apply across the board. However, concerning religion and language, it must be acknowledged that not all people of the same ethnic group necessarily share a religion or speak the same language. According to Davies, ethnicity can be utilised as a justification, or as grounds for opposing various political projects; forced assimilation, genocide, ethnic cleansing, self-determination, secession, irredentism, nation building, and demands for autonomy and equality.<sup>100</sup> It is this political dimension of ethnic identity that becomes one of the most important identity communities for the

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<sup>97</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropology, Culture, and Society* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> For detailed discussions on the definition of ethnic group, see, for example; George DeVos, "Ethnic Pluralism Conflict and Accommodation," in *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Communities and Change*, ed. George DeVos and Lola Romanucci-Ross (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 5-41, Charles F Keyes, "The Dialectics of Ethnic Change," in *Ethnic Change*, ed. Charles F Keyes (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), pp. 202-13, James McKay and Frank Lewins, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Group: A Conceptual Analysis and Reformulation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1, no. 4 (1978): pp. 412-27, Pierre L Van Den Berghe, "Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective," *Ethnic and racial Studies* 1 (1978): pp. 401-11, Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968).

<sup>99</sup> Richard A. Schermerhorn, "Ethnicity and Minority Group," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: University Press, 1996), p. 17.

<sup>100</sup> Davies, "Ethnicity: Inside out or Outside In?."

Copenhagen School.<sup>101</sup> Since ethnic groups are bound up with their identity, they value the community's preservation as an end in itself rather than just as a means to achieve other ends. For the Copenhagen school, this quality turns identity communities into security referents.<sup>102</sup>

Theories of ethnicity can be divided into two camps that represent different perspectives on the nature of ethnicity. The first is the primordialist and the second is variously termed situationalist, strategist, constructivist or instrumentalist.<sup>103</sup> The primordialist camp views ethnicity as an innate, primordial given, suggesting that ethnicity is largely immutable.<sup>104</sup> The anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, provides a detailed definition of the primordial approach:

By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the 'givens' or ... the assumed 'givens' of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, ... and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, ... overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbour, one's fellow believer, ipso facto, as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest..., but... by virtue of some unaccountable absolute attributed to the very tie itself.<sup>105</sup>

In other words, according to primordialists, each ethnic group has its own particular constitutive features (e.g. cultures, traditions, histories, physical traits, language repertoires and religion) that are stable and consistently distributed within the group.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> T. Theiler, "Societal Security and Social Psychology," *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): pp. 249-68.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Henry F Hale, "Explaining Ethnicity," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 4 (2004): pp. 458-85.

<sup>104</sup> For detailed discussion on this perspective, see for example; Federick Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organizations of Cultural Difference* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969), Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?," *World Politics* 24, no. 3 (1972).

<sup>105</sup> Clifford Geertz and Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations, *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa: Essays by Members of the Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p. 109.

<sup>106</sup> Hale, "Explaining Ethnicity."

The situationalists, on the other hand, focus on the dynamic nature of ethnicity.<sup>107</sup> According to this camp, ethnicity results from changes in social, economic and political arenas. Situationalists see that the criteria to be part of any particular ethnic group tend to change over time as people come and go and develop new traditions and ways of life, but a group itself nevertheless endures as a way of structuring social life.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, many situationalists see ethnic identity as constant.<sup>109</sup> The situational approach is frequently associated with the anthropologist Federick Barth. Barth is aware that boundaries between ethnic groups persist and that discrete ethnic identities are maintained in spite of groups overlapping and cohabiting with one another, and people moving between groups.<sup>110</sup> As Barth has observed:

Boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them... categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on the absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories...ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundation on which embracing social systems are built. Interaction in such social systems does not lead to its liquidation through change and acculturation; cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence.<sup>111</sup>

From the statement above, it becomes obvious that Barth rejects the idea that ethnic groups have a permanent and fixed cultural and biological character, and instead argues that ethnicity is a dynamic form of social organisation. Ethnicity does not disappear despite the modernisation process that societies are experiencing, be it in terms of

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<sup>107</sup> For detailed discussion on this approach, see, for example; Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth. Annual Conference (1971: London) and Abner Cohen, *Urban Ethnicity* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974), Elaine Burgess, "The Resurgence of Ethnicity: Myth or Reality?," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1, no. 3 (1978), Richard A. Schermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research* (New York: Random House, 1970).

<sup>108</sup> Hale, "Explaining Ethnicity," pp. 458-85.

<sup>109</sup> For instance see, Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

<sup>110</sup> John Rex, *Race and Ethnicity, Concepts in the Social Sciences* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

<sup>111</sup> Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organizations of Cultural Difference*, pp. 9-10.



improvement in socio-economic infrastructures, education, or the resultant increase in social and economic interactions.

However, many scholars tend to synthesise primordialist and situationalist approaches, usually by carving out more or less separate domains for each to operate in, explaining human behaviour.<sup>112</sup> Both the primordialist and situationalist approaches can be seen to offer valuable insights as to the nature of ethnicity and its role in politics, but the adoption of either approach on its own appears to be misleading. This is mainly because ethnicity appears to exhibit both primordialist and situationalist attributes since it functions both as an interest resource and as an emotional loyalty.<sup>113</sup> This thesis adopts both the primordialist and situationalist perspectives in dealing with the issue of ethnicity, especially when applying the concept of ethnicity to the Malay ethnic group both in Malaysia and in neighbouring countries. This perspective is adopted mainly because the Malay ethnic group has both primordial and situational characteristics. The characteristic of the Malay ethnic group in Malaysia will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

### 2.3.2 Ethnic Politics

Ethnicity, according to Brown, acts as a political resource, promoting group cohesion and thereby facilitating the political articulation of both group and individual interests.<sup>114</sup> He argues that cultural affinities are certainly only one of several bases for political affiliation from which people may choose, but people rarely seem to perceive themselves as choosing their ethnic group; and compared for example to class or ethnicity, ethnicity often appears to offer a more all-embracing and emotionally

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<sup>112</sup> Hale, "Explaining Ethnicity," p. 461, Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

<sup>113</sup> Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*, p. xviii.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

satisfying way of defining an individual's identity.<sup>115</sup> Ethnicity, according to Jha, is not a static predetermined category but a manifestation of the assertion of an ethnic group in the political arena to defend or sustain economic, political and cultural interest and wrest more concessions.<sup>116</sup> In the process, it becomes a device as well as a focus for mobilising the members of the group into social and political actions. Esman defines ethnic political movements as follows:

An ethnic political movement represents the conversion of an ethnic community into a political competitor that seeks to combat ethnic antagonists or to impress ethnically defined interests on the agenda of the state. It purports to reflect the collective consciousness and aspirations of the entire community, though in fact the latter may be split into several tendencies or concrete organizations, each competing for the allegiance of the community and for the right to be its exclusive representative.<sup>117</sup>

Through the movements, the members of an ethnic group are able to better promote their interests, especially if they have to compete with other ethnic groups to obtain whatever resources they wish to secure. This is particularly true if they live in a country with a number of different ethnic groups.

In order to ensure that all the different ethnic groups within the states will somehow be treated equally, these ethnic groups will seek to promote ethnic bargaining among themselves. Ethnic bargains seek to specify the relationship between ethnic groups and channel politics in peaceful directions.<sup>118</sup> As a mechanism for managing expectations and demands, it sets the parameters of resource allocation by laying out the rights and privileges of the various ethnic groups. According to Tan,

The bargain establishes an understanding of the structure of society and the allocation of resources as a particularized social contract and the tacit

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Jha, *Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia and Quest for Identity*, p. 1.

<sup>117</sup> Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, p. 27.

<sup>118</sup> Donald S. Rothchild, *Racial Bargaining in Independent Kenya: A Study of Minorities and Decolonization* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 3-27.

understanding that each ethnic group does not transgress into the sphere of the other.<sup>119</sup>

For example, in the case of Malaysia, the essence of the bargain is that the Malays, as the indigenous people, have the rights and prerogative to political dominance. In turn, the ethnic Chinese, because of their foreign origin, are granted citizenship rights and retain their economic livelihood without interference from the state.

However, if an ethnic group becomes the dominant ethnic group in the country, the possibility arises that the ethnic group may be able to influence the state to adopt its ideology, which would consequently lead to the formation of an ethnocratic state. According to Brown, the term 'ethnocratic state' signifies the situation where the state acts as the agency of the dominant ethnic community in terms of its ideologies, its policies and its resource distribution.<sup>120</sup> Brown lists three main criteria that make a state ethnocratic. First, the recruitment to the state's elite positions either in the civil service or in the armed forces and government draws disproportionately and overwhelmingly from the majority ethnic group. Once recruited, they use their positions to promote their ethnic interests rather than serving the interests of the public. Second, the national identity and ideology of the state derives primarily from the dominant ethnic group's culture. Lastly, the state's institutions, such as its constitution, laws and political structures aim at maintaining and reinforcing the domination of the ethnic majority.<sup>121</sup> However, these policies tend to result in ethnic conflict, especially in Third World countries, because many of the state elites in these countries deny that their societies comprise a multiethnic character and attempt to construct mono-ethnic states (in terms of control of power structures and allocation of resources) that are dominated by a single

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<sup>119</sup> Eugene K.B. Tan, "From Sojourners to Citizens: Managing the Ethnic Chinese Minority in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 6 (2001): pp. 949-78.

<sup>120</sup> Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*, p. 36.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

ethno-linguistic or ethno-religious group.<sup>122</sup> Among the dominant ethnic groups that have been practising these policies are the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, and the Burmans (Bamar) in Myanmar.<sup>123</sup>

### 2.3.3 Ethnic Conflict

Ethnicity, by itself, is not a cause of violent conflict. Most of the time, most ethnic groups pursue their interests peacefully through established political channels. However, when ethnicity is linked in a problematic way with the overall structural totality of national and global processes, it emerges as one of the major fault lines along which societies fracture.<sup>124</sup> According to Geertz, the confrontation may revolve around several characteristics, namely blood ties, race, patterns of domination, language, religion, custom, geography and history.<sup>125</sup> In its many forms, ethnicity is utilised as a justification for forced assimilation, genocide, ethnic cleansing, self-determination, secession, irredentism, nation building, and demands for autonomy and equality. Therefore, the concept of “societal security” is central in explaining these issues, although, it must be seen as complementary to, and not as a replacement for, the model of national security.<sup>126</sup> Debiel acknowledges that one of the major advantages of the societal security approach is that the concept provides a substantive theoretical background, which enables it to relate to the significance of ethno-national, and

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<sup>122</sup> Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, p. 38.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Maheswar Singh, "Ethnic Conflict and International Security: Theoretical Considerations," *World Affairs* 6, no. 4 (2002): pp. 1-8.

<sup>125</sup> Geertz and Nations, *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa: Essays by Members of the Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations*, pp. 109-11.

<sup>126</sup> Debiel, "Human Security: More Than Just a Good Idea? Comments on the Need for an Integrated Security Concept".

religious, as well as political, ideological and socioeconomic identities, to the formation of social cohesion or, depending on the case, to the collapse of social structures.<sup>127</sup>

Generally, ethnic conflict usually centres on one of three general issues: the desire for “exit” or independence from the state, the demand for greater autonomy within the state, or the recognition and protection of minority interest within a plural society.<sup>128</sup> The first two issues are normally considered as the product of ethnic separatist movements. Ethnic separatism generally refers to ethnic action aimed at the complete withdrawal from state-imposed socio-economic and political arrangements.<sup>129</sup> Such actions, which are frequently a reaction to assimilation attempts by the centre, aim at promoting cultural, linguistic, religious, geographical and economic autonomy within a specific state or to obtain complete political independence.<sup>130</sup> By definition, separatism is also a species of nationalism, for it seeks to enhance ethnic autonomy and in some cases to gain political independence and self-determination.<sup>131</sup>

All these three general issues will be discussed in the case studies, particularly because there are a number of ethno-nationalist organisations in each of the conflict areas, and each of the organisations in southern Thailand, Aceh, and in the Moro region have a different objective for leading the struggle against their respective governments. The next section analyses how ethnic politics have an influence on a country’s foreign policy, especially if their ethnic kin is perceived as not being treated fairly by the state in which they are living.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Gurr and Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, pp. 95-116.

<sup>129</sup> Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, p. 11.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

## 2.4 *Ethnic Kinship*

Conflicts involving the issue of ethnicity tend to attract external involvement. According to Suhrke and Noble, an internal conflict that explicitly raises the question of national self-determination stimulates international responses.<sup>132</sup> Since ethnic identities seldom coincide completely with state boundaries, ethnic conflict in one state has implications in other states where there are ethnic kin. It provides motivation for the involvement of external kin.<sup>133</sup> Fishman defines kinship as follows:

It is a basis of one's felt bond to one's own kind. It is the basis of one's solidarity with them in times of stress. It is the basis of one's right to presume upon them in times of need. It is the basis of one's dependency, sociability and intimacy with them as a matter of course.<sup>134</sup>

Hale, for instance, claims that kinship relations are usually said to be the critical element that holds each group together and imbues it with its emotive power.<sup>135</sup> The ethnic tie is simultaneously suffused with overtones of familial duty and laden with depths of familial emotion. Therefore, even international boundaries do not cause members of ethnic groups to ignore the condition of those who are similar to themselves – their ethnic kin.<sup>136</sup>

### 2.4.1 Ethnic Kin States

According to Ganguly, ethnic kin states are created in one of three different ways.<sup>137</sup> First, they are created during the period of colonisation after the colonial powers created administrative units in their colonies that cut across the ethnic divisions of these areas.

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<sup>132</sup> Astri Suhrke and Lela Garner Noble, "Muslim in the Philippines and Thailand," in *Ethnic Conflict in International Relations*, ed. Astri Suhrke and Lela Garner Noble (London: Praeger, 1977), pp. 3-5.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>134</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, "Language and Ethnicity" (paper presented at the Ethnicity in Eastern Europe, University of Washington, June 1976), p. 5.

<sup>135</sup> Hale, "Explaining Ethnicity," pp. 458-85.

<sup>136</sup> David Carment and Patrick James, "Two-Level Games and Third-Party Intervention: Evidence from Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans and South Asia" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 3 (1996): pp. 521-54.

<sup>137</sup> Ganguly, *Kin State Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts: Lessons from South Asia*, p. 9.

Following the process of decolonisation, the status of these colonies was changed from administrative units to independent states. Many of these new states subsequently inherited artificial boundaries, which cut across ethnic lines. Second, population migrations over centuries, by scattering ethnic groups or communities, may also create ethnic kin states. Finally, ethnic kin states may be created because of the disintegration of states as demonstrated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.<sup>138</sup> Due to the manner in which modern territorial states have developed, ethnic groups are not neatly grouped within state territories, but find themselves being the majority or minority that straddles the boundaries of two or more states.<sup>139</sup> Consequently, ethnicity becomes politicised and this has become a major aspect and issue of interstate relations.<sup>140</sup>

Esman, for example, illustrates how ethnic politics affect interstate relations by claiming that;

Significant expressions of ethnic politics are not [...] confined to domestic affairs. The demands of ethnic groups may spill over state borders; external actors may attempt to intrude into domestic ethnic conflicts; and some ethnic networks may operate as transnational actors within several states, often with scant regard to their governments.<sup>141</sup>

For some scholars, ethnic linkages across political borders may thus be considered the analogue of alliances between sovereign states, with dispersed ethnic groups likely to press their government to intervene when the interests of their ethnic brethren are threatened.<sup>142</sup> According to Moore, "an ethnic tie exists whenever members of an ethnic group are divided across a border and members of the group form either a dominant

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework*, p. 173.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Milton J. Esman, "Ethnic Actors in International Politics," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 1, no. 1 (1995): p. 112.

<sup>142</sup> Moore and Davis, "Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy," pp. 89-103.

majority or an advantaged minority in one of the two countries".<sup>143</sup> Support from across borders is generally instrumental, providing for example, money, weapons and a safe haven.

More specifically, one set of studies shows that the country in which an ethnic group is dominant or has been in an advantaged position, is more hostile toward the country where the group's kin are disadvantaged or persecuted<sup>144</sup>. Holsti, for instance, finds that men

"sympathise with those whom they consider their ethnic, religious, and ideological kin. When these kin are threatened, persecuted, or physically harmed, their benefactors abroad may come to their assistance - sometimes with armed forces."<sup>145</sup>

In addition, Holsti concludes, from these observations, that the "sympathy factor" (ethnic, religious, or ideological bonds) had played an important role in conflicts occurring between 1648 and 1989, and his studies reveal that this "sympathy factor" was a source of conflict in more than twenty per cent of the post-1945 wars.<sup>146</sup> In addition, there are a number of empirical studies that have been conducted to explicate the linkages between ethnicity and the foreign policy orientation of states.<sup>147</sup> According to Friedman, among the well known cases where 'irreducible identities' had been key motivators for citizen participation in foreign policy making of their country are

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<sup>143</sup> Will H. Moore, "Ethnic Minorities and Foreign Policy," *SAIS Review* 22, no. 2 (2002): pp. 77-91.

<sup>144</sup> See, for example, Davis and Moore, "Ethnicity Matters: Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior," 171-94, David R. Davis, Keith Jagers, and Will H. Moore, "Ethnicity, Minorities and International Conflict," in *Wars in the Midst of Peace*, ed. David Carment and Patrick James (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1977), pp. 148-63, Moore and Davis, "Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy," pp. 89-103.

<sup>145</sup> Kalevi J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflict and International Order 1648-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 317.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 317-18.

<sup>147</sup> For instance, Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), Michael E. Brown, "The Causes and Internal Dimensions of Regional Conflict," in *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 1-31, David Carment and Patrick James, *Wars in the Midst of Peace: The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict* (Pittsburg, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), Gurr and Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, David A. Lake and Donald S. Rothchild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*.



opposition to white domination in apartheid South Africa or Rhodesia for Africans, and Muslim solidarity in support of the Palestinians and Bosnians.<sup>148</sup>

According to Suhrke, although ethnic kinship ties may or may not influence the policy of outside parties toward ethnic conflict, in some cases the policies implemented can be explained by the priority given to non-ethnic factors, but they are also likely to reflect differences in the strength of ethnic ties. If a group that is divided by state boundaries has a common language, religion, and culture, for instance, the group is united by stronger ethnic ties than if it shares fewer symbols of ethnic identity. Strong ties are more likely to result in partisan alignments of ethnic identity.<sup>149</sup> In conclusion, ethnic ties have been identified as one of the main factors that provoke interstate conflict, especially between neighbouring countries. The next section analyses how ethnic politics influence foreign policy, especially when the ethnic kin is being threatened by its host state. The section also outlines the assumptions in the theoretical framework that will be applied in the thesis.

#### 2.4.2 Ethnic Politics and Foreign Policy

The theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy builds upon two basic assumptions about the motivations of states, the interests of politicians and their supporters, and the relative influence of these actors upon foreign policy. First, foreign policy is dependent on domestic politics because states respond to domestic pressure.<sup>150</sup> In fact, according to Morgan and Palmer, all leaders/politicians, whether they are leading democratic or non-democratic states; cannot repress everyone and must retain the support of some

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<sup>148</sup> Friedman, "The Forgotten Sovereign: Citizens, States and Foreign Policy in the South," pp. 241-42.

<sup>149</sup> Suhrke and Noble, "Muslim in the Philippines and Thailand," p. 14.

<sup>150</sup> This assumption has recently been invoked by a number of scholars including, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman, *War and Reason: Domestic and International Imperatives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review* 88 (1994): pp. 577-91, T.C Morgan and K.M Bickers, "Domestic Discontent and the External Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36 (1992): pp. 25-52.

constituents.<sup>151</sup> In other words, as politicians primarily care about gaining and maintaining office, they have to maintain the support from people in their constituency.<sup>152</sup> Regardless of the particular support mechanism, incumbent politicians care most about preventing these supporters from leaving their coalition. Even if leaders do not want to intervene, they may not be in a position to restrain followers who do.<sup>153</sup>

Secondly, people who are affiliated with a particular ethnic group are mostly concerned with the welfare and conditions of other members of the ethnic group. Therefore, even if an international border divides members of an ethnic group, their ethnic affinity will serve as a conduit for the exchange of information and as a potential motivation for action. Therefore, it is assumed that if members of an ethnic group are dispersed across two or more states, they will monitor the status and behaviour of their brethren across the border. Davis and Moore, for instance, find that the existence of ethnic ties between an advantaged group in one state and a non-advantaged group in a second state increases the probability of interstate conflict.<sup>154</sup> According to Saideman, ethnic identity shapes supporters' preference in both domestic and foreign policy.<sup>155</sup> The constituents may compel a politician to follow a particular foreign policy, the politician may anticipate their demands, or the politician may use foreign policy to emphasise particular identities and de-emphasise others.<sup>156</sup> It is noted however that the theory does not specify whether politicians are manipulating the public or are being dictated to by public opinion. Ethnic politics can produce two kinds of dynamics; top-down or bottom-up. While one dynamic may produce different policies to the other, it may be

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<sup>151</sup> T. C Morgan and G Palmer, *Room to Move: Security, Proaction and Institutions in Foreign Policy Decision-Making*, ed. Randolph M. Siverson, *Strategic Politicians, Institutions, and Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

<sup>152</sup> Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict*, pp.22-23.

<sup>153</sup> Carment, "Managing Interstate Ethnic Tensions: The Thailand-Malaysia Experience," pp. 1-22.

<sup>154</sup> Davis and Moore, "Ethnicity Matters: Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior," 171-94.

<sup>155</sup> Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

hard to distinguish the two in practice.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, this framework does not develop this distinction here. Either way, if politicians can influence foreign policy, the existence of ethnic ties and antagonisms between the politicians' supporters and external actors will shape the state's foreign policy.

Specifically, since almost all separatist crises are ethnic conflicts, potential and existing supporters frequently have ethnic ties to one side of a secessionist crisis. Therefore, ethnic ties between politicians' supporters and the combatants in ethnic conflict in other states help to explain states' policies toward secessionist crises.<sup>158</sup> In this case, the kin state may take up policies or strategies that can be categorised into three groups: supporting the state-centre against the ethno-nationalist/separatist movements, offering either covert or overt support for these movements, and involving itself in reconciliation between the state-centre and these movements.<sup>159</sup> In short, the theory of ethnic politics argues that if a particular ethnic group dominates a state politically, then that group is likely to receive support from externally based kin, and that support is likely to be intense.<sup>160</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion

In order to analyse the impact of ethnic politics on foreign policy, a concept of national security that is more appropriate to Third World countries will be used.<sup>161</sup> The thesis adopts the national security approach of developing countries/Third World mainly

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<sup>157</sup> Since politicians may anticipate public opinion, what appears to be top-down may actually be a bottom-up situation where the pressure from the masses is the driving force, even if it is only potential pressure.

<sup>158</sup> Stephen M Saideman, "Explaining the International Relations of Secessionist Conflicts: Vulnerability Versus Ethnic Ties," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): pp. 721-53.

<sup>159</sup> Carment, "Managing Interstate Ethnic Tensions: The Thailand-Malaysia Experience," pp. 1-22.

<sup>160</sup> Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict*, p. 168.

<sup>161</sup> See, for example, Al-Mashat, *National Security in the Third World*, Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, Azar and Moon, *National Security in the Third World: The Management of Internal and External Threats*.

because Malaysia's national security approach fits better in this category. In addition, the issue of ethnic conflict as a national security concern has not received adequate attention within the traditional approach compared to the approach taken by the developing countries.<sup>162</sup> Contrary to this traditional approach, the concept of national security used in developing countries assumes neither a unitary national-state actor, nor the existence of commonly shared national values. The thesis also adopts the conception of foreign policy among the developing countries. Unlike the concept of foreign policy in the developed world, foreign policy in the developing countries may be influenced by several 'irreducible identities' such as religion and ethnic group in the formulation of their foreign policy making.<sup>163</sup> In order to look at the linkages between the ethnic groups among all the separatist movements that have been chosen as the case studies with the Malaysian Malays, the thesis, however, adopts both the primordialist and situational perspectives. The main reason for this undertaking is elaborated upon in the following chapter. In short, this thesis adopts the theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy as its main analytical framework to address the question of how the Malaysian government has dealt with efforts to ensure the survival of the Malay ethnic group located in its neighbouring countries. Based on what has been argued in this chapter, the ethnic factor has influenced Malaysia's security practice towards the ethnic conflicts in southern Thailand, Aceh, Indonesia and the Moro region of the Philippines. In fact, the ethnic factor is the reason why Malaysia has been engaged in all of the ethnic conflicts in its neighbouring countries despite being a member of ASEAN, which requires all member states to adhere to the principle of non-interference in the affairs of other ASEAN states. The following chapter analyses both how Malaysia has

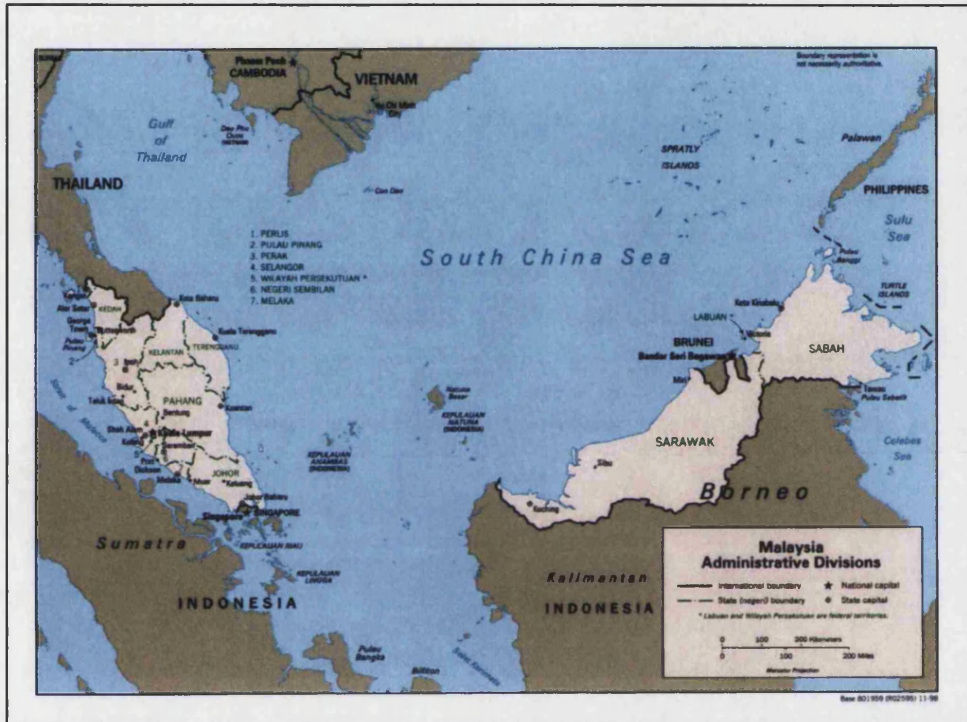
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<sup>162</sup> Azar and Moon, *National Security in the Third World: The Management of Internal and External Threats*, pp. 86-90.

<sup>163</sup> Friedman, "The Forgotten Sovereign: Citizens, States and Foreign Policy in the South," p. 241.

conceptualised national security and how the role of ethnic politics has shaped the country's domestic security policy.

## Chapter 3: The Ethnic Factor in Malaysia's Domestic Security Practices



**Map 2: Malaysia - Administrative Divisions**

(Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/malaysia\\_adm98.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/malaysia_adm98.jpg))

### *Introduction*

This chapter examines Malaysia's conception of national security and particularly the role of ethnicity in the country's internal security practice. The purpose of the chapter is to provide the necessary background on the role of the ethnic factor in Malaysia's external security practice in relation to the conflict involving its ethnic brethren outside the country's international borders. The chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section [3.1] analyses Malaysia's perspective on national security. This section argues that one of the main objectives underpinning national security policy is to ensure

that the Malay ethnic group will continue to dominate the country's political life. The section also analyses the history of how the Malay ethnic group was constructed. The primary purpose of this section is to illustrate how the nature of the Malay ethnic group has the characteristics identified by both the primordialists and the situationalists. The second section [3.2] analyses the practice of ethnic politics in Malaysia. The objective of this section is to show how the Malays achieved and maintained their political and economic interests in the country. The third section [3.3] analyses how the Malaysian government has protected the Malay ethnic group against external threats.

### **3.1 *Malaysia's Security Practices***

Like many post-colonial states, Malaysia<sup>1</sup> might best be characterised as a "new" state because the country's elite is still generally engaged in the process of nation building.<sup>2</sup> One of the main reasons why the leaders of the country are still engaged in this process, despite Malaysia being independent since 1957, is its multi-ethnic makeup. According to Abraham, Malaysia is a classic case of a country in which the major ethnic groups have learned to coexist while maintaining their distinct ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural identities and perceptions.<sup>3</sup> Historically, Malaysia became a multiethnic society because of the former colonial power's policy that promoted immigration, especially from China and India. However, the lack of integration between the indigenous Malays and the immigrant population before Malaya gained its independence prevented any kind of solidarity among these ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup> As stated by Alagappa, the development

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<sup>1</sup> Before 16 September 1963, the name of the country was Malaya. The country changed its name after the merging of the two Bornean states, Sabah and Sarawak, into the Federation.

<sup>2</sup> See, Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, pp. 23-27.

<sup>3</sup> C Abraham, "Political Elitism in Malaysia: The Case for Democratising Social Institutions" (paper presented at the 2nd International Malaysian Studies Conference, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> A.J. Stockwell, "The White Man's Burden and Brown Humanity: Colonialism and Ethnicity in British Malaya," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 10, no. 1 (1982): pp. 59-62.

of domestic political consensus is a formidable task in Malaysia due to its delicate ethnic composition.<sup>5</sup>

The British colonial policy of expanding the number of Chinese and Indian immigrants created an artificial occupational segregation along ethnic lines. The Malays predominantly formed the bulk of the peasantry, the Chinese were associated with commerce, and Indians worked in plantations. This division of labour consequently reinforced a sense of interethnic divisions.<sup>6</sup> In facilitating colonial rule, the British planted seeds of fear among Malays about the threats and challenges from non-Malays, and assumed a role of self-proclaimed protector of Malay interests and rights in various spheres of society.<sup>7</sup> Internal conflicts were created to prevent the formation of any consensus amongst the people living in the country. The 'divide and rule' policy continued for centuries and, thus, the roots of conflict became entrenched.<sup>8</sup> Although British rule in Malaya amounted to indirect rule,<sup>9</sup> the influence that the former colonial power had in determining the whole range of the country's policies before the country's independence was very substantial, especially with regard to immigration policies. The policies had a long-lasting impact on the characteristics of the ethnic composition of Malayan and subsequently Malaysian society. In order to ensure that all ethnic groups in Malaysia would live in peace and harmony, the Malaysian government had to introduce policies that have aimed to promote national unity among all ethnic groups.

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<sup>5</sup> Alagappa, "Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN Countries," pp. 50-78.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Firdaus Hj. Abdullah, "Affirmative Action Policy in Malaysia: To Restructure Society, to Eradicate Poverty," *Ethnic Studies Report* XV, no. 2 (1997): pp. 189-221, Rudiger Korff, "Globalisation and Communal Identities in the Plural Society of Malaysia," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 22, no. 3 (2001): pp. 270-83.

<sup>7</sup> H.L. Mah, "Affirmative Action, Ethnicity and Integration: The Case of Malaysia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 8, no. 2 (1985): pp. 250-76.

<sup>8</sup> Jha, *Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia and Quest for Identity*.

<sup>9</sup> For discussions on the system of ruling that the British imposed on Malaya, refer to J. de V. Allen, A. J. Stockwell, and L. R. Wright, *A Collection of Treaties and Other Documents Affecting the States of Malaysia, 1761-1963*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1980), p. 391, Cyril Northcote Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya, 1867-1877* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1960), pp. 323-24.



However, the policies implemented by the Malaysian Government are not those associated with the 'normal' Weberian notion of the state as a legal-rational actor where governments are supposed to maintain some degree of neutrality and play the role of neutral arbitrator among contending interests of various ethnic groups, besides accommodating their diverse needs and demands.<sup>10</sup> Rather, Malaysia is different from other countries that also have multiethnic societies because Malaysia purports to serve the interests of a majority ethnic group, in the first instance the Malays, by implementing policies that are favourable to them.<sup>11</sup> Also, Malaysia's security is overwhelmingly linked to policies and strategies that are shaped to advance the interest of the Malay ethnic group.<sup>12</sup> In view of the above factors, it is possible to identify six objectives of Malaysia's national security policy. The objectives of the security policy are, (1) to incorporate the notion of the preservation of the Constitution, including the position of the Malay rulers, Islam and the special rights of the Malays,<sup>13</sup> and the legitimate rights of the other ethnic groups; (2) to preserve the national unity and harmony among various ethnic groups since the existence of open internal ethnic conflict could be destructive to the country's development; (3) to promote equitable economic development among all the ethnic groups in society in order to strengthen the country's internal resilience; (4) to guard against internal security threats (such as those from armed communist rebellion, communal conflict and Islamic extremist groups); (5) to protect national sovereignty such as preserving the territorial integrity of the state; (6)

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), "Ethnic Violence, Conflict Resolution and Cultural Pluralism," in *Report of the UNRISD/UNDP International Seminar on Ethnic Diversity and Public Policies* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Haji Ahmad and Kadir, "Ethnic Conflict, Prevention and Management: The Malaysian Case," pp. 42-64, Hoddie, *Ethnic Realignment: A Comparative Study of Government Influences on Identity*, pp. 87-105.

<sup>12</sup> Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation," p. 517.

<sup>13</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, the protection of the Malays' special rights is synonymous with the protection of the Malays' societal security. On the Malays' special rights, refer to Gordon P Means, "'Special Rights' as a Strategy for Development: The Case of Malaysia," *Comparative Politics* 5, no. 1 (1972): pp. 29-61.

to maintain a stable and peaceful environment in the areas of its strategic interest (that is, in its immediate vicinity, regionally and globally).<sup>14</sup>

The following section analyses who the Malays are and how the identity of this ethnic group has been constructed over time. In addition, the section aims to explain why and how the ethnic groups that have formed the separatist movements in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines are related to the Malays living in Malaysia. The objective of this section is to show that in the process of constructing the Malay ethnicity, the government has absorbed under this category all the other indigenous people in the region that were not originally from the Malay peninsula. Since the Malay ethnic group in Malaysia comprises all the indigenous people in the region, the thesis analyses whether the ethnic factor affects Malaysia security practice towards the Malays' ethnic brethren in the conflict areas, particularly in southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro region.

### 3.1.1 The Construction of the Malay Ethnic Group

As mentioned in the previous chapter, two major perspectives serve to explain the nature of ethnicity, namely the primordialist and situationalist. This thesis adopts a combination of both the primordialist and the situationalist perspectives in dealing with the issue of ethnicity, especially when applying the concept of ethnicity to the Malay ethnic group. The reason for this is that the Malay ethnic group is both learned or constructed and innate. According to Shamsul, the Malay (Melayu) ethnic group was initially constructed by colonial historiography.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, this construction was adopted uncritically by most historians of postcolonial Malaysia, both Malay and non-

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<sup>14</sup>Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 140.

<sup>15</sup>Shamsul A.B., "A History of Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia Reconsidered," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (2001): pp. 355-66.

Malay.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Milner also claims that the Malay ethnic group is a concept in 'motion'.<sup>17</sup> In other words, it is an invented concept, one that is persistently subject to development and contest. It was promoted particularly in the colonial period by Malay and some European ideologues which, at times displaying real ingenuity, defined, redefined, and bestowed dignity upon "Malayness."<sup>18</sup>

Reid, for instance, has sketched the different meanings and applications of the terms 'Malay' and 'Malayness' in the history of the Malay Archipelago.<sup>19</sup> He argued that the terms initially represented self-referential categories among the people inhabiting the archipelago. Later, they became social labels that were used by the peoples of South Asia and China, who were mainly traders. Finally, these social labels were used by Europeans, namely, the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and British, who were travellers, traders and, eventually, colonisers. In the first and second instances, in a non-European context, 'Malay' and 'Malayness' were associated with the following: (1) a line of kingship acknowledging descent from Srivijaya and Malacca (Melaka); (2) a commercial Diaspora retaining the customs, language and trade practices of Malacca in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>20</sup> Since the term was used in at least two different contexts, namely the non-European and the European, there is an element of ambiguity surrounding which group of people can be classified as Malay.

Even in anthropology, the term Malay has both narrow and broad meanings. In its narrow sense, references to Malays are references to the ethnic group straddling the Malacca Straits, which shares a clear cultural and historical heritage dating back to the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Anthony C. Milner, "Ideological Work in Constructing the Malay Majority," in *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*, ed. Dru C. Gladney (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 151-69.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 151-69.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Reid, "Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (2001): pp. 295-313.

<sup>20</sup> Leonard Y. Andaya, "The Search for the 'Origins' of Melayu," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (2001): pp. 315-30.

maritime empire of Srivijaya of southern Sumatra that flourished between the seventh and eleventh centuries. In its broad sense, on the other hand, the word Malay can refer also to Malay-speaking Muslims on other islands of the Indonesian archipelago, notably Kalimantan (Borneo), who are indigenous to those islands but who have converted from a traditional religion to Islam.<sup>21</sup> The term Malay is sometimes also used to refer to the Austronesian Diaspora in maritime Southeast Asia, including the Filipinos.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the notion of Malayness is not only being subscribed by the Malays in Malaysia but also by all the people in all the respective conflict areas. In other words, the view of the Malays in Malaysia that these people belong to the same ethnic group is not unilateral but a two-way process. For instance, the people who formed as the majority in the southern provinces of Thailand not only view themselves as Malays but also maintain strong ties with the Malays in Malaysia. As for the Acehnese, not only they perceived themselves as Malays, Aceh has been identified as one of the birthplaces of the Malay-language Islamic culture.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the Moros in southern Philippine classify themselves closely with the Malays in Malaysia<sup>24</sup> mainly because they view that they are part of the “*Dunia Melayu*” (Malay World).<sup>25</sup> Since this thesis analyses the ethnic factor in Malaysia’s security practice, especially its practice towards the separatist movements in its neighbouring countries, the term Malay will be used in the broadest of the three senses and not solely be based on the Malaysian constitution’s definition of who is part

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<sup>21</sup> See Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*, p. 140, Doug Miles, *Cutlass and Crescent Moon: A Case Study of Social and Political Change in Outer Indonesia* (Sydney: Centre for Asian Studies, University of Sydney, 1976), Anthony S. K. Shome, *Malay Political Leadership* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Robert Cribb and Li Narangoa, "Orphans of Empire: Divided Peoples, Dilemmas of Identity, and Old Imperial Borders in East and Southeast Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Cambridge University Press 46, no. 1 (2004): pp. 164-87, Reid, "Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities.", Shome, *Malay Political Leadership*, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Reid, "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh," *Asian Ethnicity* 5, no. 3 (2004): p. 303.

<sup>24</sup> Peter G. Gowing, "The Muslim Filipino Minority," in *The Crescent in the East: Islam in Asia Minor*, ed. Raphael Israeli (London: Curzon, 1982), p. 19, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 269.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Abhoud Syed Mansur Lingga, 25 February 2007.

of the Malay ethnic group. Although there are other ethnic groups in the country, the Malaysian constitution only defines those who are Malays, which indirectly means that this particular ethnic group has a special status in the country. A further discussion of how the constitution defines the Malay ethnic group will be analysed in the following sub-sections (Malay after Independence of Malaysia). The following section demonstrates how the identity of the Malay as an ethnic group underwent a process of construction from the pre-colonial to the postcolonial era.

### The Malays during the Melaka Empire

Melaka was the greatest Islamic empire of Southeast Asia and, for many contemporary Malays, remains the font of Malay identity.<sup>26</sup> Historically, prior to the foundation of Melaka in the early fifteenth century, 'Malay' referred solely to the kingdoms in Sumatra.<sup>27</sup> For example, according to the Chinese records, in the seventh century, 'Malayu' appears as a more specific kingdom to the north of Srivijaya before being absorbed into the latter in the 680s.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the Tanjore inscription of 1030 and Marco Polo around 1290 also identify 'Malayur' as one of Sumatra's ancient kingdoms.<sup>29</sup> However, Melaka's success as a centre of commerce, religion, and literary output made it synonymous with Malay civilisation in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. As a result, the Malay identity that had previously referred solely to the Kingdoms in Sumatra shifted to Melaka. Consequently, this became a major source of conflict in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the principal Malay

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<sup>26</sup> Graham K. Brown, "The Formation and Management of Political Identities: Indonesia and Malaysia Compared," (Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford, 2005), pp. 1-35.

<sup>27</sup> Andaya, "The Search for the 'Origins' of Melayu."

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Reid, "Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities," in *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity across Boundaries*, ed. Timothy P. Barnard (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

contender in Sumatra: the kingdom of Aceh.<sup>30</sup> In keeping with constructivist theories of group identity that situate it as a phenomenon of modernity, careful readings of Malay texts from the pre-colonial period, especially during the height of the Melaka sultanate in the Malay world in the fifteenth century, have concluded that the term Malay was originally not applied to an ethnic group identity, but instead referred to an elite identity of those of royal descent.<sup>31</sup> If any group identity of 'Malayness' is to be surmised in this period, it was premised primarily on the notion of *Kerajaan* – the condition of being a subject of the Sultan.<sup>32</sup>

The conquest of Melaka by the Portuguese in 1511 and the ensuing flight of its rulers to Johor marked the beginning of the demise of a hegemonic, Sultan-centred Malay identity. The merchant traders of Melaka spread across Southeast Asia, creating a new, diasporic Malay identity in places as diverse as Aceh, Siam, and Cambodia.<sup>33</sup> Despite efforts by Aceh and other areas on Sumatra to reclaim the right to be regarded as the heart of the Malay lands, the identification of the Malays with the peninsula became increasingly entrenched. With the division of the Malay world into Dutch and British spheres by the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824 and the subsequent creation of independent nation-states in the mid-twentieth century, the Malays finally became identified with the peninsula.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See, Leonard Y. Andaya, "Aceh's Contributions to Standards of Malayness," *Archipel* 61 (2001): pp. 29-68.

<sup>31</sup> Virginia Matheson, "Concepts of Malay Ethos in Indigenous Malay Writings," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 10, no. 2 (1979): pp. 351-71.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Anthony C. Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Anthony C. Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982).

<sup>33</sup> Reid, "Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities."

<sup>34</sup> Andaya, "The Search for the 'Origins' of Melayu."

### Malay during the Colonial Period

The establishment of British colonial rule on the 'Malay' peninsula in the late nineteenth century reinforced the ideas that the homeland, and hence the centre of the political life of the Malays was on the peninsula, and that the fifteenth-century kingdom of Melaka was the cradle of Malay civilisation. Proper behaviour, customary laws, standards of government, language, and literature derived from the oral and written traditions of Melaka became the 'primordial' values of being Malay.<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt that Thomas Stamford Raffles' view of the Malays had a great effect on the imaginings of English-speakers. He was regarded as the most important voice in projecting the idea of a 'Malay' nation that was not limited to the traditional Malay sultans or even their supporters, but instead embraced a large, if unspecified part of the Archipelago. In defining who the Malays are, Raffles wrote:

'I cannot but consider the Malayu nation as one people, speaking one language, though spread over so wide a space, preserving their character and customs, in all the maritime states lying between Sulu Seas and the Southern Oceans'.<sup>36</sup>

If one were to use this statement, then all the indigenous people that live in countries such as Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Southern Thailand and Singapore are part of the Malay nation. This statement would not only have applied then, but also now because the region of Southeast Asia, particularly the maritime states, is often referred to as the Malay Archipelago.<sup>37</sup>

The idea that the Peninsula was particularly 'Malay' appears also to have been something that was constructed by the English. In his late-eighteenth-century work, *The History of Sumatra*, William Marsden thought the idea of the Peninsula as 'Malayan' or

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in, Shamsul A.B (2001); Thomas Stamford Raffles, "On the Malayu Nation," *Asiatic Researches* 12 (1816): p. 103.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see, Muthiah Alagappa, "Dynamics of International Security in Southeast Asia: Change and Continuity," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (1991): pp. 17-22, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, pp. 1-18.

'Malay' was of exclusively European origin, which had thereby confused many into thinking of the Peninsula as the place of Malay origin.<sup>38</sup> In fact, this was an almost exclusively English perception since other Europeans usually called the Peninsula 'Malacca', after its most famous city.<sup>39</sup> The term 'Malaya' goes back at least as far as Alexander Hamilton in the early eighteenth century, especially in his use of the phrase 'Coast of Malaya' which indicated the ports of Kedah and Perak.<sup>40</sup> English maps, like French and Dutch, more often referred to the Peninsula by the name of Melaka until around 1800, however. As the British became more concerned with the Peninsula after the founding of Georgetown in Penang in 1786, they appear to have generally adopted the usages 'Malay' or 'Malayan' for the Peninsula. Once the London Treaty of 1824 restricted British activity to the Peninsula, they were much more disposed to see it as a coherent unit under one of these labels. The first book explicitly on the subject, which P.J. Begbie published in 1834, used 'Malayan' in the title but referred to the 'Malay Peninsula' in the accompanying map.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to conceiving the peninsula as Malay, the British subsequently played a major role in constructing the Malay ethnic group. According to Hirschman, the origins of the ethnic constructs or the homogenised ethnic categories that now divide the population of Malaysia can be traced back to the decennial census taken by the colonial government beginning in 1871.<sup>42</sup> He points out that while the early colonial censuses conducted in 1871 and 1881 respectively listed Malays, Boyanese, Acehnese, Javanese, Bugis, Manilamen, Siamese, and others as separate groups, the 1891 Census demarcated the three racial categories of modern Malaysia as Chinese, 'Tamil and other natives of

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<sup>38</sup> Marsden William, *The History of Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 326.

<sup>39</sup> Reid, "Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities," p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies*, ed. William Foster, vol. II (London: Argonaut Press, 1930), p. 41.

<sup>41</sup> Peter James Begbie, *The Malayan Peninsula* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967).

<sup>42</sup> Charles Hirschman, "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology," *Sociological Forum* 1, no. 2 (1986): pp. 330-61, Charles Hirschman, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 3 (1987): pp. 555-82.



India', and 'Malays and other natives of the Archipelago', each elaborately subdivided. In short, Hirschman argues that Malay thinking about their ethnicity was "not a prehistorical residue", but rather derived from a 'new' theory that accompanied the rise of European technological superiority and expansion.<sup>43</sup> The usage of ethnic categories prevailed not only among the colonialist and other foreigners, but also among the different ethnic groups in Malaysia who were increasingly conscious of their differences.<sup>44</sup>

### Malay after Independence of Malaysia

The Malaysian constitution defines "Malay" as a person who follows Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay customs, and was born in the Federation of Malaya or Singapore (before independence).<sup>45</sup> There is, however, a broader ethnic category used in major policy matters, especially after the New Economic Policy was introduced in 1971.<sup>46</sup> This category is known as "Bumiputera" or the "son of the soil". In addition to the Malays, the federal government used the term to refer to other indigenous people, such as Sino-natives, natives of Sarawak, Ibans, and others, who constitute the majority of the population.<sup>47</sup> The introduction of this term is actually not very innovative. It is merely a new term for what in the 1891 census, conducted by the British colonial government, had already been used as the category of "Malays and other

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<sup>43</sup> Hirschman, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia," p. 568.

<sup>44</sup> Shamsul A.B., "Bureaucratic Management of Identity in a Modern State: "Malayness" In Postwar Malaysia," in *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*, ed. Dru C. Gladney (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 135-50.

<sup>45</sup> Snodgrass, R.R (1978). *Summary evaluation of policies used to promote Bumiputra participation in modern sector in Malaysia* [Development Paper No. 38]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Institute of International Development.

<sup>46</sup> A.B., "A History of Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia Reconsidered," p. 364.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, N.M. Mehta, "Ethnic Divisions and Growth Mandates in Southeast Asia: Irreconcilable Conflicts?" (paper presented at the International Conference on Chinese Overseas, Seoul, Korea, July 12-14 2000).

natives of the Archipelago”.<sup>48</sup> However, unlike the other Bumiputera, the Malays have their sovereign rulers, who under the Malaysian constitution are required to extend their special powers and privileges to protect the Malays and the “natives of Borneo”.<sup>49</sup>

After the introduction of the new term, Bumiputera became one of the most common synonyms for the Malay. By using this term, Malay identity came to be dominated not by subtle differences that distinguish Malays from other indigenous people of Sumatra, such as Acehnese and Minangkabau, but by the simple facts of religion – Islam as opposed to Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism among most of the Chinese ethnic group and the Hinduism of the Indians.<sup>50</sup> In fact, any of the indigenous peoples of the Indonesian archipelago, as long as they were Muslim, could be considered ‘Malay’ in the context of Malaysian domestic politics. In this way, not only immigrants from Sumatra, but also those from Java and Sulawesi and even Muslim Cham who migrated from Cambodia to Malaysia to escape the genocide by the Khmer Rouge regime between 1975 and 1979 could quickly be assimilated as Malays.<sup>51</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, the ethnic groups that are living outside Malaysia’s state borders but are indigenous to the archipelago, who have long standing historical links and also share a very similar ethnic identity with the Malays in Malaysia, are also considered to be Malays.

Unlike other ethnic groups, the Malays organised themselves to confront the former colonial power to protect their interest in Malaysia especially after the British founded the Malayan Union in 1946. By virtue of their indigenous status, the Malays believe they are entitled to greater rights and to enjoy a superior moral claim on

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<sup>48</sup> A.B., "A History of Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia Reconsidered."

<sup>49</sup> Boon Kheng Cheah, *The Challenge of Ethnicity: Building a Nation in Malaysia* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2004), p. 46.

<sup>50</sup> Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community, 1945-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>51</sup> Cribb and Narangoa, "Orphans of Empire: Divided Peoples, Dilemmas of Identity, and Old Imperial Borders in East and Southeast Asia."

government than more recent arrivals.<sup>52</sup> Whereas the Chinese and the Indians had migrated to Malaysia during British colonialism from 1891 to 1931, the Malays had already made their claim to the territory following the establishment of the Malacca Sultanate in 1402.<sup>53</sup> In addition, even before the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Malay Peninsula had been subject to territorial claims by various Malay kingdoms and empires in the region such as the Sumatran-based Srivijaya in the fifth and sixth centuries, the Patani-based Langkasuka in the sixth and the seventh centuries and the Java-based Majapahit in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>54</sup> In short, the Malays believe that Malaysia (and its precursor Malaya) is the land of the Malays – a proprietary belief and principle, and that the non-Malays are “sojourners”.<sup>55</sup> Malays overwhelmingly subscribe to this notion, which then also translates to mean that Malays should have primacy in the polity, economy and society of the country. Despite holding strongly to this notion, the Malays have also accepted that the non-Malays have a place in Malaysia if they accept the “rules of the game” as set by the Malays.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.2 *Ethnic Politics*

In Malaysia, ethnic politics can be considered as a means to an end whereby political stability, regime security, economic growth and development, and multiracial peace and harmony are all regarded as key values in the preservation and promotion of national security.<sup>57</sup> Besides incorporating historical (during the period of colonisation) and ideological factors, ethnicity has always been a major factor in developing policies and

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<sup>52</sup> Milton J. Esman, *An Introduction to Ethnic Conflict* (Oxford: Polity, 2004), p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Hj. Abdullah, "Affirmative Action Policy in Malaysia: To Restructure Society, to Eradicate Poverty," pp. 192-94.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*: pp. 189-221.

<sup>55</sup> Haji Ahmad and Kadir, "Ethnic Conflict, Prevention and Management: The Malaysian Case," p. 48.

<sup>56</sup> See also, Boon Kheng Cheah, *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation."

strategies for moulding the nation since Malaysia gained its independence. This phenomenon is acknowledged by Crouch, who states,

Since the 1960s, almost all policy issues in Malaysia have been affected by ethnicity, including language, education, government, employment, business licences, immigration, internal security, foreign policy or virtually everything else.<sup>58</sup>

The implementation of various national policies tailored according to ethnic groups was actually aimed at addressing the economic, social and educational imbalance among the ethnic groups brought about by British colonisation. However, these national policies led to the further promotion of ethnic politics in Malaysia.<sup>59</sup>

### 3.2.1 Ethnic Politics in Malaysia

The Malaysian government through its main political party in the National Front (*Barisan Nasional - BN*), the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), has promoted the interests of the ethnic group that it has represented by implementing a wide range of policies and rules to influence various sectors in ways that are favourable to their ethnic group.<sup>60</sup> Because of the ethnicity-laden nature of Malaysia's policies, especially in terms of its role in practising preferential policies favouring the dominant ethnic group, the country has been characterised as an "ethnocratic state"<sup>61</sup> and its political system as a "consociational democracy".<sup>62</sup> In fact, Malaysia qualifies for all three propositions that would make the country an ethnocratic state, as outlined in the

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<sup>58</sup> Harold A. Crouch, "Managing Ethnic Tensions through Affirmative Action: The Malaysian Experience," in *Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention in Asia*, ed. N.J. Colleta, T.G. Lim, and A. Kelles-Vitanen (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2001), pp. 225-62.

<sup>59</sup> Cynthia Joseph, "It Is So Unfair Here...It Is So Biased: Negotiating the Politics of Ethnic Identification in Ways of Being Malaysian Schoolgirls," *Asian Ethnicity* 7, no. 1 (2006): p. 56.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Alagappa, "Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN Countries," 50-78, Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, p. 53, Donald L. Horowitz, "Cause and Consequence in Public Policy Theory: "Ethnic Policy and System Transformation in Malaysia", " *Policy Sciences* 22, no. 3/4 (1989): pp. 249-87.

<sup>61</sup> Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>62</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (London: Yale University Press, 1977).

previous chapter. First, almost all the key positions in the Malaysian cabinet, such as the ministerial posts for Home Affairs, Defence, Treasury, Trade, and Education have been monopolised by the key leaders of UMNO. In fact, the UMNO General Assembly has been dubbed the 'real' general election in Malaysia because those who win the posts of president and vice president of UMNO assume the posts of prime minister and deputy prime minister respectively.<sup>63</sup>

Second, Malaysia employs the Malays' cultural attributes and values as the core elements for the elaboration of its national identity/ideology.<sup>64</sup> For instance, the Malay language is the national language. Islam, which is the religion that is embraced by all Malays in Malaysia, is the official religion. The Malay rulers are constitutional monarchs. Lastly, the state institutions in Malaysia, such as the constitution, its laws, and its political structure, all serve to maintain and reinforce the power monopoly held by the Malay ethnic group. As a matter of fact, the privileges of Malays are entrenched in Article 153 of the Constitution that provides "special rights" to Malays, which are to be safeguarded by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (i.e. the paramount ruler or King).<sup>65</sup> The provisions relating to the special rights of the Malays include civil service positions, scholarships, certain permits or licenses, and Malay reservations.<sup>66</sup> Questioning these rights and privileges is forbidden and would result in a trial for sedition.<sup>67</sup> Despite having an ethnocratic character, Malaysia has enjoyed a relatively high degree of

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<sup>63</sup> Kamarulnizam Abdullah, "National Security and Malay Unity: The Issue of Radical Religious Elements in Malaysia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 21, no. 2 (1999).

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, M. Shamsul Haque, "The Role of the State in Managing Ethnic Tensions in Malaysia," *American Behavioral Scientist* 47, no. 3 (2003), Hock Guan Lee, *Ethnic Relations in Peninsular Malaysia: The Cultural and Economic Dimension* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), Tan, "From Sojourners to Citizens: Managing the Ethnic Chinese Minority in Indonesia and Malaysia."

<sup>65</sup> Government of Malaysia, *The Federal Constitution* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1977).

<sup>66</sup> R. S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia* (Singapore: Federal Publications, 1980), pp. 38-40.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Alagappa, "Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN Countries.", Cheah, *The Challenge of Ethnicity: Building a Nation in Malaysia*, R. S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir* (London: Routledge, 1999), Hari Singh, "Ethnic Conflict in Malaysia Revisited," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 39, no. 1 (2001).

political stability. This was largely due to a power sharing arrangement among elites representing all the major ethnic groups that formed the core political parties in the Alliance party (later National Front) since the country gained its independence. Besides UMNO, whose basis for its 'goal-rational legitimacy' is to serve the interests of the Malays<sup>68</sup>, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) have formed the other major political parties within the National Front, which has been ruling the country since 1957. However, while these two political parties are engaged in a power-sharing grand coalition, UMNO is the senior partner and quite clearly "calls the shots".<sup>69</sup>

Following Arend Lijphart, the practice of ethnic politics in Malaysia can be considered a classical example of consociationalism. The model interprets such a political system favourably as the structure of ethnic composition in society is reflected or represented in the structure of political parties and institutions to reduce interethnic tension and enhance social harmony.<sup>70</sup> Scholars such as Milne and Mauzy<sup>71</sup> have shown that consociationalism can, with some modification, be applied to Malaysia. This situation has been described as one in which:

Two or more ethnic blocs, roughly equal in power, cooperated, in spite of remaining substantially separate in their activities, through agreement between their leaders, who at the same time were able to retain the support of their followers.<sup>72</sup>

One of the modifications of the concept of consociationalism, as it has been practised in Malaysia, is that the accommodation of ethnic-based interest is subject to two conditions: Malay political hegemony and the preservation of class and ethnic harmony.

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<sup>68</sup> J.N Mak, "Malaysian Defence and Security Cooperation: Coming out of the Closet," in *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order*, ed. See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), p. 127.

<sup>69</sup> Haji Ahmad and Kadir, "Ethnic Conflict, Prevention and Management: The Malaysian Case," p. 49.

<sup>70</sup> Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*.

<sup>71</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

“Malay political hegemony” refers to the exercise of Malay political power in a multiethnic setting.<sup>73</sup> “Strong” Malay political power denotes predominance of the Malays in most of the key positions in the civil service and the armed forces.<sup>74</sup> These arrangements are elsewhere described as “hegemonic consociationalism.”<sup>75</sup> This kind of politics has been instrumental in promoting a consensus whereby sensitive issues are not raised. Consociationalism may have helped to enhance Malaysia’s internal security, but as it has been argued elsewhere, it has also helped to legitimise a political structure that sustains the longevity of the ruling elites.<sup>76</sup>

All three political parties reached a consensus among themselves that allowed the modified consociational system to work in Malaysia through what many scholars call an ethnic bargain. In general, the ethnic bargain seeks to specify the relationship between ethnic groups and to channel national politics in peaceful directions.<sup>77</sup> As a mechanism to manage expectations and demands, they normally set the parameters of resource allocations by laying out the rights and privileges of the various ethnic groups. The bargain establishes an understanding of the structure of society and the allocation of resources as a particularised social contract and the tacit understanding that each ethnic group does not transgress into the sphere of the other.<sup>78</sup> As for Malaysia, the ethnic bargain allowed the immigrants (such as the Chinese and the Indians) to effectively become citizens of Malaya, but on the condition that they acknowledge *ketuanan Melayu*, or Malay dominance. Malay dominance has meant that the other ethnic groups have to accept ‘special Malay privileges’ in education, and government services,

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<sup>73</sup> Haji Ahmad and Kadir, "Ethnic Conflict, Prevention and Management: The Malaysian Case," p. 48.

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, Chapter 5.

<sup>75</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Singh, "Ethnic Conflict in Malaysia Revisited."

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, Harold A. Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 21, Means, "'Special Rights' as a Strategy for Development: The Case of Malaysia," pp. 29-61, Milne and Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia*, pp. 79-85.

<sup>78</sup> Tan, "From Sojourners to Citizens: Managing the Ethnic Chinese Minority in Indonesia and Malaysia."

'Malay' royalty as their rulers, Islam as the official religion, and the 'Malay' language as the official language of Malaya.<sup>79</sup> The ethnic bargain was then incorporated into the 1957 Federation of Malaya. Malays continue to receive 'special status' treatment in matters of language, culture, and as regards the position of the sultans.

In other words, given the dominant role of the Malay ethnic group in domestic Malaysian political life, the idea of consociationalism from Lijphart has been modified to 'hegemonic consociationalism' whereby Malaysia's security is translated into policies and strategies which are designed to accommodate and promote Malays' ethnic interests.<sup>80</sup> In short, this sub-section has argued that despite being a multiethnic state, Malaysia's domestic politics is primarily concerned with safeguarding the interests of the Malay ethnic group in the country. Since the ethnic factor has indeed had an influence on Malaysia's domestic affairs, the thesis asks whether these interests are extended towards other Malays living outside the country. To shed some light on this question, the following section examines the origins of Malay nationalism. This will be followed by a section analysing how the Malaysian government has defended Malay interests both against "internal and external threats".

### 3.2.2 Malay Nationalism

Historically, Malay nationalism developed against the backdrop of the signing of the MacMichael Agreement with Britain by all the nine Malay sultans, which led to the creation the Malayan Union in April 1946.<sup>81</sup> The opposition to the British-initiated Malayan Union provoked a huge Malay crowd to gather spontaneously at a protest

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<sup>79</sup> See, for example, A.B., "A History of Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia Reconsidered," pp. 355-66, Hussin Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 22-28, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 113, Tan, "From Sojourners to Citizens: Managing the Ethnic Chinese Minority in Indonesia and Malaysia."

<sup>80</sup> Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation," p. 517.

<sup>81</sup> Shome, *Malay Political Leadership*, p. 49.



meeting in May 1946. This show of solidarity culminated in the formation of the country's first united Malay political party, UMNO, a platform upon which Malay nationalism was consummated.<sup>82</sup> The unprecedented display of Malay unity in the wake of the British plan to strip the Malay monarch of all but ceremonial power and grant broad citizenship rights to non-Malays has been identified as the birth of Malay nationalism.<sup>83</sup> The Malays opposed the Malayan Union because they thought that the union would destroy the Malay states and their sultans' sovereignty, which were the symbols of their community's special status, and an affirmation of the fact that Malaya was a Malay country.<sup>84</sup>

In addition, the Malayan Union also aimed to allow a liberal citizenship provision that accorded immigrants equal political status with the Malays.<sup>85</sup> According to Roff, although demographic concern was not the only factor that led to the emergence of Malay nationalism, it was a critical one.<sup>86</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Malays comprised 90 per cent of the entire population of the Malay Peninsula, including the small island of Singapore. However, after the Chinese and Indians migrated in large numbers under British colonial rule to work in the tin mines and rubber plantations of British Malaya, the proportion of the Malays in the country decreased tremendously. The demographic change whereby the Chinese and Indian immigrants had outnumbered the Malays is illustrated in Table 1 below.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, Cheah, *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 2, Mak, "Malaysian Defence and Security Cooperation: Coming out of the Closet," p. 132, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 112.

<sup>84</sup> Leong H. Liew, "Ethnicity and Class in Malaysia," in *Ethnicity in Asia: A Comparative Introduction, Asia's Transformations*, ed. Colin. Mackerras (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 88-100.

<sup>85</sup> Mohamad Nordin Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1974), pp. 13-21.

<sup>86</sup> William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

**Table 1: Malaya: Population by Ethnic Group, 1911-47**  
(Number in Thousands, Percentage as a Proportion of Total Population)

Year	Malaysians*		Chinese		Indians**	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1911	1,438	54	917	34	267	10
1921	1,651	49	1,175	35	472	14
1931	1,962	45	1,709	39	624	14
1947	2,544	43	2,615	45	600	10

Notes: \* 'Malaysians' include Malays and Indonesians.

\*\* Includes Pakistanis after 1947

The Table excludes 'other' ethnic groups.

Source: Malaya: Census Report 1911-1947 quoted in Kaur, Amarjit. "Refugees and Refugee Policy in Malaysia." *UNEAC Asia Papers*, no. 18 (2007): 77-90.

In fact, after the 1921 census, the Malays came to realise that they were outnumbered by the immigrant populations and hence had become a minority in their own "motherland". The proportion of Malays vis-à-vis non-Malays which stood at 54 per cent in 1911, reduced to 49 per cent in 1921, declining further to 45 per cent in 1931. By 1947, the Chinese population of Malaya outnumbered the Malays, with the Indians in third place. To the Malays, it was clear that if all immigrants were accorded equal status, this could ultimately mean that non-Malays might be at the helm of political leadership.

In the event, the protest against the Malayan Union led by UMNO successfully pressured the British to abandon the Malayan Union plan and restored the pre-war arrangement that favoured the Malays.<sup>87</sup> According to Stockwell, the formation of UMNO had long-lasting ramifications on the construction of ethnic politics in the country.<sup>88</sup> This is mainly because the main objective and mission of UMNO, as stated

<sup>87</sup> William F Case, "The New Malaysian Nationalism: Inform Beginnings, Crashing Finale," *Asian Ethnicity* 1, no. 2 (2000): pp. 131-47.

<sup>88</sup> A. J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1945-1948* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1979), A.J. Stockwell, "The Formation of the First Years of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), 1946-1948," *Modern Asian Studies* 11, no. 4 (1977): pp. 481-513.

in the party's constitution, is the protection of Malay rights and identity.<sup>89</sup> After the British withdrew from implementing the Malayan Union in Malaya, they secured with UMNO the Federation of Malaya Agreement in 1948. Under the Agreement, Malay rights and privileges were safeguarded, especially with regard to key issues such as land ownership, citizenship, access to political offices, national language and religion.<sup>90</sup> The agreement dovetailed with existing agreements. When the British signed treaties with the Malay rulers between 1874 and 1914, these treaties had implied a form of trusteeship on behalf of the Malay rulers and their subjects. While not mentioning special rights for Malays, these treaties had given rise to administrative rules marking a distinction between Malays and non-Malay immigrants.<sup>91</sup> For example, the first explicit system of Malay special rights implemented by the British was the Malay right over land ownership. Between 1913 and 1941, the Malay states passed legislation designating large areas of land as "Malay reservations" where only Malays could own or lease land and non-Malays were prevented from holding mortgages or seizing land in discharge of debts.<sup>92</sup>

In short, UMNO not only succeeded in dismantling the Malayan Union, it also convinced Britain of its sole right to negotiate future constitutional matters since the party had successfully asserted its image as a political player representing the interests

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<sup>89</sup> See, for example, Mak, "Malaysian Defence and Security Cooperation: Coming out of the Closet," p. 129, Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p. 17, Muhammad Ikmal Said, "Malay Nationalism and National Identity," *Soumen Anthropologi* 2 (1995): pp. 11-31.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics*, pp. 27-28, Tan, "From Sojourners to Citizens: Managing the Ethnic Chinese Minority in Indonesia and Malaysia," pp. 949-78, Riwanto Tirtosudarmo, "The Orang Melayu and Orang Jawa in the 'Land Below the Winds'," in *Crisis Working Paper 14* (Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 2005).

<sup>91</sup> Gordon P Means, "Ethnic Preference Policies in Malaysia," in *Ethnic Preference and Public Policy in Developing States*, ed. Neil Nevitte and Charles H. Kennedy (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1986), pp. 96.

<sup>92</sup> International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *The Economic Development of Malaya: (Report of a Mission Organized by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development...At the Request of the Governments of the Federation of Malaya,...Of Singapore and the United Kingdom)* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), pp. 311-13.

of the majority of the indigenous people in Malaya.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, 'Malay nationalism', promoted by UMNO, became the backbone of Malayan politics that aimed at ensuring Malay supremacy in relation to the other ethnic groups in the country. Given the circumstances of UMNO's birth, it is not surprising that the party saw itself as the defender of Malay rights and interests, with the security perceptions of its leaders shaped around the objectives of Malay survival.<sup>94</sup> In other words, the referent units of Malaysian security were to be principally Malay in character and determined almost exclusively by the Malays, to whom power was transferred constitutionally by the British colonial masters on August 31, 1957.<sup>95</sup> Preserving this domination was the primary goal of Malaysian domestic security objectives.

Relations between the Malays and the Chinese are discussed in further detail in the next section. The objective is not to illustrate the long history of discontent between the two groups.<sup>96</sup> Instead, the section demonstrates how the Malaysian government after independence has acted as a defender and protector of the Malay ethnic group and its interests against perceived internal and external threats. Internally, the fear of being overwhelmed by the Chinese ethnic group has remained as a primary concern of the Malay community. The Chinese are still viewed as posing a threat to the Malay community because although they only form the second largest ethnic group in the country, they have a bigger share in ownership of the country's total wealth as compared

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<sup>93</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 256, Shome, *Malay Political Leadership*, p. 61.

<sup>94</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 113.

<sup>95</sup> Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation," p. 516.

<sup>96</sup> For detailed discussions on this issue, see Alan Collins, "Securitization, Frankenstein's Monster and Malaysian Education," *The Pacific Review* 18, no. 4 (2005): pp. 567-88, Haque, "The Role of the State in Managing Ethnic Tensions in Malaysia."

to the other ethnic groups.<sup>97</sup> The external dimension of this threat is discussed in the next section.

### 3.2.3 Malay – Chinese Relations

The increasing number of non-Malays, coupled with their rising control over the economy (especially by the Chinese ethnic group), has been a source of fear for the Malays, whose claims to the ownership of the land date back thousands of years. For instance, as discussed above, the census of 1931 showed that the Chinese had become more populous in British Malaya than the Malays (which included Singapore). Even the English historian A.J. Toynbee, after a tour of the region, predicted that eventually the country would (“by peaceful penetration”) become a Chinese province.<sup>98</sup> It was this fear that aside from resentment against British colonialism gave birth to Malay nationalism in 1946. By 2006, according to the Department of Statistics, of the total population of nearly 22 million, the Malays and other indigenous groups constituted 65.1 per cent, whereas the Chinese made up 26 per cent, the Indians 7.7 per cent, and the remaining groups 1.2 per cent.<sup>99</sup> However, despite the significant relative decrease of the Chinese population over the last few decades, Malay envy of the Chinese has remained an important factor in the political organisation of the Malays.<sup>100</sup> This envy feeds on Chinese success, particularly due to their ability to dominate the country’s economy. The dominant position of the Chinese in the country’s economy will be discussed in further detail later in this section.

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<sup>97</sup> See, for example, Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 63, Mah, "Affirmative Action, Ethnicity and Integration: The Case of Malaysia.", Jomo Kwame Sundaram, *A Question of Class: Capital, the State, and Uneven Development in Malaya* (Manila: Monthly Review Press, 1998), p. 254.

<sup>98</sup> Kay Kim Khoo, "Sino-Malaya Relations in Peninsular Malaysia before 1942," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 12, no. 1 (1981): pp. 93-107. Khoo Kay Kim. 1981. "Sino-Malaya Relations in Peninsular Malaysia before 1942." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 12(1): 93-107

<sup>99</sup> Department of Statistics, *Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristics (Press Statement)* (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2006 [cited 24 March 2006]).

<sup>100</sup> Hj. Abdullah, "Affirmative Action Policy in Malaysia: To Restructure Society, to Eradicate Poverty," pp. 189-221.

## Communism

When UMNO managed to convince the British colonial rulers to drop the Malayan Union plan and to restore the special privileges to the Malays through the Federation of Malaya Agreement in 1948, it caused an embittered response from the non-Malays, especially the ethnic Chinese. This bitterness led some Chinese to feel that they had no choice but to turn to the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) for justice.<sup>101</sup> Still in 1948, alienated elements of the Chinese community, in part also galvanised by international communism, retaliated against the decision to restore the special privileges to the Malays with industrial stoppages, followed by the launching of a full-scale insurgency.<sup>102</sup> The communist insurgency aggravated ethnic conflict in Malaya because the Malays viewed it as a Chinese challenge to their political power legitimised by the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948.<sup>103</sup> Decision makers concluded that defeating internal communism and containing international communism would be given the most important priority in order to establish security in the country. Consequently, between 1948 and 1960, the British launched the Malayan Emergency to contain communist activity in Malaya.<sup>104</sup>

The government's apprehension towards the communist insurgency was strengthened by the ethnic composition of the Malayan communists, as nearly all of them were Chinese. Since the security forces were mainly Malay, this insurgency conflict carried an ethnic overtone.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, the presence of a sizeable ethnic Chinese population in Malaya fuelled official concern about their potential role as fifth

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<sup>101</sup> Mak, "Malaysian Defence and Security Cooperation: Coming out of the Closet," p. 113.

<sup>102</sup> The best account is perhaps Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>103</sup> On the Emergency, see, Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960* (London: Muller, 1975). On the assertion that Malay political hegemony was implied in the Federation of Malaya Agreement, refer to Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>104</sup> Tan, "From Sojourners to Citizens: Managing the Ethnic Chinese Minority in Indonesia and Malaysia," pp. 949-78.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

columnists in the service of the CPM and the Communist Party of China (CPC).<sup>106</sup> For many Malays, this period cemented the perception that all Chinese were communists, and all communists Chinese.<sup>107</sup> This is because the insurgency gained little support from the Malay community, giving rise to the perception that the struggle was actually between the Chinese and the Malays.<sup>108</sup> The anti-communal feeling towards the overseas Chinese has been illustrated as follows:

The overseas Chinese are a unique phenomenon that often poses problems. They have been frequently dubbed by innuendoes as the "fifth column" of the People's Republic of China dedicated to the work of infiltration, subversion, and armed insurrection to overthrow the government of their countries of residence. They have frequently been portrayed as sentimentally and intellectually predisposed to the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>109</sup>

In December 1989, a tripartite Peace Accord was signed between the CPM and the Thai and Malaysian governments, under which the CPM would lay down its arms.<sup>110</sup> The CPM insurgency appeared to be buried for good, given the rapid economic development in Malaysia, which provided increased prosperity to significant sections of the population, including the Chinese. However, it had taken several decades of counter-insurgency efforts to finally overcome the revolt. Significantly, the roots of the Malaysian conception of comprehensive security can be traced to the wide-ranging policy measures employed to counter the communist insurgency during the 1948-60 period.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation," pp. 513-48.

<sup>107</sup> Boon Kheng Cheah, "Sino-Malay Conflicts in Malaya, 1945-1946: Communist Vendetta and Islamic Resistance," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 12, no. 1 (1981): pp. 108-17.

<sup>108</sup> Case, "The New Malaysian Nationalism: Inform Beginnings, Crashing Finale," pp. 131-47.

<sup>109</sup> Ngor Chong Chan, "ASEAN and China: An Evolving Relationship," in *ASEAN and China: An Evolving Relationship*, ed. Joyce K. Kallgren, Noordin Sopiee, and Soedjati Djihadono (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1988), p. 125.

<sup>110</sup> K.S. Nathan, "Malaysia in 1989: Communists End Armed Struggle," *Asian Survey* 30, no. 2 (1990): pp. 210-20.

<sup>111</sup> Alagappa, "Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN Countries," pp. 50-78.

## Ethnic Riots - May 1969

In the 1969 general elections, Malaysia witnessed the most aggressive campaign ever staged by dominant Chinese opposition parties when they succeeded in making unprecedented electoral gains.<sup>112</sup> In the election, the Alliance<sup>113</sup> suffered a major setback, losing twenty-two of the seats it had held, and gaining less than 50 percent of the total vote.<sup>114</sup> Although the ruling party retained power at the federal level, it lost its two-thirds majority, which the party had previously commanded in the Parliament.<sup>115</sup> In addition, the Alliance lost control of the state assemblies in Penang, Perak, and Kelantan, while in Selangor, both the Alliance and the combined opposition tied at fourteen seats each.<sup>116</sup> In a way, the election results symbolised the loss of Malay dominance in Malaysian politics, one of the key elements that was agreed upon in the ethnic bargain between the leaders of the two communities prior to independence.<sup>117</sup> The Malays feared that the results would threaten the predominance of their culture and their privileged political position. John Funston captures the Malay's fear when he writes,

Characteristically, such outbursts occur when the very identity if not existence of the community is felt to be threatened... [The] Malays perceived a direct threat to their identity and retaliated with the fanaticism of the religiously possessed in a holy war.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Liew, "Ethnicity and Class in Malaysia," pp. 88-100.

<sup>113</sup> Alliance is the name of the coalition of the ruling party which is comprised of the main party representing each of the three major ethnic groups i.e. the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)

<sup>114</sup> Means, "'Special Rights' as a Strategy for Development: The Case of Malaysia," p. 54.

<sup>115</sup> William F Case, "Testing Malaysia's Pseudo-Democracy," in *The State of Malaysia: Ethnicity, Equity, and Reform*, ed. Edmund Terence Gomez (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 29-48, Liew, "Ethnicity and Class in Malaysia."

<sup>116</sup> Stuart Drummond and David Hawkins, "The Malaysian Elections of 1969: An Analysis of the Campaign and the Results," *Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (1970): pp. 320-35.

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, A.B., "Bureaucratic Management of Identity in a Modern State: "Malayness" In Postwar Malaysia," pp. 135-50, Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, p. 54, John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), p. 211, Singh, "Ethnic Conflict in Malaysia Revisited," pp. 42-65.

<sup>118</sup> Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam*, p. 211.



The result of the fear was the serious inter-ethnic rioting that erupted on 13 May 1969.<sup>119</sup> The riots between Chinese and Malay communities lasted over a period of two and a half weeks and, according to official figures, resulted in 196 fatalities and 409 injured.<sup>120</sup> The Malaysian government responded by suspending parliament and declaring a state of emergency, whereby the authority usually exercised by the cabinet was handed over to the director of the National Operations Council (NOC).<sup>121</sup> In its effort to reduce ethnic tension, the NOC tightened political control by prohibiting public discussion on sensitive issues, even in parliament.<sup>122</sup> Among the issues that were classified as sensitive were the special position of Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak, the status of the Malay language as the national language, citizenship, and sovereignty of the sultans.<sup>123</sup> When the Parliament reconvened in February 1971, this prohibition was integrated into the Constitution (Amendment Act).<sup>124</sup> Until today, any public discussion questioning these rights and privileges remains forbidden and would normally result in a trial for sedition.<sup>125</sup> In other words, when the Malay dominance was seen as being challenged by the Chinese, the government (led by UMNO) reacted by further increasing Malay dominance and institutionalising Malay hegemony.<sup>126</sup>

Along with these constitutional changes, a New Economic Policy (NEP) was formulated. The Second Prime Minister, Tun Razak (1970-1976) asserted, "it (the

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<sup>119</sup> John Butcher, "May 13: A Review of Some Controversies in Accounts of the Riots," in *Reinventing Malaysia: Reflections on Its Past and Future*, ed. K. S. Jomo (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2001), pp. 35-56.

<sup>120</sup> Federation of Malaysia. National Operations Council, *The May 13 Tragedy: A Report* (Kuala Lumpur: 1969).

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, Haque, "The Role of the State in Managing Ethnic Tensions in Malaysia," pp. 240-66, Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p. 23.

<sup>122</sup> Ozay Mehmet, *Development in Malaysia: Poverty, Wealth and Trusteeship* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 9, Takashi Torii, "The New Economic Policy and the United Malays National Organization - with Special Reference to the Restructuring of Malaysian Society," *The Developing Economies XXXV*, no. 3 (1997): pp. 209-39.

<sup>123</sup> Torii, "The New Economic Policy and the United Malays National Organization - with Special Reference to the Restructuring of Malaysian Society."

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> A.B., "Bureaucratic Management of Identity in a Modern State: "Malayness" In Postwar Malaysia.", Alagappa, "Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN Countries," 50-78.

<sup>126</sup> A.B., "Bureaucratic Management of Identity in a Modern State: "Malayness" In Postwar Malaysia."

NEP) was the last chance for the survival of the people and the country."<sup>127</sup> It contained a two-pronged development programme. The first prong aimed to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of ethnic group. The second objective aimed to accelerate the process of restructuring Malaysian society to correct economic imbalances which would reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of ethnic group with economic functions. The NEP involved the modernisation of rural life, a rapid and balanced growth of urban activities and the creation of a Malay commercial and industrial community in all categories and at all levels of operation, in order for Malays and other indigenous people to become full partners in all aspects of the economic life of the nation.<sup>128</sup>

Before the NEP was implemented, there were serious inequalities among the three ethnic groups, especially concerning their average level of income. For example, in 1957, the average monthly income for the Malays was estimated to be around *Ringgit Malaysia* (RM) 139, for the Indians it was RM 237 while for the Chinese it was RM 300.<sup>129</sup> In terms of levels of poverty, according to estimates in 1966, nearly 65 per cent of all Malays lived below the official poverty line, compared with 26 per cent of the Chinese and 39 per cent of the Indian households.<sup>130</sup> Collectively, the Malays held no more than 1.5 per cent of the country's equity during the first decade of independence, while the Chinese held around 23 per cent and foreign investors the rest.<sup>131</sup> The target of

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<sup>127</sup> Cited by Karl Von Vorys, *Democracy without Consensus: Communalism and Political Stability in Malaysia* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 406.

<sup>128</sup> See, for example, Edmund Terence Gomez, *The State of Malaysia: Ethnicity, Equity, and Reform* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), Malaysia., *Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975* (Kuala Lumpur: Printed at the Govt. Press, 1971), Robin Ramcharan, "Southeast Asian Security: Pitfalls of the Regional Approach," in *PSIS Occasional Paper Number 1* (Geneva: Programme of Strategic and International Security Studies, 1998), Torii, "The New Economic Policy and the United Malays National Organization - with Special Reference to the Restructuring of Malaysian Society."

<sup>129</sup> Mah, "Affirmative Action, Ethnicity and Integration: The Case of Malaysia," pp. 250-76.

<sup>130</sup> Gurr and Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, p. 63.

<sup>131</sup> Sundaram, *A Question of Class: Capital, the State, and Uneven Development in Malaya*, p. 254.

the NEP<sup>132</sup> was to reduce the percentage of the population living in poverty and to increase the equity ownership of the Malay community from under 2 per cent in 1970 to 30 per cent by 1990. In short, the decision to implement NEP was made to redress the economic imbalances among the ethnic groups because the Malay political elites believed that poverty was one of the reasons for the eruption of the racial riots in 1969.

According to Tan, the riots prompted almost two years of emergency rule, which led to the erosion of genuine consociationalism, marking the beginning of increased Malay control and dominance in various areas affected, mainly through the NEP.<sup>133</sup> Through the NEP, UMNO managed to ensure that the Malays could also achieve eventual economic dominance aside from maintaining their political dominance in the country.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, at the end of the NEP in 1990, the Malays' share of the economy rose from 3 per cent at the onset of the NEP in 1971 to 20 per cent.<sup>135</sup> The level of poverty fell from 30 per cent in 1977 to 17 per cent in 1987 and more Malays became entrepreneurs, creating a substantial Malay middle class because of the affirmative pro-Malay economic policies of the NEP. The improvements in the Malay population's economic condition in general, however, did not have any negative effect on the non-Malays' economic wealth. Since 1971, the share of the economy under control of non-Malays had risen from 34 per cent to 47 per cent.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> On NEP, see, R.S. Milne, "Malaysia - Beyond the New Economic Policy," *Asian Survey* 26, no. 12 (1986): pp. 1364-82, R.S. Milne, "The Politics of Malaysia's New Economic Policy," *Pacific Affairs* 49, no. 2 (1976): pp. 235-62.

<sup>133</sup> Tan, "From Sojourners to Citizens: Managing the Ethnic Chinese Minority in Indonesia and Malaysia," pp. 949-78.

<sup>134</sup> Mak, "Malaysian Defence and Security Cooperation: Coming out of the Closet," p. 129.

<sup>135</sup> Cited from Malaysian Government's Statistic by Torii, "The New Economic Policy and the United Malays National Organization - with Special Reference to the Restructuring of Malaysian Society."

<sup>136</sup> Clark D. Neher, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Politics in Asia and the Pacific* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), pp. 133-4.

### Operation Lalang 1987

Besides contestation over political and economic issues, various beliefs in types of education also contributed to ethnic tension in Malaysia. Unlike with political and economic matters, where ethnic contestation was “stabilised”, educational issues remained contentious. From time to time, there were flare-ups and tensions on matters of education that hinged around the autonomy of vernacular education.<sup>137</sup> For various reasons, the Chinese in Malaysia developed and maintained a very passionate attachment to Chinese education. In essence, the Chinese strongly resisted any initiatives made by the government to standardise the education system in the country because they perceived them as government interference in their affairs. Scholars such as Lee Hock Guan even describe the initiative by the government to streamline the country’s education system as a “Malay-dominated state’s attempts to regulate, control and marginalize Chinese education”.<sup>138</sup> In addition, Hock Guan claims that the main reason why the government wanted to standardise the education system was due to the Malays perception that “the Chinese education is detrimental to the development of a national culture and to fostering national unity”.<sup>139</sup> The Chinese Education Movement (Dong Jiao Zong, DJZ) also held this perception. The DJZ was a body that represented two Chinese educationalist organisations, namely: the United Chinese School Committees’ Association (UCSCA) and the United Chinese School Teachers’ Association (UCSTA).<sup>140</sup> In addition, the DJZ was also responsible for the

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<sup>137</sup> Johan Saravanamuthu, "Malaysian Multicultural Policy and Practices: Between Communalism and Consociationalism," in *The Challenge of Ethnicity: Building a Nation in Malaysia*, ed. Boon Kheng Cheah (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2004).

<sup>138</sup> Lee, *Ethnic Relations in Peninsular Malaysia: The Cultural and Economic Dimension*, p. 9.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>140</sup> Collins, "Securitization, Frankenstein's Monster and Malaysian Education," pp. 567-88.

administration, the running of more than 1,281 Chinese primary schools in Malaysia and raising funds for the Independent Chinese Secondary Schools.<sup>141</sup>

The suspicions surrounding government initiatives concerning Chinese vernacular education reached a climax when the then Minister of Education appointed 100 non-Mandarin educated Chinese teachers in the Chinese primary schools in September 1987.<sup>142</sup> The decision contributed to a rise in ethnic tension in Malaysia after DJZ warned the Chinese community that these appointments would “change the character of the Chinese schools”.<sup>143</sup> On top of this, DJZ successfully created fear among the Chinese community that the appointment ‘was a subtle attempt by the regime to further undermine the status of the Chinese population’.<sup>144</sup> As a result, DJZ was able to quickly mobilise support for a protest by bringing together the opposition Chinese-based political party, the Democratic Action Party (DAP), other Chinese associations and guilds, the National Front Chinese parties, the MCA, and Gerakan.<sup>145</sup> Over 2,000 leaders from all of these Chinese-based organisations gathered on 11 October 1987 at the Thean Hou Temple in Kuala Lumpur where they called for a three-day boycott of schools if the appointments were not withdrawn.<sup>146</sup>

Even though the boycott was called off, the Malays headed by the Youth wing of UMNO responded by holding a rally in which around 10,000 Malays participated.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> For an account of events see, Johan Saravanamuthu, "Authoritarian Statism and Strategies for Democratisation: Malaysia in the 1980s," in *Partisan Scholarship: Essays in Honour of Renato Constantino*, ed. Peter Limqueco and Renato Constantino (Manila, Million: Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers, 1989).

<sup>143</sup> Liok Ee Tan, "DJZ and the Challenge to Cultural Hegemony 1951-1987," in *Fragmented Vision : Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, ed. Joel S. Kahn and Francis Kok-Wah Loh (North Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia, in association with Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 181-201.

<sup>144</sup> Sumit Ganguly, "The Politics of Language Policies in Malaysia and Singapore," in *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia*, ed. Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), p. 251.

<sup>145</sup> Amy L. Freedman, "The Effect of Government Policy and Institutions on Chinese Overseas Acculturation: The Case of Malaysia," *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (2001): pp. 411-40.

<sup>146</sup> Collins, "Securitization, Frankenstein's Monster and Malaysian Education."

<sup>147</sup> Saravanamuthu, "Malaysian Multicultural Policy and Practices: Between Communalism and Consociationalism," pp. 89-114.

During the rally, MCA leaders, such as its deputy president, were condemned for championing the DJZ cause and colluding with the opposition party, the DAP. In addition, UMNO also planned to have another rally whereby it was estimated that around half a million of its members would attend. The rally was actually designed to celebrate UMNO's 41<sup>st</sup> Anniversary. However, with the Malays perceiving that the Chinese were uniting against them, there was every prospect that the rally would become anti-Chinese. At that time, the possibility of experiencing another ethnic riot in Kuala Lumpur was considered very high. As Harold Crouch wrote, "[t] here seems to be little doubt that racial tensions had risen to a high point during October 1987; fear[s] that 'May 13 Ha[d] Begun', were by no means unfounded."<sup>148</sup> Fearing another ethnic riot in the capital city, the Inspector General of Police cancelled the rally.

This tension led the government to launch "Operation Lalang" in October 1987, during which 150 individuals were arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA).<sup>149</sup> Among those arrested were members of the political parties from DAP, MCA, Gerakan, PAS, and UMNO youth leaders. In addition, a number of university lecturers and the President of DJZ were also arrested and three newspapers were suspended indefinitely.<sup>150</sup> The government accused the DJZ of playing "prominent roles in exploiting sensitive issues as extremist pressure groups", of increasing "racial sentiments among the Chinese", and "agitation" by "raising questions that can hurt the feelings of the Malays".<sup>151</sup> The 'questions raised' regarded the imbalance in opportunities that exist between the different races because of Malaysia's affirmative action policies.

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<sup>148</sup> Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, p. 111.

<sup>149</sup> Lee, *Ethnic Relations in Peninsular Malaysia: The Cultural and Economic Dimension*.

<sup>150</sup> Collins, "Securitization, Frankenstein's Monster and Malaysian Education."

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

Besides the DJZ, a Chinese election body, the Malaysian Chinese Organisations' Elections Appeal Committee (SUQUI), also contributed to ethnic tension in the country when, during the 1997 economic crisis, the body took issue with Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera rights.<sup>152</sup> In 2000, ethnic tensions increased again when the body demanded that UMNO accord non-Malays an equal status with Malays and other Bumiputera and to end the education quotas. The then Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, responded to the demand by indicating that there would be no elimination of Bumiputera rights as long as the Malays wished to retain them.

In short, the account above shows how contentious relations have been between the two main ethnic groups in Malaysia. It also indicates that the government is ever willing to implement any policies that would serve to protect the interest of the Malays in the country. As Gordon Means has perceptively noted, 'the reality of Malay political power [being] overwhelming and unassailable' was clear to all.<sup>153</sup> Not only was Malay security guaranteed politically, but also the community's sense of relative deprivation gradually declined as the state became more assertive in the economic realm as a result of the NEP, and succeeded redressing economic imbalances to some extent. Overall, the Malaysian state, in Nathan's view, is only a political expression: its political fundamentals are Malay in origin and evolution. The political basis of Malaysian security prioritises the security of ethnic Malays over other groups.<sup>154</sup> All the preceding points show that domestically, the themes of Malay survival and political domination, apart from the struggle for political equality by other ethnic groups, have dominated the discussion regarding identity and security in Malaysia since independence.<sup>155</sup> The following section argues that the ethnic factor has equally informed Malaysia's foreign

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<sup>152</sup> Cheah, *The Challenge of Ethnicity: Building a Nation in Malaysia*, p. 3.

<sup>153</sup> Gordon P Means, *Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 316.

<sup>154</sup> Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation," p. 521.

<sup>155</sup> Haque, "The Role of the State in Managing Ethnic Tensions in Malaysia," pp. 240-66.

policy especially with regard to 'protecting' the interests of the Malays from perceived external threats.

### 3.3 *Protecting the Malays' Interests from External Threats*

Given the intertwined nature of the state's interests and the political leadership, the government has retained its role in formulating the foreign policy. Although there are other actors besides the state who have played some role in shaping the country's foreign policy, their role have been limited to the issues related to the economic development of the country.<sup>156</sup> Areas that are perceived as more crucial such as the military-security and political-ideological issues, however, are still being monopolised by the government.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, the process of formulating the policy does not takes place in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as it is commonly assumed. Instead, the actual formulation of foreign policy has traditionally take place primarily in the Prime Minister's Department and the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been limited only to the implementation of foreign policy decisions.<sup>158</sup> In fact, within the Malaysian government's bureaucratic structure, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not even regarded as a major or central agency unlike other government agencies/ministries such as the Treasury, the Public Services Department or the Prime Minister's Department.<sup>159</sup> A number of scholars had analysed the process of formulating Malaysia's foreign policy.<sup>160</sup> In general, they have concluded that in fact, the shaping of its foreign policy

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<sup>156</sup> Hari Singh, "Malaysia: Growing Foreign Policy Complexity and Persistent State Power," in *Diplomacy and Developing Nations: Post-Cold War Foreign Policy-Making Structures and Processes*, ed. Maurice A. East and Justin Robertson (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 217.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-17.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>159</sup> Zakaria Haji Ahmad, "Change and Adaptation in Foreign Policy: Malaysia's Foreign Ministry," in *Foreign Ministries: Change and Adaptation*, ed. Brian Hocking (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 119.

<sup>160</sup> See, for example, Zakaria Haji Ahmad, "Malaysian Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics: Looking Outward and Moving Inward?," in *Asia and the Major Powers: Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy*, ed. Robert A. Scalapino (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1988), Nair,



was essentially based on the rationalisation of the prevailing conceptions of the head of the government and his observations of domestic needs and international considerations. In other words, Malaysia's foreign policy is not the outcome of a domestic debate but more of a reflection of the style, values, and sense of national interest held by the leader of the country.<sup>161</sup>

Having said that, Malaysia's foreign policy, however, have not been determined solely by all of the respective Prime Ministers. In fact, there are other key agencies that are known to be utilised by the Prime Ministers in the policy formulation process. Among others is the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS). The ISIS which is supposedly an independent organisation is essentially a hybrid of present and former government officials who oversee it, and its existence depends heavily on government funding.<sup>162</sup> According to Haji Ahmad, the exact position of the ISIS in foreign policymaking is not known, but tensions are said to have existed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its formative period in 1983-1984.<sup>163</sup> In fact, at certain periods ISIS has been regarded by some as the 'other' foreign ministry.<sup>164</sup> Besides ISIS, another agency that has been utilised for the formulation of the country's foreign policy is the little publicised government unit known as the Research Division located within the Prime Minister's Department. This division has both internal and external security functions and provides the chief decision maker with important inputs on

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*Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, Johan Saravanamuthu, *The Dilemma of Independence: Two Decades of Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1957-1977* (Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1983), Singh, "Malaysia: Growing Foreign Policy Complexity and Persistent State Power."

<sup>161</sup> Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, Haji Ahmad, "Malaysian Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics: Looking Outward and Moving Inward?," p. 257, Means, *Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation*, Chapter 4-9.

<sup>162</sup> Singh, "Malaysia: Growing Foreign Policy Complexity and Persistent State Power," p. 205.

<sup>163</sup> Haji Ahmad, "Change and Adaptation in Foreign Policy: Malaysia's Foreign Ministry," p. 122, Haji Ahmad, "Malaysian Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics: Looking Outward and Moving Inward?," p. 266.

<sup>164</sup> Haji Ahmad, "Change and Adaptation in Foreign Policy: Malaysia's Foreign Ministry," p. 122, Haji Ahmad, "Malaysian Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics: Looking Outward and Moving Inward?," p. 266.

foreign/security issues.<sup>165</sup> From the observation made by Haji Ahmad, this division's frame of reference is unclear, but it is believed that its purpose is to ensure the 'Malay character' of the government's policies.<sup>166</sup> There are at least two examples that indicate that the Malaysian government has indeed adopted a policy which aims at "protecting" the interests of the Malays in Malaysia from what the government has perceived as a threat to Malay interests. The first example relates to the way in which the Malaysian government has responded to the effects of its diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China on its Chinese citizens. The second example concerns the government's reaction to the Vietnamese refugee crisis.

### 3.3.1 Diplomatic Relations with the People's Republic of China

The "Chinese problem", as some put it, when referring to the existence of the large Malaysian Chinese community, has played a significant role in shaping Malaysia's perception of China and has given rise to the fear of a linkage between Beijing and sections of the local Chinese population. During the Cold War period, KL feared that these ties would reinforce the spread of communist ideology. This fear coincided with a heightened national consciousness on the part of the Chinese ethnic group and pride in their motherland, leading the local Chinese population to be often regarded as the fifth column for communist China.<sup>167</sup> At the same time, the Chinese government had also openly demonstrated its support for the CPM's 'liberation' war.<sup>168</sup> Consequently, Malaysia initially refrained from having diplomatic relations with either the Chinese government in Beijing or Taipei for fear that an embassy would both provide a focal

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<sup>165</sup> Singh, "Malaysia: Growing Foreign Policy Complexity and Persistent State Power," p. 205.

<sup>166</sup> Haji Ahmad, "Change and Adaptation in Foreign Policy: Malaysia's Foreign Ministry," p. 122.

<sup>167</sup> Boon Kheng Cheah, *Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and after the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, 1941-1946* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1987), Walker Connor, "Ethnology and Peace of South Asia," *World Politics* 22, no. 1 (1969): pp. 51-86.

<sup>168</sup> Shome, *Malay Political Leadership*, p. 103.

point for the Chinese in Malaysia to continue to be loyal to China, which could then spark ethnic strife in Malaysia.<sup>169</sup>

Reacting to a global shift in the balance of power as a consequence of China-US rapprochement, the second Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, in September 1971 announced Malaysia's willingness to establish diplomatic ties with China even though the Malaysian government remained anxious about what impact a Chinese embassy might have on the overseas Chinese community.<sup>170</sup> Malaysia finally established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in May 1974, after Malaysia made it clear that diplomatic relations were preconditioned on Beijing's firm assurances that it would not attempt to influence internal Malaysian politics.<sup>171</sup> Malaysia was the first ASEAN member state to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing. However, despite having established diplomatic relations between the two countries, there were incidents that had directly annoyed the Malaysian government during the first few years of the diplomatic relationship. However, relations between the countries have improved greatly since the end of the communist rebellion in 1989, and the notion of the 'China threat/Chinese fifth columnist' is hardly ever heard now.<sup>172</sup>

### 3.3.2 Malaysia's Response to Vietnamese Refugees

The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 not only created a crisis situation in the Indochinese peninsula, but also threatened the stability of Southeast Asia and the members of ASEAN.<sup>173</sup> Besides being intensely concerned that communism

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<sup>169</sup> Charles Edward Morrison and Astri Suhrke, *Strategies of Survival: The Foreign Policy Dilemmas of Smaller Asian States* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1978), p. 147.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, Shome, *Malay Political Leadership*, p. 103.

<sup>171</sup> Morrison and Suhrke, *Strategies of Survival: The Foreign Policy Dilemmas of Smaller Asian States*, p. 147.

<sup>172</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 114.

<sup>173</sup> For detailed discussion on the crisis, see, Poh Ping Lee, "The Indochinese Situation and the Big Powers in Southeast Asia: The Malaysian View," *Asian Survey* 22, no. 6 (1982): pp. 515-23, Sharpe, "An ASEAN Way to Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia?," pp. 231-50.

was expanding throughout the region, one of the direct consequences of the invasion was that the ASEAN members had to deal with a huge influx of refugees known as “boat people” in their respective territories. During 1978 and in the first half of 1979, the number of people who fled from southern Vietnam increased so drastically that by July 1979 a total of some 204,000 had landed in the ASEAN countries seeking first asylum.<sup>174</sup> In fact, Malaysia received the largest number of these refugees; more than 120,000 of them landing in the Malay Peninsula.<sup>175</sup> Approximate figures for all arrivals by boat people in the other countries of Southeast Asia up to July 1979 were as follows: Indonesia 40,000; Philippines 11,000; Singapore 2,100; and Thailand 30,000.<sup>176</sup> Before Malaysia finally resolved the issue in 2001 when the government closed the last camp for the Vietnamese boat people, a total of nearly 255,000 refugees had been given temporary asylum in the country.<sup>177</sup>

Given its previously insecure status as the majority ethnic group in the country, the Malays remain extremely concerned about their population size and status relative to the country’s competing ethnic groups.<sup>178</sup> The anxiety that the uncontrolled inflow of these refugees would make the Malays once again a “minority” in what they consider their “own” country as in 1947, led the government to label the arrival of the Vietnamese boat people, who happened to be predominantly of Chinese ancestry, as a security threat.<sup>179</sup> As the result of this fear, although the government policy towards refugees has altered from period to period, a constant feature of that policy has been that no Indochinese refugees who land in Malaysia can expect to become settlers.<sup>180</sup> In fact,

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<sup>174</sup> Milton Osborne, "The Indochinese Refugees: Cause and Effects," *International Affairs* 56, no. 1 (1980): p. 42.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Amarjit Kaur, "Refugees and Refugee Policy in Malaysia," *UNEAC Asia Papers*, no. 18 (2007): p. 83.

<sup>178</sup> Hoddie, *Ethnic Realignment: A Comparative Study of Government Influences on Identity*, p. 87.

<sup>179</sup> See, for example, Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, p. 691, Singh, "Malaysia's National Security: Rhetoric and Substance," pp. 1-25.

<sup>180</sup> Osborne, "The Indochinese Refugees: Cause and Effects," pp. 48-49.

in June 1979, Dr. Mahathir, who was the Deputy Prime Minister, announced that refugees in Malaysia would be expelled and those seeking to enter in the future would be shot if they ignored warnings to go away.<sup>181</sup> Although the Malaysian Prime Minister, Hussein Onn, subsequently denied that the boat people would be shot, he made clear that Malaysia would turn away boats attempting to land refugees.<sup>182</sup> However, these warnings were merely rhetoric, as the boat people continued to seek first asylum in the country. Despite giving the refugees temporary asylum, according to various reports, Malaysia was 'perhaps the most resolute of the Southeast Asian first-asylum countries in pursuing the repatriation of Vietnamese boat people'.<sup>183</sup> This shows that although Malaysia was willing to extend humanitarian assistance to the refugees, due to the delicate demographic structure, the government had no intention of allowing them to settle in the country.

The Malaysian government's approach towards the refugees such as those from Aceh and the Southern Philippines, on the other hand, has differed significantly from the approach concerning the Vietnamese refugees. According to Kaur, the Malaysian government worked in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from 1977-86 to integrate them and fund housing, healthcare facilities and schooling for their children.<sup>184</sup> Although Malaysia promised to return the refugees following the 1996 Peace agreement between the Philippines government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), no major repatriation occurred. In the case of the refugees from Aceh, although Malaysia regarded all undocumented migrants from Indonesia as economic migrants, the government allowed them to stay,

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<sup>181</sup> Judith Strauch, "Malaysia's Response to the Boat People: The Ethnic Factor," *Southeast Asia Chronicle* (1980).

<sup>182</sup> Osborne, "The Indochinese Refugees: Cause and Effects," pp. 37-53.

<sup>183</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Flight from Indochina* (2000 [cited 8 October 2007]); available from <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3ebf9bad0.pdf>, Nancy Viviani, *The Long Journey: Vietnamese Migration and Settlement in Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1984).

<sup>184</sup> Kaur, "Refugees and Refugee Policy in Malaysia," p. 87.

acknowledging that they could be persecuted if they were returned to Aceh. In other words, the movement of the Moros and the Acehnese into Malaysia was viewed as a positive development, especially among some segments of the Malay elites.<sup>185</sup> As illustrated by Cribb,

“Migration to Malaysia from Indonesia and from the Muslim provinces in the southern Philippines, on the other hand, although often technically illegal, was commonly welcomed by the government as a means of boosting the demographic strength of the Malays vis-à-vis the large Chinese and Indian minorities”.<sup>186</sup>

In short, ethnic Malays’ fear of becoming a minority in the country due to the arrival of predominantly ethnic Chinese refugees from Vietnam during the height of the Vietnamese War indicated the government’s determination to ensure that Malays would continue to be the majority ethnic group in the country.

Both examples demonstrate that besides protecting the Malays’ interests in the country, the Malaysian government has also employed strategies and policies that aim to safeguard the Malays’ interests from perceived external threats. Against this backdrop concerning Malaysia’s domestic security practice, the thesis has prepared the ground to examine the influence of the ethnic factor on its external security practices.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Although Malaysia’s security practice comprises efforts that are premised on a broad notion of security incorporating political, military, economic, social, cultural, and psychological dimensions, preserving the Malay core of Malaysia’s society is arguably the most important goal of the Malaysian search for security. Given its previously insecure hold on the majority status, the Malay community remains intensely concerned

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<sup>185</sup> Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, p. 691.

<sup>186</sup> Cribb and Narangoa, "Orphans of Empire: Divided Peoples, Dilemmas of Identity, and Old Imperial Borders in East and Southeast Asia," p. 175.

about its population size and status relative to the country's competing ethnic groups.<sup>187</sup> To ease this anxiety, the Malay-controlled government has promoted policies that are favourable to the Malays/Bumiputera especially since the most senior partner in the ruling party, UMNO, sees itself as the defender of Malay rights and interests. Subsequently, it is understandable that the security perceptions of its leaders have been shaped around the objective of Malay survival. As an ethnocratic state, domestic politics play a critical role in Malaysia's foreign and security policy.<sup>188</sup> Chapter 4 to Chapter 6 analyse whether the issue of ethnicity affects Malaysia's security practice towards conflict in Southern Thailand, Aceh, and in the Moro Region.

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<sup>187</sup> Hoddie, *Ethnic Realignments: A Comparative Study of Government Influences on Identity*, p. 87.

<sup>188</sup> Mak, "Malaysian Defence and Security Cooperation: Coming out of the Closet," pp. 127-53.

## Chapter 4: Malaysia's Security Practices Towards Southern Thailand



**Map 3: Malaysia – Thailand Borders**  
Source: <http://www.puloinfo.net/?Show=Sejarah>

### *Introduction*

By the end of the 1990s, there was a general perception that the Thai government had successfully dealt with the ethno-nationalist conflict in Southern Thailand. However, since 2001 the conflict has been steadily escalating, which resulted in the Thai government placing the Malay majority provinces in the south under martial law in 2004.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, numerous scholars and international organisations have attempted to explain the contemporary upsurge in violence. Generally, the violence is linked to the

<sup>1</sup> Smith, "Trouble in Thailand's Muslim South: Separatism, Not Global Terrorism."



grievances held by the Malay ethnic group in these provinces.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will not endeavour to provide a comprehensive analysis of the conflict; rather it only investigates whether the question of ethnic kinship between the Thai Malays and the Malaysian Malays has influenced Malaysia's security practices towards the conflict. The main argument of this chapter is that Malaysia's security practice in the case of the conflict in southern Thailand can only be understood with reference to domestic and regional concerns and with reference to the framework of a common ethnic identity.

The chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section [4.1] analyses the ethnic identity of the Thai Malays and gives a brief overview of their history in Thailand. In addition, this section also analyses the Thai central government's policies towards the Malays in the context of nation-building in Thailand. The primary purpose of this section is to illustrate why the struggle by the Thai Malays continues despite 'their' provinces having been incorporated into Thailand for almost 100 years. The second section [4.2] offers an overview of the ethno-nationalist movement in southern Thailand. The objective of this section is to elaborate on the particular goals of the various ethno-nationalist organisations under discussion (composed of ethnic Malays). The third section [4.3] analyses the ethnic linkages between the population in southern Thailand and the Malays in Malaysia. In order to set the context for a discussion of how ethnic kinship between the Malays across the common border has affected Malaysia's security practices towards the conflict in southern Thailand, the fourth section [4.4] analyses the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Thailand. Lastly, the fifth section

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Thailand: International Terrorism and the Muslim South," in *Southeast Asian Affairs*, ed. Daljit Singh and Chin Kin Wah (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," (Brussels: 18 May 2005), Rohan Gunaratna, Arabinda Acharya, and Sabrina Chua, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*.

[4.5] discusses the influence of ASEAN on Malaysia's stance towards the conflict in southern Thailand.

#### **4.1 The Malays in Southern Thailand**

The Malay ethnic group is estimated to make up around four to five per cent of Thailand's total population of 62 million.<sup>3</sup> Although the Malay ethnic group constitutes only a small minority in the country, they form the majority in Thailand's southernmost provinces: Patani,<sup>4</sup> Narathiwat, Yala and Satun. In fact, according to Liow, the entire region is popularly defined as the "Malay heartland" of Thailand.<sup>5</sup> Estimates are that in the provinces of Narathiwat and Patani, Malays make up around 80 to 85 per cent of the total population, whereas in Yala this figure is around 70 per cent and in Satun approximately 65 per cent.<sup>6</sup> Besides being the majority ethnic group in three of the southern provinces, the Malays also represent the largest Muslim population in Thailand because they constitute almost 80 per cent of the total 4 million Muslims in the country.<sup>7</sup> The Malay ethnic group in Thailand's southern provinces is distinct compared to the other ethnic minorities in the country. Above all, unlike the other ethnic minorities in Thailand, the Thai Malays are politically significant because they have been actively demanding their self-determination and have consistently resisted Bangkok's assimilation policy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Linda J. True, "Balancing Minorities: A Study of Southern Thailand," in *SAIS Working Paper Series* (Washington: 2004), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> 'Patani' is the Malay version; 'Pattani' is translated from the Thai spelling. This thesis will be using 'Patani' instead.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Chinyong Liow, *Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2006), p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Liow, "The Security Situation in Southern Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Domestic and International Dimensions," pp. 531-48, Duncan McCargo, "Southern Thai Politics: A Preliminary Overview," in *Dynamic Diversity in Southern Thailand*, ed. Sugunnasil Wattana (Chiang Mai: Silk Worm Books: Prince of Songkhla University, 2005), p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> True, "Balancing Minorities: A Study of Southern Thailand," p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Uthai Dulyakasem, "Muslim-Malay Separatism in Southern Thailand: Factors Underlying the Political Revolt," in *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Joo-Jock Lim and S. Vani (Singapore: Regional Strategic Studies Programme, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), pp. 217.

#### 4.1.1 Thai Malays' Ethnic Identity

Another important trait that distinguishes the Malays from the other ethnic minorities in Thailand is that “they did not come to Thailand, but Thailand came to them.”<sup>9</sup> The conceptualisation of a separate identity among the Malay ethnic group in southern Thailand has revolved around four major premises, namely; the historical legacy of the Sultanate of the Patani that existed from 1390 to 1902; their ethnic distinctiveness and their ethnic ties with the Malays in Malaysia; and Islam.<sup>10</sup> As in Malaysia, to be Malay in the southern provinces of Thailand is also to be Muslim, yet the converse is not necessarily true – a Muslim need not be Malay.<sup>11</sup> In other words, like for other Malays, especially those in Malaysia, for the Thai Malays, ‘Malayness’ and Islam are virtually inseparable. An example of this inextricable link between the ethnic and religious identity of the Thai Malays can be seen when their leaders appealed to the outside world during the campaign of resistance to the Thai government in early 1948 using the following terms: ‘Give us back our race as Malays and our religion as Islam.’<sup>12</sup> Although the Malay sultanate has been integrated into Thailand since 1909, the pre-eminent role of Malay identity in the south of Thailand has continued. There are a number of significant ways in which the Malay identity has been sustained, such as through the continuation of the common use of the language among the Malays in these

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew D. W. Forbes and Sachchidanand Sahai, *The Muslims of Thailand*, vol. 2 (Gaya, Bihar, India: Centre for South East Asian Studies, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Connor Bailey and John Miksic, "The Country of Patani in the Period of Re-Awakening: A Chapter from Ibrahim Syukri's Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani," *The Muslim of Thailand, Volume II: Politics of the Malay Speaking South* (1989), Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*, p. 174.

<sup>11</sup> Omar Farouk Bajunid, "Islam, Nationalism, and the Thai State," in *Dynamic Diversity in Southern Thailand*, ed. Sugunnasil Wattana (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books: Prince of Songkhla University, 2005), p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddin, "Letter to Barbara Whittingham Jones Dated 21 January 1948," in *The Jones Papers* (SOAS Library, London: 1948).

provinces and the geographical contiguity with the northern Malay states of Kedah, Perak and Kelantan in Malaysia.<sup>13</sup>

However, unlike Patani, Narathiwat and Yala, the province of Satun had been spared from the violence plaguing its neighbouring provinces because the Malays there had never organised themselves to “rebel” against the Thai central government. Basically, there are three main explanations for this phenomenon. First, according to Syamsuddin Khan, who is currently the Head of the Executive Committee of the Patani United Liberation Front (PULO), the Malays in Satun are different from the Malays in the other three provinces primarily because they do not share Patani’s past.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the three other provinces that were formally under the Sultanate of Patani, Satun, on the other hand, used to be part of the Sultanate of Kedah’s territory.<sup>15</sup> When most of Kedah was ceded by Siam<sup>16</sup> to British Malaya in 1909, Satun was made a Thai province.<sup>17</sup> Second, Kasturi Mahkota, the Chief of the Foreign Affairs Department, Patani United Liberation Front (New-PULO), claimed that the Malays in Satun did not develop the same degree of Malay nationalism as the Malays in the other three provinces because there were fewer religious schools in Satun compared to the other provinces.<sup>18</sup> These religious schools, according to Mahkota, do not only function as the place where students learn about Islam but they also serve as the bastion of Malay history and identity.<sup>19</sup> In other words, through teaching the students about their history and identity,

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<sup>13</sup> Bajunid, "Islam, Nationalism, and the Thai State," p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Syamsuddin Khan, 11 September 2006. Syamsuddin Khan is currently the Head of Executive Committee, Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO). Also see, Ruth McVey, "Identity and Rebellion among Southern Thai Muslims," in *The Muslim in Thailand*, ed. Andrew Forbes (Bihar: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Khan. See for instance, Donald Tugby and Elise Tugby, "Malay-Muslim and Thai-Buddhist Relations in the Patani Region: An Interpretation," in *The Muslims of Thailand*, ed. Andrew D. W. Forbes and Sachchidanand Sahai (Gaya, Bihar, India: Centre for South East Asian Studies, 1989), pp. 73-74.

<sup>16</sup> The country’s official name was changed from Siam to Thailand on 11 May 1949.

<sup>17</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," p. 2 n. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Kasturi Mahkota, 7 September 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

the religious schools in Southern Thailand have developed a strong sense of Malay nationalism among the new Malay generation. Third, the province's main chain of communication is northward to Thailand. This has fostered a closer link with Thai culture and customs and stands in harsh contrast to the provinces of Yala, Patani and Narathiwat, which maintain very close border contacts with Malaysia.<sup>20</sup> In fact, most of the Malays in Satun speak Thai in their everyday lives and therefore have not felt aggrieved by a sense of linguistic alienation.<sup>21</sup> In other words, looking at these three explanations, one can argue that in the case of the conflict in southern Thailand, Thai Malays have been politicised by their nationalism that is based on the importance of the historical legacy of their sultanate and not Islam per se.

#### 4.1.2 The History of the Malay Ethnic group in Thailand

Historically, a large area of territory in the region of the Isthmus of Kra was ruled by an ancient Malay Kingdom called Langkasuka, which was founded some time in the First century A.D.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the territory that presently covers the provinces of Patani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces was part of this ancient Malay kingdom.<sup>23</sup> This kingdom lasted for 400 years and was populous and prosperous.<sup>24</sup> This ancient Malay Kingdom was renamed the Kingdom of Patani or "Greater Patani" ("Patani Raya") at some point in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup> According to Newbold, the Kingdom of Patani<sup>26</sup> "was once the

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24 (2001): pp. 241-69.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Lukman Thaib, *The Politics and Governments of South East Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Golden Books Centre, 1997), p. 92.

<sup>23</sup> Dulyakasem, "Muslim-Malay Separatism in Southern Thailand: Factors Underlying the Political Revolt," pp. 220-21.

<sup>24</sup> Thaib, *The Politics and Governments of South East Asia*.

<sup>25</sup> Syed Serajul Islam, "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 5 (1998): p. 443, Virginia Matheson and M.B Hooker, "Jawi Literature in Patani: The Maintenance of an Islamic Tradition," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of Royal Asiatic* 61, no. Part 1 (1988): pp. 1-86.

<sup>26</sup> For a comprehensive history of the kingdom, see for instance, Bailey and Miksic, "The Country of Patani in the Period of Re-Awakening: A Chapter from Ibrahim Syukri's *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu*

largest and most populous of the Malay states on the Peninsula".<sup>27</sup> Patani had its golden age from 1584 – 1651. The sultanate has been described as an important commercial hub for Asian as well as for European traders.<sup>28</sup> In addition, Patani was also an important centre of Islamic scholarship in the Malay world.<sup>29</sup> The confrontation between Siam and the Malay sultanates started when Sukhotai<sup>30</sup> began to flex its political muscles in the southern parts of the Malayan peninsula. During the mid-fourteenth century, the empire of Ayudhya<sup>31</sup> met military resistance from the Malay Muslim sultanates of Patani, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Melaka. With the defeat of the Melaka Sultanate<sup>32</sup> to the Portuguese in 1511, Siam eventually succeeded in making all of the other aforementioned Malay states its vassals. As vassal states, all of these Malay sultanates were required to send the *Bunga Mas* (a tree with flowers and leaves made of gold) to the King of Siam as a form of submission.<sup>33</sup> However, these Malay sultanates viewed this form of submission as largely symbolic, as neither the Thai political system nor the Thai culture was imposed on them at that time. In other words, although the Malay sultanates were Siam's vassal states, they were able to cherish their Malay distinctiveness,<sup>34</sup> and the sultanates' political authority remained in the hands of the respective sultans.<sup>35</sup> However, while for the latter the tributary relationship with

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Patani.", Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*.

<sup>27</sup> T. J. Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca [by] T.J. Newbold, with an Introd. By C.M. Turnbull* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 670.

<sup>28</sup> Thaib, *The Politics and Governments of South East Asia*, p. 92.

<sup>29</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.173.

<sup>30</sup> Sukhotai was an early Thai Kingdom that existed from 1238 till 1438.

<sup>31</sup> The Kingdom of Ayudhya existed after Sukhotai from 1350–1767.

<sup>32</sup> Patani was under the reign of the Malacca Sultanate in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>33</sup> Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> Gopinath, "International Aspects of the Thai Muslim and Philippine Moro Issues: A Comparative Study," pp. 125-47.

<sup>35</sup> Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, pp. 110-12.

Siam was simply a symbol of friendship, Siam viewed this arrangement as an expression of allegiance.<sup>36</sup>

In 1785, the King of Siam decided to abolish this symbolic arrangement and enforced what has been referred to as centralisation policies by absorbing Patani and the other Malay sultanates (Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu) into the Siamese Empire.<sup>37</sup> In 1909, Siam signed the Anglo-Siamese Treaty with the British whereby the Siamese kingdom agreed to relinquish the Malay states of Perlis,<sup>38</sup> Kedah, Terengganu, and Kelantan to British Malaya.<sup>39</sup> Besides casting a new international border between Thailand and British Malaya, the treaty also resulted in the formal incorporation of Patani, as the only Malay sultanate that became part of the Thai kingdom. In other words, the Malay provinces are in Thailand as the result of the annexation of their sultanate by Siam before being incorporated into Thailand. The inclusion of Patani following the signing of the Treaty allowed the Siamese government to take various measures aimed at what Brown has classified as creating a "mono-ethnic character of the state."<sup>40</sup> Among the measures implemented were the reorganisation of the Patani sultanate into three provinces such as Patani, Yala and Narathiwat and the replacement of local rulers with Thai governors. These measures, generally viewed by the Malays as unjust, evoked particularly strong resentment among the Patani royalty because the

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<sup>36</sup> Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 74.

<sup>37</sup> Nantawan Haemindra, "The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 7, no. 2 (1976): p. 198.

<sup>38</sup> Just like Satun, Perlis was also originally part of the Kedah Sultanate. Perlis was separated from Kedah by Siam in 1842. See, Kay Kim Khoo, *Malay Society: Transformation and Democratisation* (Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 2001), p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Steinmetz, "Thai Nationalism and the Malay Muslim Minority. Reflections on the Domestic and Foreign Policy Aspects of Relevant Historic Sequences," in *Ethnic Minorities and Politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. Thomas Engelbert and Hans Dieter Kubitscheck (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 131-64.

<sup>40</sup> David Brown, "From Peripheral Communities to Ethnic Nations: Separatism in Southeast Asia," *Pacific Affairs* 61, no. 1 (1988).

move altered their long-cherished political autonomy in the kingdom to their disadvantage.<sup>41</sup>

The drawing of new political boundaries led the Patani royals to seek assistance from the British either to gain independence from the Thai or to seek unification with the rest of the Malay states in British Malaya. For instance, in 1901 the Sultan of Patani, Tengku Abdul Kadir Qamaruddin, tried to solicit British intervention in order to win independence from Thailand. The British, represented by the Governor of the Straits Settlements in British Malaya, Sir Frank Swettenham, almost initiated a move to annex Patani into British Malaya. However, he did not proceed with the intervention because his plan was not approved by London.<sup>42</sup> The Thai Malays again tried to rejoin their ethnic kin across the border as one political unit at the end of the World War II when they believed that the Western Allies would treat Thailand as a defeated belligerent.<sup>43</sup> At that time, they requested the British administration in Malaya to incorporate the Malay provinces of Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun into British Malaya.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the development during and after World War II, which included the trading back and forth of four Malay states (Kelantan, Kedah, Terengganu and Perlis), between Thailand and British Malaya led to rising hopes among the Thai Malays that their request to British Malaya would be fulfilled.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, on 1 November 1945, they sent a petition to the Supreme Commander of the British Forces in Malaya, in which they expressed their

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<sup>41</sup> Bajunid, "Islam, Nationalism, and the Thai State," pp. 1-19, Dulyakasem, "Muslim-Malay Separatism in Southern Thailand: Factors Underlying the Political Revolt," p. 226.

<sup>42</sup> Margaret L Koch, "Pattani and the Development of a Thai State," *The Journal of Malaysian Research of the Royal Asiatic Society* Part 2, no. 50 (1977): pp. 78-81.

<sup>43</sup> During the Second World War, Thailand was Japan's ally. In fact, as a gift in exchange for having allowed the Japanese armed forces to march to Malaya through Thailand, the Japanese armed forces "returned" the Malay states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah in 1943.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Liow, "The Security Situation in Southern Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Domestic and International Dimensions," pp. 531-48, Thaib, *The Politics and Governments of South East Asia*, p. 97.

<sup>45</sup> Steinmetz, "Thai Nationalism and the Malay Muslim Minority. Reflections on the Domestic and Foreign Policy Aspects of Relevant Historic Sequences," pp. 131-64.



hope to become independent from the Thai nation.<sup>46</sup> The petition closely identified with the Malay identity of Patani and reasoned that,

...Patani is really a Malay country, formerly ruled by Malay Rajas for generations, but has been Siam's dependency only since about fifty years ago. Now the Allied Nations ought to help to return this country to the Malays, so that they can have it united with other Malay countries in the peninsula.<sup>47</sup>

In the same year, approximately 250,000 Thai Malays endorsed a petition to the United Nations (UN) requesting that the three southern provinces of Patani, Yala and Narathiwat should be permitted to secede from Thailand and join the newly constituted Federation of Malaya.<sup>48</sup> The British officials (in Malaya) sympathised with the Thai Malays' petition, addressed to the British Prime Minister, expressing the hope that the UN would help the "Malays of Patani and its dependent districts (i.e. Patani, Yala and Narathiwat)" to be "freed from [...] Siamese domination" and allowed "to become one federation with Malay states of the Peninsula".<sup>49</sup> British officials in Malaya argued that the annexation of these provinces would be an adequate retribution for Thailand's behaviour during the war.<sup>50</sup> London, however, disagreed for two reasons. First, the view from the British officials in Malaya was not shared by the British embassy in Bangkok, which refused with "utmost disapproval"<sup>51</sup> to engage in any discussion that would involve the possible expansion of British protection into southern Thailand. Second, for strategic and political reasons, both Britain and the United States of America (USA) preferred the maintenance of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of

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<sup>46</sup> Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, *Sejarah Perjuangan Melayu Patani* (Bangi: Penerbit UKM, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*, p. 180.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Uthai Dulyakasem, "The Emergence and Escalation of Ethnic Nationalism: The Case of the Muslim Malays in Southern Siam," in *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, ed. Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), p.223.

<sup>49</sup> H. E Wilson, "Imperialism and Islam: The Impact of 'Modernisation' on the Malay Muslim of South Thailand," in *The Muslims of Thailand*, ed. Andrew D. W. Forbes and Sachchidanand Sahai (Gaya, Bihar, India: Centre for South East Asian Studies, 1989), p. 62.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

Thailand.<sup>52</sup> As a result, despite attempting to secede and to reunite with the other Malay states in British Malaya, Patani has remained part of Thailand. In fact, according to Wyatt, ever since the integration of the Sultanate, most of the Malays in Southern Thailand never stopped feeling like “subjects of a foreign colonial regime”.<sup>53</sup>

Over time, the Thai administrations have implemented both confrontational and more conciliatory policies towards their Malay ethnic minority. For instance, in 1948 under the administration of General Phibunsongkhram,<sup>54</sup> in the name of “nation-building”, the Thai government enforced a confrontation policy aimed at assimilating all the various minorities’ cultures in the country into the mainstream Buddhist “Thainess”.<sup>55</sup> According to Muhkriz Mahathir, the Managing Director of the Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO), who is also the head of the UMNO Youth International Bureau, the Thai government’s position in relation to Thai ethnic identity can be summarised by the following quote “When you are Thai, it means that you are Thai. You could not be a Malay Thai.”<sup>56</sup> Consequently, in an effort to ensure that all Thai nationals had the same identity, the Thai government tried to impose several restrictions on the Malays so that their cultural heritage would not be able to be passed on to the new generation, so that future generations would in turn view themselves more as Thai than Malays. As a result, the Thai government officials both in Bangkok and in the southern provinces have tended to suppress the demands of Malays relating to

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<sup>52</sup> For a greater discussion see Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*, pp. 177-81. One of the examples of the strategic reasons mentioned by Christie was the fact that the Malayan government desperately needed the supply of rice from the Thai government after the Second World War.

<sup>53</sup> David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 63, 268.

<sup>54</sup> Plaek Phibunsongkhram was in power from 1938 – 1944. The regime fell in 1944 because of its association with the axis power during World War II. He returned to power in 1948 by coup d’état and was the Prime Minister until 1957.

<sup>55</sup> Chidchanok Rahimmula, “Peace Resolution: A Case Study of Separatist and Terrorist Movements in Southern Border Provinces of Thailand,” in *Militant Movements in Indonesia and Southeast Asia*, ed. S Yunanto (Jakarta: FES and the RIDEP Institute, 2003), pp. 263-77.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Dato’ Muhkriz Mahathir, 13 March 2007.

expression of their Malay identity because the government officials equate these with political demands for separatism.<sup>57</sup> In his effort to foster a Thai racial identity and unity, that is, to promote the 'one-ness' of the Thai ethnic and national identity, Phibun Songkhram issued the Thai Customs Decree<sup>58</sup> prohibiting the "wearing of sarongs, the use of Malay (Muslim) names and the Malay language."<sup>59</sup> In addition, the Thai government also replaced Islamic law with Siamese law and the imposition of education and language policies on the Thai Malays.<sup>60</sup>

Ironically, although the Thai government have precluded the Malay language as a medium of instruction in government schools, other languages such as Arabic and Chinese, on the other hand, are allowed.<sup>61</sup> According to Mahathir, the Thai government's policy of not allowing the use of the Malay language in state-run schools is viewed by Thais of Malay descent as an attempt to "deny their culture".<sup>62</sup> In addition, Phibun Songkhram also imposed elements of Buddhism on the Malay population whereby Buddha statues were placed in all public schools, and Malay Muslim children were forced to bow before them as a patriotic act.<sup>63</sup> These policies sparked opposition and hostility among the Malay population in these provinces not only because they saw these policies as a direct threat to their ethnic identity but also because it led them to feel alienated socially, culturally, and religiously within Thailand. After all, to most of the Thai Malays, to speak Thai is the same as to abandon their own language, and their nation (community), because to them the term "Malay" stands for both their language

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<sup>57</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad."

<sup>58</sup> This decree was repealed in 1961. Nevertheless, the Thai government only made more than minimal concessions towards accommodating the Malays in the 1970s.

<sup>59</sup> Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*, p. 177.

<sup>60</sup> Haemindra, "The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand," pp. 208-25, Vincent. J. H. Houben, "Southeast Asia and Islam," *The Annals of the American Academy*, no. 588 (2003): pp. 160-61.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Mahathir. According to Kasturi Mahkota, in private Islamic schools, the Malay language is permitted and not "openly banned". Email from Kasturi Mahkota, 7 February 2007.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Mahathir.

<sup>63</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," p. 3.

and nationality.<sup>64</sup> In line with the concept of societal security as discussed in Chapter 2, the Thais of ethnic Malay origin have sought to preserve, among other things, their cultural and linguistic practices. The Thai Malays have to rely solely on themselves to protect these values because no help from British Malaya or Britain was forthcoming, especially during that period. One of the strategies that the Thai Malays pursued in order to secure their values against the “threat” from the Thai Buddhist government was forming their own ethno-nationalist movement. In response to pressure from the Malay ethno-nationalist organisations and the wider international society, General Phibun Songkhram made some concessions, which allowed for the teaching in Malay in primary schools as well as the application of Islamic law (through Thai courts) in matters of family law and inheritance. He also allowed Malay state employees to wear Malay dress. These reforms, however, were implemented slowly and only partially.<sup>65</sup>

During the administration of Prime Minister General Prem Tinsulanond (1980-88), Thailand embarked on a more conciliatory policy. General Prem supported the Malays’ cultural rights and religious freedom.<sup>66</sup> According to Eskay Abdullah, the Honorary Consul of the Royal Thai Consulate at Langkawi, Malaysia, General Prem reversed all the ‘integration’ policies implemented by Phibun Songkhram and supported absolute religious freedom by building about 1,200 religious schools and more than 1000 mosques in Thailand’s southern provinces.<sup>67</sup> Arguably, General Prem thought that by reversing the policies on religious institutions and education, the members of the Malay ethno-nationalist groups would want to be re-integrated into society.<sup>68</sup> However, such policies did not resolve the discontent on the part of the Thai Malays, and

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<sup>64</sup> Dulyakasem, "Muslim-Malay Separatism in Southern Thailand: Factors Underlying the Political Revolt," p. 229.

<sup>65</sup> Ladd M. Thomas, "Thai Muslim Separatism in South Thailand," in *The Muslims of Thailand*, ed. Andrew D. W. Forbes and Sachchidanand Sahai (Gaya, Bihar, India: Centre for South East Asian Studies, 1989).

<sup>66</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Dato' Shazryl Eskay Abdullah, 6 March 2007.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

especially not among those who had joined the ethno-nationalist organisations, notwithstanding the fact that during this period there was a significant decrease in terms of the level of violence initiated by them. According to Eskay Abdullah, although General Prem had introduced policies that supported the Malays' cultural rights and religious freedom, he failed to appropriately embrace members of the ethno-nationalist organisations (composed of ethnic Malays).<sup>69</sup> Above all, there were no specific policies targeting their grievances. However, rather than supporting the ethno-nationalist movement in their cause, the majority of Thai Malays have supported their local Malay politicians running for Thailand's Parliament. In fact, during General Prem's administration, the popular support extended towards the Thai Malays ethno-nationalist movement subsided tremendously, resulting in the steep decline of the movement's activities by the late 1990s.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the decline in support also caused many of the leaders of the Thai Malays ethno-nationalist movement to go into exile.<sup>71</sup> However, the decision by the majority of the Thai Malays to join and support the political framework of the country was revisited when subsequent Thai governments, especially the Thaksin administration (2001–06), implemented national policies that have been perceived by the Thais of Malay ethnic origin as another effort to marginalise them.<sup>72</sup>

In fact, during the administration of Thaksin Shinawatra the level of violence in the southern provinces increased drastically. This phenomenon was largely attributed to Thaksin's hard-line response towards events occurring in these provinces.<sup>73</sup> According

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Interview with Khan.

<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that there are a number of other factors that have been identified as the contributing factors that have increased the incidences of violence in the southern provinces. Among the factors are, regional and international terrorist organisations, criminal activities in the provinces, and political conflicts between the main political parties in Thailand. See, for instance, Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad.", Aurel Croissant, "Unrest in South Thailand: Contours, Causes, and Consequences since 2001," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27, no. 1 (2005), Gunaratna, Acharya, and Chua, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*, Liow, *Muslim Resistance in Southern*

to Mahkota, some of Thaksin's confrontational policies towards the Thai Malays had indirectly led to the death of at least 80 people who had taken part in the Tak Bai demonstrations in 2004 and the kidnapping of Thai Malays by officials.<sup>74</sup> Eskay, on the other hand, viewed Thaksin's decision to dismantle the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) in 2003, which was in charge of administering southern Thailand's provinces, as one of the policies that created tension among the Thai Malays.<sup>75</sup> This centre was established in 1981 to serve as the main channel for communication between the authorities and the locals in the South.<sup>76</sup> The Thai Malays could also bring their grievances to the attention of the government through the Centre.<sup>77</sup> Its dismantling resulted in the decision of many Thai Malays to take the law into their own hands because they found no other alternative to articulate their grievances.<sup>78</sup> As a result, the Thai Malays decided to renew their support for their ethno-nationalist movement in the belief that this step would provide for the best mechanism to protect their identity and to attain their cause.<sup>79</sup>

This section has shown that due to the strong historical links between the Thai Malays and Malaysian Malays, the former have repeatedly tried to politically unite with their ethnic kin state across the border. The legacy of the Sultanate of Patani has played a major role in creating a separate identity espoused by the Malays in Patani, Narathiwat and Yala. The following section elaborates on the goals and the particular characteristics of the ethno-nationalist organisations in Southern Thailand. Generally, the origins of these movements lie in historical grievances stemming from

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*Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics*, Duncan McCargo, "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South," in *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*, ed. Duncan McCargo (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007).

<sup>74</sup> E-mail from Mahkota.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>76</sup> McCargo, "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South," p. 47.

<sup>77</sup> Duncan McCargo, "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South: Network Monarchy Strikes Back?," *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2006): p. 44.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Khan.

discrimination against the Thai Malay population and the heavy-handed policies carried out by certain Thai administrations in the name of “nation-building”.<sup>80</sup> Not surprisingly, given that there were about twenty different Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations in the 1970s, there were also differences in terms of their ideological orientation, goals, tactics and strategies. Efforts focused on attaining one of the following goals: The goals of these organisations can be classified into three different objectives: (1) seeking full independence and the reestablishment of the Malay sultanate; (2) seeking unification with Malaysia; or (3) obtaining autonomy within Thailand. The following section will review some of the early Thai Malay organisations as well as the current major organisations.

#### ***4.2 The Ethno-Nationalist/Separatist Movement in Southern Thailand***

The Thai Malays formed their first political organisation, the League of Malays of Greater Patani (*Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya* - GAMPAR), in 1948. According to its manifesto, the organisation pursued three major objectives. The first was to unite the four “Malay heartland” provinces as a Malay Islamic state and liberate its residents from oppression and exploitation. The second objective was to establish a state appropriate to Islamic traditions and practices. The third goal was to improve the status and standard of living of the Malays in southern Thailand in areas such as justice, freedom and education.<sup>81</sup> However, according to its founding leader, Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddin, of these three objectives of GAMPAR, the most important one was to seek unification of

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<sup>80</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N°98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad.", Liow, *Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics*, p. 25.

<sup>81</sup> Rahimmula, "Peace Resolution: A Case Study of Separatist and Terrorist Movements in Southern Border Provinces of Thailand."

the southern provinces with the Federation of Malaya.<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, rather than establishing the organisation in Thailand's South, GAMPAR was founded in Kelantan, Malaysia. However, since Kelantan was part of British Malaya, the organisation operated under the pretext of being a social and cultural organisation, which sought to promote and protect the Malays' interests in both Malaya and Thailand. This focus on socio-cultural aims was necessary because the British administration did not allow for the existence of a foreign separatist movement on its territory as this could jeopardise its relations with the Thai government.<sup>83</sup> After the establishment of GAMPAR in Kelantan, branches of the organisation were set up in three other states in Malaya, namely in Penang, Perlis and Kedah.<sup>84</sup> However, when the leaders of GAMPAR died, the organisation soon disintegrated.<sup>85</sup> In 1959, the Deputy leader of GAMPAR, Tengku Abdul Jalal, established the first organised armed separatist group - the Patani National Liberation Front (*Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani* – BNPP).<sup>86</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (BNPP)

The BNPP was also reportedly founded in Kelantan.<sup>87</sup> The BNPP was different from GAMPAR in terms of its core leadership, as this movement initially drew support from both the traditional aristocrats as well as the religious elite.<sup>88</sup> Unlike GAMPAR that sought reunification of the Malay provinces with the Federation of Malaya, BNPP's

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<sup>82</sup> Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddin, "Letter to Barbara Whittingham Jones Dated 6 March 1948," in *The Jones Papers* (SOAS Library, London: 1948).

<sup>83</sup> Omar Farouk, "The Historical and Transnational Dimensions of Malay-Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," in *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Joo-Jock Lim and S. Vani (Singapore: Regional Strategic Studies Programme, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), p. 237.

<sup>84</sup> Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddin, "Letter to Barbara Whittingham Jones Dated 14 March 1948," in *The Jones Papers* (SOAS Library, London: 1948).

<sup>85</sup> Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, p. 98.

<sup>86</sup> Islam, "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines," pp. 441-56.

<sup>87</sup> Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 142.

<sup>88</sup> Islam, "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines."



objective was to achieve complete independence and the establishment of an Islamic state (but not in the context of the Federation of Malaysia). Just as with GAMPAR, the BNPP's political leadership was based in Kelantan since it received considerable support, both moral and material, from the Malaysia Islamic Party (*Partai Islam Se-Malaysia* – PAS).<sup>89</sup> In terms of its membership, the BNPP attracted many Thai Malay student activists who had studied in Malaya. According to Surin Pitsuwan, the BNPP was operating both inside the Kelantan state and within Thailand's southern provinces.<sup>90</sup> The organisation encouraged the Thai Malays to apply for Malaysian citizenship because the leadership thought that it was easier for the organisation to conduct its activities on both sides of the border if its members had dual citizenship.<sup>91</sup> However, the BNPP was weakened significantly after the Thai military campaign of 1972 and the death of its leader, Tengku Abdul Jalal, in 1977.<sup>92</sup> The organisation finally disintegrated when PAS lost power in Kelantan in 1978. Many of its leaders left, some took up Malaysian citizenship and settled down, while others joined the Patani United Liberation Organisation (*Pertubuhan Persatuan Pembebasan Patani* – PULO).<sup>93</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO)

Tunku Bira Kotanila (Kabir Abdul Rahman), a descendant of the Patani nobility, founded the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) in 1968.<sup>94</sup> During its prime, from the late 1970s to early 1980s, PULO was the largest, most effective and the most

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<sup>89</sup> Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand* (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, 1985), p. 229.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. According to Muhkriz Mahathir, there were about 60,000 Thai Malays who have dual citizenship at the end of 2006. The Thai government estimates appear to assume even more citizens with dual citizenship. Interview with Mahathir.

<sup>92</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 146.

prominent ethno-nationalist organisation in southern Thailand.<sup>95</sup> According to Carment, PULO grew to be influential largely because it received material support from Libya and Syria, and ideological support from Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.<sup>96</sup> PULO's ideology has been based on religion, ethnic nationalism, homeland, and humanitarianism (*Ugama, Bangsa, Tanahair, and Perikemanusiaan - UBANGTAPEKEMA*).<sup>97</sup> According to Syamsuddin Khan, the Head of PULO's Executive Committee, the stated goal of the organisation remains to establish an independent Malay Islamic state.<sup>98</sup> For Khan, the question about the main orientation of the organisation - whether it is Islamist or ethno-nationalist - does not arise in the first place because Malays must be Muslim.<sup>99</sup> In other words, since being Muslim is one of the core elements of the Malay identity, it is normal for the organisation to occasionally articulate resistance with reference to Islamist parameters.<sup>100</sup> Just like the two aforementioned Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations, PULO reportedly also has links with Kelantan. In 1977, PULO's political and military operational headquarters were in Tumpat, Kelantan and in 1978 the headquarters moved to Pasir Mas, Kelantan and lastly to Kota Bahru, Kelantan.<sup>101</sup> However, PULO headquarters ceased its operations in 1998, following the arrest and repatriation of their leaders to Thailand by the Malaysian authorities.<sup>102</sup> In that year, the Malaysian security forces also arrested the leader of the New PULO, Abdul Rohman Bazo, its military chief Haji Daoh Thanam, as well as PULO's military commander, Haji Sama-ae Thanma, in Kuala Lumpur, and quietly handed them over to Thai

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<sup>95</sup> Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh," pp. 36-40, Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," p. i, Gunaratna, Acharya, and Chua, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*.

<sup>96</sup> Carment, "Managing Interstate Ethnic Tensions: The Thailand-Malaysia Experience," p. 8.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Email from Syamsuddin Khan, 7 February 2007.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

authorities.<sup>103</sup> In fact, according to Khan, this incident was the first in Malaysian history where leaders of a Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisation were extradited to Thailand.<sup>104</sup> The crackdown by the Malaysian authorities prompted other senior separatist leaders to flee Malaysia. The PULO's leader, Tunku Bira Kotanila, left for Damascus, the former leader of the New PULO leader Arong Muleng went to Sweden, and his deputy, Haji Abdul Hadi Rozali, fled to Saudi Arabia.<sup>105</sup>

Before the incident, PULO had undergone a degree of "disintegration and reunification".<sup>106</sup> According to Khan, PULO had split into four different groups in 1985.<sup>107</sup> However, despite this division, individually, all of the different groups still called themselves "PULO".<sup>108</sup> In 1995, an organisation called the New PULO was created, which was led by Arong Muleng and Haji Abdul Rahman Boza.<sup>109</sup> The goals of this faction remained the same as the goals of the original PULO. In 2005, the PULO held a reunification assembly in Damascus, Syria, which brought together around 40 PULO leaders from Thailand, Europe, and the Middle East, and aimed at strengthening the movement in order to continue the fighting for the cause of the Thai Malays in all the Malay majority provinces of Southern Thailand.<sup>110</sup> Since the objective of PULO has been to struggle for the cause of the Thai Malays, Kasturi Mahkota, the New PULO's Chief of the Foreign Affairs Department, rejects the claims by some analysts that there are currently elements of international terrorist groups operating in southern Thailand.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> "Terrorists Asked to Surrender in a Month's Time," *The Nation*, 27 January 1998.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>105</sup> "Separatists in Malaysia Flee Abroad," *Bangkok Post*, 22 February 1998.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Gunaratna, Acharya, and Chua, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*, p. 39.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Mahkota.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. For views that claims there are elements of international terrorist groups operating in the South, see, for instance, Gunaratna, Acharya, and Chua, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*, David Martin Jones and Mike Lawrence Smith, "Southeast Asia and the War against Terrorism: The Rise of Islamism and the Challenge to the Surveillance State," in *September 11 & Political Freedom: Asian Perspectives: 9/11*, ed. Uwe Johannsen, James Gomez, and Alan Smith (Singapore: Select Pub., 2003).

According to Mahkota, the insurgency is the issue of the Patani-Malay people and it has nothing to do with either the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) or Al-Qaeda.<sup>112</sup> On this matter, even the Thai Foreign Minister, Kantathi Suphamongkhon, said, "as far as the situation in the southern part of Thailand is concerned, there is no relationship with any international linkages of any sort."<sup>113</sup> Concerning the organisation's operations in the southern provinces, the PULO is cooperating with the other Thai Malay organisations to coordinate their activities in southern Thai provinces. These organisations are the National Revolutionary Front-Coordinate (*Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Coordinate - BRN-C*) and the Patani Islamic Mujahidin Group (*Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani - GMIP*).<sup>114</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Coordinate – (BRN-C)

The *Barisan Revolusi Nasional* (BRN) was established in the early 1960s. The BRN's main objective was to create an independent Republic of Patani that consists of all the four Malay majority provinces (Yala, Narathiwat, Patani and Satun) and parts of Songkhla.<sup>115</sup> Initially, the BRN had pan-Malay aspirations, as it called for the unification of all the Malays in the region, in line with its premise of Malay nationalism.<sup>116</sup> In other words, the original objective of the BRN was to incorporate all the four southern provinces of Thailand into Malaya, including Singapore and portions of territory across the Straits of Malacca.<sup>117</sup> The BRN, however, dropped its pan-Malay aspirations due to increasing factionalism within the organisation. This factionalism

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<sup>112</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N°98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad.", "JI Claim Disputed by PULO Chief," *The Nation*, 23 November 2006, Smith, "Trouble in Thailand's Muslim South: Separatism, Not Global Terrorism."

<sup>113</sup> "Officials Say International Terrorists Have No Foothold in Thailand," *The Star* 2006.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Mahkota.

<sup>115</sup> Farouk, "The Historical and Transnational Dimensions of Malay-Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," p. 240.

<sup>116</sup> Harish, "Changing Conflict Identities: The Case of the Southern Thailand Discord," p. 9.

<sup>117</sup> Carment, "Managing Interstate Ethnic Tensions: The Thailand-Malaysia Experience," p. 8, Farouk, "The Historical and Transnational Dimensions of Malay-Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," p. 239-40.

was mainly caused by the confrontation waged by Indonesia in response to the creation of the Federation of Malaysia, as this led to the creation of splinter blocs within the organisation that either supported Indonesia or sided with Malaysia.<sup>118</sup> Due to its identity as a Malay movement, the organisation was able to establish bases in Malaya.<sup>119</sup> However, the organisation lost its more conservative supporters in Malaysia and the Middle East when it was reported to have developed a close relationship with the communist parties of Malaysia and Thailand in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>120</sup> By 1984, the BRN had three major factions, namely the BRN-Congress, BRN-Coordinate and BRN-Uran.<sup>121</sup> However, among these, the BRN-Coordinate at the time of writing is reported to be the most active, largest and best organised of the armed organisations.<sup>122</sup> The other two, BRN-Coordinate and BRN-Uran, in principle no longer have any military wing in southern Thailand.<sup>123</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani – (GMIP)

Afghan war veterans<sup>124</sup> founded the GMIP in 1995. Similar to both PULO (old and new) and BNPP, GMIP's objective is also to create an Islamic state in southern Thailand. However, the organisation is effectively more of a criminal gang than a group of freedom fighters as it has been "engaged in kidnapping, extortion, and contract killing."<sup>125</sup> According to Mahkota, originally the GMIP was just a small branch of the PULO, but

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<sup>118</sup> Farouk, "The Historical and Transnational Dimensions of Malay-Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," p. 240.

<sup>119</sup> Harish, "Changing Conflict Identities: The Case of the Southern Thailand Discord," p. 9.

<sup>120</sup> Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand*, p. 231.

<sup>121</sup> Zachary Abuza, "A Breakdown of Southern Thailand's Insurgent Groups," *Terrorism Monitor* 4, no. 17 (2006).

<sup>122</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," p. i.

<sup>123</sup> E-mail from Khan.

<sup>124</sup> Afghan War Veterans were the Thai Malays who fought alongside the Afghan Mujahidin against the Soviet Union's invasion in Afghanistan (1979-89)

<sup>125</sup> Abuza, "A Breakdown of Southern Thailand's Insurgent Groups."

later became an independent organisation.<sup>126</sup> Thai intelligence sources have reportedly claimed that GMIP maintains an important underground base in Terengganu, Malaysia.<sup>127</sup> It has been thought that GMIP has run guns for other ethno-nationalist movements, in particular the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).<sup>128</sup> According to Thai military intelligence, this organisation can be classified as “guns-for-hire.”<sup>129</sup>

#### 4.2.5 Analysis of the Thai Malays’ Ethno-Nationalist Organisations

One can discern a shift in the objectives of the Thai Malay organisations. For instance, between the end of World War II and 1960, the Malay elites in Thailand sought reunification with the Federation of Malaysia. After 1960, the organisations decided to fight for their own state. In fact, lack of support from the Kuala Lumpur government (both the British colonial government and the Malayan/Malaysian government) for their irredentist demands was identified as the primary reason why these organisations decided to change their objectives. In order to ensure that they continued to draw support, particularly international support, for their struggle, these organisations had to adapt their strategy. They did this by placing more emphasis on their other core element of their identity in order to sustain their movement. As mentioned earlier, Malays must be Muslim. This Muslim identity allows them to garner support from a wider Muslim population in the world. However, despite the fact that lately these organisations have been focussing more on the Islamic cause (i.e. calling for the creation of an Islamic state in these provinces), this does not mean that Islam has completely overridden the ethnic factor. Although there is heightened Islamic consciousness and existence of transnational linkages with terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and Jemaah

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<sup>126</sup> Interview with Mahkota.

<sup>127</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," p. 18.

<sup>128</sup> Abuza, "A Breakdown of Southern Thailand's Insurgent Groups."

<sup>129</sup> "Thailand's Trouble in the South," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (8 January 2004).

Islamiyah in southern Thailand, it would be a mistake to view longstanding grievances in Thailand as being subordinate to terrorist groups with global and abstract ideological agendas.<sup>130</sup> Unlike the global and regional terrorist groups, the motivation for resistance among the Thai Malays ethno-nationalist organisations is different. It should be noted that although over the past few decades, the purist Salafi (and more specifically Wahhabi) teaching has been gaining ground in the province, the Thai Malays are predominantly practicing a moderate and syncretic variant of Islam, Sufism—Sunni Islam with a mystical moderate edge.<sup>131</sup> In short, although there is a religious dimension within the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations, the main motivation for the struggle is their Malay nationalism.<sup>132</sup> As argued by Khan, the Thai Malay organisations are currently no longer struggling over finer ideological points among each other but instead seem to be working together.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, according to Khan, the Thai Malay organisations are in the process of merging into a single organisation.<sup>134</sup>

Another common characteristic of these organisations is that they all have links with Malaysia. This supports Farouk's statement that the separatist struggle of the Malays in southern Thailand has, since its inception, involved Malaysia just as much as it has Thailand.<sup>135</sup> As illustrated earlier, the fact that most of the Thai Malay organisations were either founded or had their bases in various parts of Malaysia, particularly in Kelantan, proves that Malaysia or some Malaysians have played a role in supporting these groups, either to challenge or at least to embarrass the Thai

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<sup>130</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," p. 32, Liow, "The Security Situation in Southern Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Domestic and International Dimensions," p. 544.

<sup>131</sup> Barry Desker, "Islam in Southeast Asia: The Challenge of Radical Interpretation," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 16 (2003): pp. 415-28, Houben, "Southeast Asia and Islam," pp. 149-70.

<sup>132</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," Liow, *Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics*.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Farouk, "The Historical and Transnational Dimensions of Malay-Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," p. 243.

government. Consequently, there has been a general perception at least on the part of the Thai Malays that due to the overlap between their ethnic identity with that of the Malaysian Malays, the Malaysian government, and especially the Malays there, would readily come to their rescue.<sup>136</sup> Given the fact that the most intense forms of protests and support for Thai Malays have always come from their ethnic kin across the border, it is quite appropriate to perceive these recurrent phenomena as “ethnic nationalism” among the Malay community. The ethnic nationalism among the Malay community can be defined as the “close attachment that Malays accord to the safeguarding of their Malay ethnic primordial ties or parochial interest in their dealing with others, especially non-Malays”.<sup>137</sup>

To support this section, the next one examines how the Thais of Malay descent are related or affiliated with the Malays in Malaysia. The section also analyses common Thai Malay perceptions of the Malays in Malaysia, and the impact of their ethnic kinship with the Malaysian Malays on their struggle against Thailand. The primary objective of this section is to demonstrate why Malaysia should be viewed as the kin state to the Thais of Malay descent.

### ***4.3 Relations between Thai Malays and the Malays in Malaysia***

Although divided by an international border since 1909, the Thai Malays remain a self-conscious ethnic minority that is distinct from the Thai Buddhists. Not surprisingly, therefore, given that the southern provinces of Thailand actually belong to the Malay World of Southeast Asia from cultural, ethnic and linguistic standpoints, the Thai Malays maintain strong links with the Malays in Malaysia. The close ethnic linkages between the Thai Malays and the Malays were also acknowledged by the Malaysian

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>137</sup> Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics*, p. 1.



Foreign Minister, Syed Hamid Syed Jaafar Albar, when he said that, "It cannot be denied that due to ethnic and religious similarities, there will be close relations among those at the Malaysian-Thai border."<sup>138</sup> These links are based on extensive kinship relations, commercial contacts and information exchange.<sup>139</sup> In fact, both the Thai Malays and the Malays in Malaysia view the present international border that separates the Thai southern provinces from Malaysia as a legacy of the colonial past and a highly artificial one.<sup>140</sup> As Syed Husin Ali put it:

The Peninsular Malays (including the Malays of south Thailand) constitute but a minor portion of the people from the same stock, and the culture they inherit forms only part of a greater cultural heritage of the rest of the people in the area. What has set the Malays in this country apart from the rest socially and culturally has been the result of recent colonial history.<sup>141</sup>

The decision made by the "colonial powers" to draw their international borders in such a way as to separate the Malays into two different countries is in fact one of the identifiable ways by which ethnic kin states are created. In other words, in the case of British Malaya (later Malaysia), since the Malays have formed the majority ethnic group in the country, it can be considered as an ethnic kin state to the Thai Malays.

#### 4.3.1 Ethnic Kinship between Thai Malays and Malaysian Malays

Without a doubt, the southern provinces of Thailand are part of the *Tanah Melayu* (the Malay land). Therefore, both the Thai Malays and the Malaysian Malays (particularly in the northern states) not only share a common ethnic background, culture, past history,

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<sup>138</sup> "At the Dewan Rakyat Yesterday: No Pressure on Thailand to Return to Democracy," *New Straits Times*, 28 November 2006.

<sup>139</sup> See, for example, Farouk, "The Historical and Transnational Dimensions of Malay-Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," pp. 234-57, Gopinath, "International Aspects of the Thai Muslim and Philippine Moro Issues: A Comparative Study," pp. 125-47.

<sup>140</sup> See, for example, Alexander Horstmann, "From Shared Cosmos to Mobilization of Hatred: Ethnic Relations in Southern Thailand between Complementary, Alienation and Hostility," in *Ethnic Minorities and Politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. Thomas Engelbert and Hans Dieter Kubitscheck (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 112.

<sup>141</sup> Syed Hussin Ali, "A Note on Malay Society and Culture," in *The Cultural Problems of Malaysia in the Context of Southeast Asia*, ed. S. Takdir Alisjahbana and Xavier S. Thani Nayagam (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Society of Orientalists, 1970), p. 65.

but in some cases are also related through ties of kinship and marriage. In fact, the Sultanate of Patani has had particularly strong links with the Sultanate of Kelantan. For instance, the consort of the current Sultan of Kelantan is from the Patani royalty. In addition, the current Crown Prince of Kelantan is also married to a royal family member from Patani.<sup>142</sup> Historically, the Sultanate of Patani was actually comprised of two major dynasties; the Patani Dynasty and the Kelantan Dynasty.<sup>143</sup> Even when Thailand incorporated the Sultanate of Patani into its territory, Patani's link with Kelantan continued to survive. In fact, this link has played a major role in cementing strong ties between the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations and Kelantan. According to Carment, it is unlikely that Malay nationalism in the Malay provinces in Thailand would have begun with such enthusiasm and optimism without substantial assistance from the Kelantanese.<sup>144</sup>

As a matter of fact, there is no other state in Malaysia that has been more vociferous in supporting the rights of the Thai Malays than Kelantan. Kelantan's strong link with Patani makes the state the most popular destination among the Thai Malays whenever they flee Thailand. There are several reasons for this: first, Kelantan has attracted many Thai Malay religious leaders and wealthy Malays who fled to the state as soon as the Thai Kingdom formally annexed the Patani Sultanate.<sup>145</sup> Second, according to Dr. Syed Azman Syed Nawawi, the Head of the PAS International Relations Bureau, many of the Thai Malays have blood ties with the Malays in Kelantan.<sup>146</sup> Due to these close ethnic linkages, the people living in some areas of the border region cross back and forth passing boundary markers as if they did not exist. Even when the Thai Malays

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<sup>142</sup> "Tengku Mahkota Kelantan Pilih Kerabat Diraja Pattani," *Utusan Malaysia* 21 October 2004.

<sup>143</sup> Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, p. 34.

<sup>144</sup> Carment, "Managing Interstate Ethnic Tensions: The Thailand-Malaysia Experience," p. 6.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 5.

<sup>146</sup> E-mail from Syed Azman Syed Nawawi, 22 May 2007.

have to pass through an official border control, they are still free to move into Malaysia or vice versa. According to Khan, one of the main reasons why the Thai Malays are able to move into Malaysia (at least to Rantau Panjang, Kelantan) and return to Thailand freely is because they are not required to produce any travel documents when leaving Thailand or entering Malaysia by the immigration officials of both countries.<sup>147</sup> In short, the ethnic ties, cultural links, and historical bonds exert themselves in defiance of political boundaries superficially imposed on them.

This section has illustrated that the Thai Malays and the Malaysian Malays indeed not only share a common ethnic identity, but also have very close personal bonds. The next section analyses how Malaysia has approached the conflict in southern Thailand. The primary objective of this section is to analyse whether ethnic affinity with the Thai Malays has an impact on Malaysia's security practice towards the conflict in Thailand's southern provinces.

#### **4.4 Malaysia and Thailand Bilateral Relations**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, ethnic conflicts tend to draw external attention. In the case of the Thai Malays, one of the factors that has attracted international attention to their affairs is the ethnic affinity that exists between themselves and the Malaysian Malays. The fact is that the "Thai Malays are perceived by the Malays in Malaysia as their ethnic kin has created a security dilemma especially to the Thai government."<sup>148</sup> It should be noted that in this context, the concept is not used by the usual security dilemma dynamics.<sup>149</sup> However, there is an element of uncertainty on the part of the Thai

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Mahkota.

<sup>149</sup> For detailed discussion on how 'security dilemma' is defined, see John Hermann Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theory and Realities* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1951), Paul Roe, "The Interstate Security Dilemma: Ethnic Conflict as a 'Tragedy'," *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 2 (1999), Nick Wheeler and Ken Booth, "The Security Dilemma," in *Dilemmas of World*

government with regards to the real intention of the Malays and the Malaysian government when they provide aid to Thais of Malay descent across the border. The Thai government fears for the country's territorial integrity, especially since a number of the Malay ethno-nationalist organisations have espoused irredentist demands. On the part of the Malaysian government, while there is a general desire to maintain good relations with the Thai government in accordance with the policy of non-intervention, the government must also respond to meet the demands of its own Malay population, who want the government to render assistance to their ethnic kin across the border.<sup>150</sup> In other words, despite wishing to maintain cordial relations with Thailand, the Malaysian government has to deal with strong domestic pressure, particularly if the cooperation with the Thai government could result in the suppression of the Malays of southern Thailand.<sup>151</sup> Ultimately, the Malaysian government has to balance domestic exigencies and international obligations.

One of the major domestic constraints that the Malaysian government has to take into account is the existence of strong advocates of Thai Malay interests in Kelantan. If Kuala Lumpur ignored this domestic demand and cooperated fully with the Thai government in suppressing the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations, the government would run the risk of fuelling support for PAS. After all, PAS has already been acknowledged as commanding a strong support base in most of the northern Malaysian states such as Kedah, Terengganu and Kelantan. In particular, the government, headed by UMNO, cannot be perceived as caving in to Thai demands, as

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*Politics: International Issues in a Changing World*, ed. John Baylis and N. J. Rengger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>150</sup> Gopinath, "International Aspects of the Thai Muslim and Philippine Moro Issues: A Comparative Study," p. 139.

<sup>151</sup> Pitsuwan, "The Ethnic Background of Issues Affecting Bilateral Relations between Malaysia and Thailand," p. 324.

this would provide “political ammunition” for the PAS.<sup>152</sup> Even if the Malaysian Malays do not reinforce their support to PAS as a form of protest against the government’s cooperation with the Thai government to control the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations, it is difficult for the Malaysian government to commit itself to the active suppression of the Malays’ ethnic kin across the border, as this could easily threaten the political stability of Malaysia. Since the conflict in Thailand’s southern provinces has been seen as an emotional issue by the general Malay population of Malaysia, especially Malaysians in the northern states of the country, the Malays there would not hesitate to openly criticise the government for implementing policies that are viewed as detrimental to the societal security of their ethnic kin.<sup>153</sup> Of particular importance in this regard is the role of the Kelantan state government. Unlike other states in Malaysia, the Islamic Party of Malaysia (Partai Islam Se-Malaysia – PAS) has been ruling the state of Kelantan since 1990. PAS was also the ruling party of the state from 1959 – 1978. UMNO’s aim is to win back this state.

#### 4.4.1 The Influence of Partai Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) in the Conflict

As mentioned in the previous sections, the Sultanate of Patani has maintained very close links with Malaysia, particularly with Kelantan. In addition to having relations with the Malays in Kelantan, the ruling party of the state, PAS, has also been known to be very sympathetic to the Thai Malays and has been championing their cause for decades. It is also a known fact that many Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations have benefited

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<sup>152</sup> S. P Harish, *How Malaysia Sees Thailand's Southern Strife* (8 February 2006 [cited 12 May 2006]); available from [http://atimes.com/atimes/Southeast\\_Asia/HB08Ae01.html](http://atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/HB08Ae01.html), Storey, "Malaysia's Role in Thailand's Southern Insurgency," pp. 7-10.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Mahkota. See, for instance, Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p. 175, Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 165.

from good connections with PAS.<sup>154</sup> According to Khan, however, cooperation between PAS and Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations such as the PULO has not taken place on a “party-to-party basis”.<sup>155</sup> Rather, the informal cooperation between PAS and PULO has been based on blood ties between individual personalities of PAS and PULO. It is these blood ties that have led some PAS personalities to feel obligated to extend support to some of the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations.<sup>156</sup> For the most part, PAS has tended to confine itself to statements of sympathy and concern towards the Malays across the border. However, due to blood ties between members of PAS and members of the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations, there is a great deal of suspicion in Bangkok that the party condones tangible support for the autonomy-separatist groups as well. Thailand, for instance, has repeatedly alleged that PULO and New PULO have benefited from a safe-haven in Kelantan and that this support has both been sanctioned by PAS and met with official indifference by the Federal government in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>157</sup> In addition, the Thai government also believed that without the support of PAS, the campaign that was codenamed “Falling Leaves” devised by both the PULO and the New PULO in 1997, and which targeted Thai state officials, could not have been carried out.<sup>158</sup> According to both Khan and Mahkota, the “Falling Leaves” operation represented PULO’s strategy to shift their operations from the jungle to the

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<sup>154</sup> Nantawan Haemindra, "The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 8, no. 1 (1977): pp. 85-105, Suhrke and Noble, "Muslim in the Philippines and Thailand," p. 201, 03.

<sup>155</sup> E-mail from Khan.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh," p. 56, Angel M. Rabasa, *Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Moderates, Radicals and Terrorists, Adelphi Papers*; 358 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>158</sup> Peter Chalk and Angel Rabasa, "Muslim Separatist Movements in the Philippines and Thailand," in *Indonesia's Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia*, ed. Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), pp. 96-97.

urban areas to engage in a “direct confrontation” with Thai security forces; however, this operation had nothing to do with PAS.<sup>159</sup>

Although both PULO leaders have denied that they had any links with PAS, the ruling party of Kelantan has often played the role of spokesman for the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist movement. However, PAS does not advocate outright support for the Thai Malay secessionists despite proclaiming in 1945 that the Malays in the four southern provinces of Thailand have the right to determine their own future.<sup>160</sup> When the discussions leading to the establishment of Malaysia were being conducted in the 1960s, PAS called for the annexation of the four southern provinces to the incipient independent Malaysia.<sup>161</sup> In 1992, the issue of PAS sympathy and refuge for the Thai Malay separatists surfaced again, when then PAS Deputy President Abdul Hadi Awang<sup>162</sup> was reported to have argued, “PAS has to offer this help because our Muslim brothers are being discriminated against in all aspects of life in Southern Thailand.”<sup>163</sup> In 2004, following the Tak Bai incident in which more than 80 Thai Malays died due to suffocation in Thai army trucks, the Malays in Kelantan organised weekly demonstrations condemning the Thai government.<sup>164</sup> In 2005, the PAS spiritual leader who is also the Chief Minister of Kelantan, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, advised the Kelantanese people to help those Thai Malays who fled their country.<sup>165</sup> In 2006, Nik Aziz requested the Malaysian government not to avert Thai Malays from entering

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<sup>159</sup> E-mail from Khan, Mahkota.

<sup>160</sup> See, for example, Suhrke and Noble, *Ethnic Conflict in International Relations*, p. 201, Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 163.

<sup>161</sup> Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 163.

<sup>162</sup> Currently Abdul Hadi Awang is the President of PAS.

<sup>163</sup> “Malaysia’s opposition party offers sanctuary for Thai Moslem separatist,” Agence France Presse, 16 August 1992 quoted in Liow, “The Security Situation in Southern Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Domestic and International Dimensions,” p. 540.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>165</sup> “Isu 131 Warga Thailand Diserah Kepada Pusat,” *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 September 2005.

Malaysia due to the increasing violence in southern Thailand.<sup>166</sup> According to Syed Nawawi, the motive of the PAS leader to extend declaratory support to the Thai Malays was solely based on humanitarian grounds because the Thai Malays had been suppressed by the Thai authorities for so long.<sup>167</sup> Also, “they had suffered in silence while the whole world was just watching”.<sup>168</sup>

Interestingly, Malaysia’s coalition government has only rarely contradicted the PAS position publicly, as leaders are obliged to acknowledge that there are strong ethnic ties between the Thai Malays and the Malays in Malaysia, especially in Kelantan. In fact, according to Mohamed, although the government is concerned for the safety of the Malays in southern Thailand, it could not openly voice its apprehension as this could jeopardise Kuala Lumpur’s good relations with Bangkok.<sup>169</sup> The sensitivity of the federal government and UMNO in dealing with the situation in southern Thailand can be better understood when taking into consideration that PAS has had important re-electoral strongholds in the states bordering the Thai border in addition to strong ethnic linkages with the Thai Malays. Indeed, the significance of the issue has meant that Kuala Lumpur’s security practice has occasionally been dictated by and/or subordinated to domestic considerations.<sup>170</sup> However, this does not mean that Malaysia has ignored the societal security of the Thai Malays. In fact, in early 2007, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, offered assistance to the Thai government to mediate in negotiations between Thailand and the Thai Malay organisations. According to the Prime Minister, Malaysia possesses the capacity and ability to mediate in the issue, as it understands the situation in southern Thailand and the Thai government’s

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<sup>166</sup> "Benarkan Pelarian Masuk," *Utusan Malaysia*, 21 September 2006.

<sup>167</sup> E-mail from Syed Nawawi.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, 14 March 2007.

<sup>170</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p. 174.



stand to end the continuing violence.<sup>171</sup> In addition, the Prime Minister said, "Moreover, we know the separatist groups, in the sense that they are Muslims, of Malay descent and that Malaysia has good relations with Thailand."<sup>172</sup>

In other words, the Malaysian government is facing a dilemma between having to choose either to serve the interests of its ethnic brethren involved in ethnic conflict in the respective countries, or to remain committed to the principle of non-interference among ASEAN member states. As political leaders, they have to be sensitive to the interests of their constituents, even if these interests lie beyond its borders. The government's inaction in this matter could be detrimental to the ruling party as supporters might give their support to other political parties.

#### 4.4.2 Malaysia's Assistance to the Thai Malays

Due to the government's concern about the human security of the Thai Malays, the leadership has without any hesitation been willing to allow the Thai Malays to seek refuge in the country despite announcing that it pursued an official policy of rejecting refugees. In order to justify the decision to allow them to seek refuge in Malaysia, the government even made a statement that while the non-acceptance of refugees was the official policy, there was "no definite policy on the Thai-Muslims' [Malays'] refugee problems".<sup>173</sup> As stated by the Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, "it is normal for many Thai Muslims who "profess allegiance to Malaysia" to cross over to Malaysia time and again."<sup>174</sup> Abdullah added that Malaysia is also willing to host the Thai Malays if they want to stay on for a while.<sup>175</sup> Historically, the largest exodus of the

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<sup>171</sup> *M'sia Well-Placed to Mediate for Peace with Thai Separatists* (Bernama, 13 February 2007 [cited 3 June 2007]); available from <http://www.pataninews.net/ReadEnglish.asp?ID=343>.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p. 176.

<sup>174</sup> "Thai PM Says He Will Resolve Southern Muslim Problem by Peaceful Means," *The Star*, 18 October 2006.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

Thai Malays into Malaysian territory occurred when almost 1,200 refugees fled into the country in 1981, after it was reported that the Thai Malays were caught in crossfire between the PULO and Thai military forces and fled to nearby Kelantan and Kedah.<sup>176</sup> For its part, Malaysia's government leaders at the time said that the refugees would not be returned against their wish and Malaysia would provide them shelter on purely humanitarian grounds.<sup>177</sup> However, rather than asking them to leave after tension subsided, these refugees were absorbed into Malaysia's society, as the country has practised with previous Thai Malay refugees.<sup>178</sup> According to a Thai senator, Malaysia's practice of allowing Thai Malays to enter the country has resulted in around 200,000 Thai Malays now living in Malaysia.<sup>179</sup>

The latest incidents where Thai Malays sought refuge in Malaysia occurred in August 2005, when 131 Thai Malays fled to Kelantan to escape from the escalating violence in Southern Thailand.<sup>180</sup> The Malaysian government not only accepted them, but also refused to send them back to Thailand even after the Thai government requested Malaysia to do so.<sup>181</sup> Instead, Syed Jaafar said that "it is up to them [the Thai government] to convince their citizens to return" because Malaysia will not force them [the refugees] to do so.<sup>182</sup> In order to reassure the Thai government that the decision on the 131 Thai Malays' application for refugee status would be made without any pressure from the state government, Kuala Lumpur transferred the Thai Malays to a facility in

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<sup>176</sup> See, for example, Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p. 176, Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 166.

<sup>177</sup> Pitsuwan, "The Ethnic Background of Issues Affecting Bilateral Relations between Malaysia and Thailand," pp. 337-8.

<sup>178</sup> Carment, "Managing Interstate Ethnic Tensions: The Thailand-Malaysia Experience," p. 14.

<sup>179</sup> "200,000 Rakyat Thai Lari Ke Malaysia," *Utusan Malaysia*, 14 September 2006.

<sup>180</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 105, "Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution," (Brussels: 18 November 2005), p. 11.

<sup>181</sup> However, in December 2005, Malaysia extradited one person from the group who was wanted by the Thai authorities in connection with the insurgency. See for example; Bernama, "Thai Welcomes M'sia's Move Not to Include South Issue During Summit," (25 October 2005), Harish, *How Malaysia Sees Thailand's Southern Strife*.

<sup>182</sup> *Up to Thailand to Convince Its People to Return - Syed Hamid* (Bernama, 20 January 2006 [cited 3 July 2006]); available from <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/bm/news.php?id=176603>.

Terengganu. This was necessary because the Kelantan state government is controlled by PAS.

#### 4.4.3 Malaysia's Assistance to Ethno-Nationalist Organisations

Malaysia's official stance on the conflict in southern Thailand has been not to support the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist movement and not to interfere in Thailand's domestic affairs.<sup>183</sup> In other words, the government's policy in relation to the conflict has been limited to formal statements, which amounted to expressions of empathy and concern about the confrontation but were always accompanied by an emphasis that this was an internal Thai problem.<sup>184</sup> To the extent that Malaysia has voiced criticisms, it has addressed these through its non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as the Malaysian Youth Islamic Movement (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia – ABIM*).<sup>185</sup> At the same time, Malaysia has also been actively promoting peace talks between the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist movement and the Thai government through its NGOs. For instance, the Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO) has mediated in talks between the Thai Malay movements and Thai government officials. According to Mahathir, the Malaysian government is very much aware of the PGPO activities with regard to pacifying southern Thailand, because the PGPO briefs the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Najib Abdul Razak regularly.<sup>186</sup> The mediation carried out by the PGPO seems to be working well since a number of suggestions made during the negotiations have either been implemented by the Thai government or are in the process of

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<sup>183</sup> See, for instance, Farouk, "The Historical and Transnational Dimensions of Malay-Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," p. 247, Gopinath, "International Aspects of the Thai Muslim and Philippine Moro Issues: A Comparative Study," pp. 125-47, "KL Won't Interfere in Thai Peace Talks, Says Najib," *Straits Times*, 9 October 2006.

<sup>184</sup> See, for example, Harish, *How Malaysia Sees Thailand's Southern Strife*, Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 166.

<sup>185</sup> Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," p. 221.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Mahathir.

implementation. Among the achievements is the appointment of a Thai Malay as the Governor of Yala in November 2006 and a commitment made by the Thai government to introduce the Malay language into the curriculum of public schools in Southern Thailand.<sup>187</sup> In addition, the Thai government had also agreed to use the Malay language as the medium of instruction in 200 schools in Thailand's southern provinces.<sup>188</sup> However, Mahathir could not verify whether these schools were actually up and running.<sup>189</sup>

Although the Malaysian government has disassociated itself from any irredentist demands, giving assurances that the conflict is an internal issue for Thailand and in which Malaysia will not interfere, the friction between both countries has not ended. One of the reasons for the everlasting tensions in both countries' bilateral relations is Thailand's lack of conviction that Malaysia has actually been doing all it can to assist in suppressing the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations and to prevent sympathetic elements in Malaysia from extending support to the Thai Malay organisations across the border.<sup>190</sup> In other words, the Thai government suspects that the Malaysian government does not want to take any strict measures to stop the members of the Thai organisations from crossing the international boundary into Malaysia. In fact, Thai state officials have complained to Malaysia on numerous occasions that separatist organisations have been taking advantage of safe havens in Kelantan.<sup>191</sup> For instance, in the late 1980s, the Thai border officials alleged that the Malaysian military forged links with the PULO because its members were reported to be wearing jungle fatigues and using tinned rations and

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<sup>187</sup> "Malay Muslim Is Yala Head," *The Star*, 2 November 2006.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Mahathir.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Harish, *How Malaysia Sees Thailand's Southern Strife, Yegar, Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 166.

<sup>191</sup> Rabasa, *Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Moderates, Radicals and Terrorists*, p. 56.

equipment similar to what was used by Malaysian armed forces.<sup>192</sup> According to Khan, the PULO formerly had good relations with the Malaysian security forces, especially at the height of the communist insurgency against the Malaysian government.<sup>193</sup> More specifically, it would seem that in 1976 the PULO came to an agreement with the Malaysian security forces whereby the organisation agreed not to cooperate with the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) but instead help the Malaysian army defeat the insurgency.<sup>194</sup> As a matter of fact, PULO played a major role in defeating the CPM. It relayed information to the Malaysian army on the exact location of CPM bases, and in some cases, even engaged the CPM in battle.<sup>195</sup> In return, the PULO fighters were given food and ammunitions by the Malaysian military and allowed to seek refuge in Malaysian territory whenever they were under attack by the Thai military.<sup>196</sup> However, these arrangements were terminated when the CPM surrendered.<sup>197</sup>

Although cooperation between the Malaysian army and the PULO ceased to exist following the CPM's surrender, Thailand continues to accuse Malaysia of lending support to Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations. In January 1998, the then Thai Prime Minister, Chuan Leekpai, accused Malaysia of supporting the guerrillas after Malaysian authorities apparently refused to hand over the leader of the PULO, who had been arrested on a charge of carrying explosives.<sup>198</sup> During 2006, the Thaksin government repeated the accusation that southern militants were being sent to training camps in Kelantan, and that bombs manufactured in Malaysia were being smuggled into

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<sup>192</sup> Pitsuwan, "The Ethnic Background of Issues Affecting Bilateral Relations between Malaysia and Thailand," p. 324.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ganesan, *Bilateral Tensions in Post-Cold War ASEAN*, p. 25, Michael Vatikiotis, "Altered Chemistry," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 160, no. 5 (1997): p. 16.

Thailand.<sup>199</sup> Lastly, in November 2006, the Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont accused Thai restaurants in Malaysia of helping to fund the separatist insurgency in the South.<sup>200</sup> However, in this particular case, the Thai Prime Minister did not accuse any official institution involved in the policy making process in Malaysia, but rather parts of civil society.

#### 4.5 *The Influence of ASEAN on Bilateral Relations*

Although Malaysia has been disturbed by the treatment of Thai Malays, there were at least two instances when both countries were willing to put aside their differences over the Thai Malay issue, namely when both countries faced a common threat and when the relations among ASEAN member states were at risk. First, when both countries faced a threat from communism, the security forces of both countries seemed to have worked together fairly well. Malaysia's border security cooperation with Thailand to suppress the communist activities along both sides of the border goes back to when Britain approached Bangkok with a view to establishing cooperation to deal with CPM sanctuaries along the common border in the south of Thailand.<sup>201</sup> In fact, the level of border security cooperation between the two countries reached an unprecedented peak during 1979-80, when a series of large-scale combined military operations were launched against the CPM's various factions. In the event, the security cooperation between the military forces of the two countries played a key part in the CPM's surrender in 1989.

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<sup>199</sup> Storey, "Malaysia's Role in Thailand's Southern Insurgency."

<sup>200</sup> "Restaurant Rebel Funds Comment Upset Malaysia," *Bangkok Post*, 23 November 2006.

<sup>201</sup> For more comprehensive details on Malaysia-Thailand cooperation to suppress communist activities in the border region, see for instance, Leon Comber, "The Malaysian Special Branch on the Malayan-Thai Frontier During the Malayan Emergency (1948-60)," *Intelligence and National Security* 21, no. 1 (2006), Chandran Jeshurun, "Government Responses to Armed Insurgency in Malaysia 1957-82," in *Governments and Rebellions in Southeast Asia*, ed. Chandran Jeshurun (Pasir Panjang, Singapore: Regional Strategic Studies Programme, Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1985), p. 149, Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*.

Second, Malaysia has not pressured ASEAN to put the issue on its Summit agenda since this would have further complicated relations with Thailand. For instance, Malaysia did not pressure Laos to include the issue on the agenda at the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit held in 2004.<sup>202</sup> Even when Malaysia became the host of the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in 2005, the conflict in southern Thailand was not on the agenda. According to Syed Jaafar Albar, this decision is in line with the "ASEAN tradition" whereby member countries do not discuss domestic matters.<sup>203</sup> In the second instance, cooperation between Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok takes place following a decision to implement various programmes which aim to revive economic and cultural ties, in addition to elevating the economic status of the Thai Malays.<sup>204</sup> The decision was made mainly because, although Thailand's absolute growth rates are increasing, the southern provinces remain underdeveloped relative to other parts of the country and Thai Malays earn less per capita income than their non-Malays counterparts in the neighbouring provinces within the country.<sup>205</sup>

In fact, the provinces of Satun, Patani, Yala and Narathiwat are among the least developed provinces in Thailand.<sup>206</sup> In an effort to increase the Thai Malays' economic standing, the Langkawi Accord was signed in July 1993, marking the formal establishment of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT). The IMT-GT covers the southern provinces (Satun, Songkhla, Yala, Narathiwat and Patani) of Thailand, the northeastern states (Kedah, Perak, Penang and Perlis) of Malaysia, and the Indonesian provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra. However, Khan questions this

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<sup>202</sup> "Thai Muslim Deaths Swept under Carpet at ASEAN Summit," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 November 2004.

<sup>203</sup> Bernama, "Thai Welcomes M'sia's Move Not to Include South Issue During Summit."

<sup>204</sup> Phil King, "The Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle: How the South Was Won...And Then Lost Again," in *Dynamic Diversity in Southern Thailand*, ed. Sugunnasil Wattana (Chiang Mai: Silk Worm Books: Prince of Songkhla University, 2005), pp. 93-108.

<sup>205</sup> Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh."

<sup>206</sup> Croissant, "Unrest in South Thailand: Contours, Causes, and Consequences since 2001," pp. 21-43.

kind of cooperation as a suitable instrument for resolving the problems in southern Thailand because, according to him, economic issues are not the key reason why the Thai Malays continue their struggle through their ethno-nationalist organisations.<sup>207</sup> Although he acknowledged Malaysia's good intentions, he also maintained that the economic cooperation between the two countries in the region did not benefit the Thai Malays' economic needs.<sup>208</sup>

In addition, both countries also signed a Joint Development Strategy (JDS) in 2004 that aims to start development projects including strengthening border development, which covers areas such as trade, tourism, agriculture, energy, education, human resources and disaster relief.<sup>209</sup> Before 2004, Malaysia through one of its government agencies, GIATMARA, has been involved in giving technical training to 271 Thai Malays between July 1999 to December 2003. In January 2007, Malaysia and Thailand agreed to reconvene annual talks between the two leaderships and expedite JDS projects.<sup>210</sup> As a result, Malaysia has set up an agency called "Task Force 2010", whose aim is to coordinate all assistance from Malaysia that would help restore peace in southern Thailand. One of the projects that has been carried out is providing vocational training to 16 Thai Malays in Malaysia's higher institution in April 2007, with funding coming from the Malaysian government. Both governments also agreed to resolve the issue of dual-nationality by sharing biometric information contained in electronic databases to identify people with dual-nationality.<sup>211</sup> Thailand believes that members of the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations are abusing dual citizenship to escape across the border with Malaysia after committing attacks in the southern provinces.

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<sup>207</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Harish, *How Malaysia Sees Thailand's Southern Strife*.

<sup>210</sup> Storey, "Malaysia's Role in Thailand's Southern Insurgency."

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.



Malaysia, which does not recognise dual-nationality, has said that any Malaysian national found to have two passports would be asked to choose a single nationality.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The Malaysian government's policy towards the conflict in southern Thailand rests in a general sense on the importance that Kuala Lumpur attaches to friendly relations with the Thai government. However, the prevailing good relations between Thailand and Malaysia, which - to some extent - have helped to defuse the crisis, do not mean that the sentiments in favour of the Thai Malays from the Malaysian government - particularly from the perspective of the Malaysian Malays - have disappeared. Even though Islam is a very important identity-marker for both the Thai Malays and the Malaysian Malays, the support for Thai-Malays cannot be reduced solely to the common religion. This is mainly because besides common religious faith, the Malays from Thailand's southern provinces maintain strong links with Malaysia, particularly with northern Malaysia, on the basis of kinship relations, cultural ties, and commercial contacts.<sup>212</sup> Despite the fact that both governments are seen as trying to resolve this issue without straining bilateral ties, the ethnic linkages between the Thai Malays and the Malaysian Malays forged throughout history have caused the Thai government to be suspicious towards Malaysia.<sup>213</sup> In general, although Malaysia has repeatedly declared that the country will not interfere in the internal affairs of Thailand, the government is under pressure to make public comments whenever Thailand is seen to be taking a hard-line response in tackling the problems in its southern provinces. The Malaysian government has to play a delicate balancing act between domestic pressures to intervene in the conflict and

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<sup>212</sup> See Gopinath, "International Aspects of the Thai Muslim and Philippine Moro Issues: A Comparative Study," pp. 125-47.

<sup>213</sup> See "Analysis: PM Faces Difficult Task of Winning KL's Help," *The Nation*, 2 April 2004, "Southern Unrest: 'Culprits Finding Refuge in Malaysia'," *The Nation*, 2 April 2004.

wider regional considerations to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of its neighbour. This can be seen by looking at the actions taken by the Malaysian government when dealing with this issue. As illustrated in this chapter, indeed, there are various channels through which the Malaysian government seeks to exert influence on the conflict in Southern Thailand, although officially the government adheres to a policy of non-interference. In short, although sometimes Kuala Lumpur is perceived to be cooperating well with the Thai authorities, at other times it appears to be making things difficult for Bangkok especially when there are rising calls in Malaysia to intervene on behalf of the Malays when their co-ethnic group are seen to be given “harsh” treatment by the Thai government. Looking at this particular case study, it can be concluded that ethnic factors do indeed have an influence in Malaysia’s security practice.

## Chapter 5: Malaysia's Security Practices Towards Aceh, Indonesia



**Map 4: Aceh and Peninsular Malaysia**  
Source: [http://encarta.msn.com/map\\_701509833/Aceh.html](http://encarta.msn.com/map_701509833/Aceh.html)

### *Introduction*

At least until late 2004, most Indonesians viewed the ethno-nationalist movement in Aceh as one of the most serious challenges to the country's territorial integrity, especially since the conflict had lasted for more than three decades by then. The Acehnese, led by the Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF), popularly known as Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* – GAM) revolted against the Indonesian government in 1976. The conflict really turned sour between 1990 and 1998, which led the Indonesian central government to put Aceh under military

operations that aimed to bring the province in line with the rest of the Republic. Before signing the Helsinki Peace Accord in August 2005, the Acehnese, represented by the GAM, and the Indonesian Central Government had signed two earlier accords but neither had been successful in solving the conflict.<sup>1</sup> With the signing of the latest peace agreement, GAM began to disarm its fighters and the Indonesian government started to withdraw from Aceh under the supervision of international monitors from Europe and some ASEAN members. As in southern Thailand, the conflict in Aceh was also linked to the grievances held by the Acehnese towards Jakarta's policies on the province. In fact, a wide range of Acehnese grievances are already well documented in the literature.<sup>2</sup> As the primary subject of investigation here is Malaysia's security practices towards the Acehnese conflict, the chapter will not attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the conflict. The main argument of this chapter is that Malaysia's security practice in the case of the conflict in Aceh can also only be understood with reference to domestic and regional concerns and with reference to the framework of a common ethnic identity.

The chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section [5.1] analyses the Acehnese ethnic identity and offers a brief overview of the Sultanate of Aceh's history, including how the sultanate ended up as part of the Republic of Indonesia. The primary purpose of this section is to illustrate the status of Aceh before joining Indonesia, which was frequently referred to as one of the main justifications for the province being granted a special status within the republic. The following section [5.2] focuses on the ethno-nationalist movement in Aceh. The objective of this section is to

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Edward Aspinall and Harold A. Crouch, *The Aceh Peace Process: Why It Failed* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2003), Crisis Group Asia Report N°17, "Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace," (12 June 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh.", Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, Kirsten E Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26 (2003), Anthony L Smith, "Aceh: Democratic Times, Authoritarian Solutions," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2002), Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications."

elaborate on the goals that particularly characterised Acehnese ethno-nationalist organisations. The third section [5.3] examines the close ethnic linkages that have existed between the population in Aceh and the Malays in Malaysia. This section also highlights the stark differences between Acehnese and Javanese ethnic identities.<sup>3</sup> In order to set the context for exploring how ethnic kinship between the Malays and the Acehnese has affected Malaysia's security practices in relation to the conflict in Aceh, section [5.4] analyses Malaysia's bilateral relations vis-à-vis Indonesia and examines Malaysia's stance in relation to the conflict prior to 2005. Lastly, the fifth section [5.5] discusses the constraints by ASEAN norms and cooperation on Malaysia's security practices towards the conflict and focuses on Malaysia's response to the 2005 Peace Agreement.

### **5.1 The Acehnese in Sumatra, Indonesia**

Indonesia consists of at least 17,000 islands and currently has a population of 220 million. Hassan di Tiro illustrated well the geographical coverage of Indonesia when he stated that the country "covered an area equal in length to that between Moscow and Lisbon, and in width equal to that between Rome and Oslo."<sup>4</sup> Due to its geographical fragmentation, the population of Indonesia is ethnically very diverse. In fact, according to the anthropologist, Hildred Geertz, Indonesia boasts more than 300 different ethnic groups, each with its own cultural identities that are speaking about 250 distinct languages.<sup>5</sup> Despite the size of the country, the majority of the population tends to be concentrated on four major islands, namely Java, Kalimantan (the Indonesian part of the

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<sup>3</sup> Javanese is the dominant ethnic group in Indonesia.

<sup>4</sup> Hassan di Tiro, "Indonesia Nationalism: A Western Invention to Subvert Islam and to Prevent Decolonization of the Dutch East Indies" (paper presented at the World Seminar on the Impact of Nationalism on the Ummah, London, 31 July - 3 August, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> Hildred Geertz, "Indonesian Cultures and Communities," in *Indonesia*, ed. Ruth McVey (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1967), p. 24.

island of Borneo), Sulawesi and Sumatra.<sup>6</sup> Aceh<sup>7</sup> is located in the northern part of Sumatra, which lies between the Indian Ocean and the Straits of Malacca. Although Indonesia in general is comprised of people from diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds, the people in Aceh are relatively homogenous. Its population is approximately four million, which is about a quarter of the total population of Sumatra. Within Aceh, the Acehnese form the largest ethnic constituency, representing about 75-80 per cent of the regional population.<sup>8</sup>

### 5.1.1 Acehnese Ethnic Identity

Despite being part of the Republic of Indonesia, the Acehnese people still possess a strong sense of identity distinct from Indonesians heralding from the archipelago's other provinces. In historical terms, the key to this identity is the memory of an important sultanate that used to be a significant regional power.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Aceh's identity also took shape against the background of their resistance against Dutch colonisation, which actually lasted longer here than in almost any other part of Indonesia.<sup>10</sup> The roughly four million people of Aceh have a distinctive language, Acehnese, which has many characteristics of Malay.<sup>11</sup> Islam also forms one of the main elements of the Acehnese ethnic identity because it is the main religion in Aceh.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, a true Acehnese would define him/herself as a person whose family has resided in Aceh over several generations, who professes Islam as his/her religion and who also belongs to one of

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<sup>6</sup> The Indonesian Central Government is located in Jakarta on the island of Java.

<sup>7</sup> This thesis will use the spelling 'Aceh' adopted under the Malay language rather than 'Atjeh' that is used by the Dutch or 'Acheh' by the English. This spelling will be used constantly except in quotes whilst acknowledging that many Acehnese people use the forms 'Acheh' and 'Atjeh'.

<sup>8</sup> Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*, p. 140, Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications," pp. 267-88.

<sup>10</sup> Reid, "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh," p. 302, Sulistiyanto, "Whither Aceh," pp. 438-39.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Dr. Husaini Hassan, 10 September 2006. See, for example, Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*, p. 140.

<sup>12</sup> In fact, Islam is also the prevailing religion among most of the ethno-linguistic groups in Indonesia.

Aceh's nine ethno-linguistic groups: Aceh, Anek Jamee, Alas, Bulolehee, Gayo, Kluet, Simeule, Singkil, and Tamiang.<sup>13</sup> Despite there being different ethno-linguistic groups among the Acehnese, all of them actually have the same roots as the Malays on the Malay Peninsula. As in Malaysia, Islam has also served as a unifying factor for all of Aceh's different ethno-linguistic groups. In fact, even during the early years of Indonesian independence, when the country's leaders were still arguing about whether or not Indonesia should become an Islamic state, the population in Aceh was already united under Islam.<sup>14</sup>

A few factors need to be taken into consideration when assessing the role of Islam in Acehnese ethnic identity. Some historians have recognised Aceh as the place through which Islam entered Southeast Asia around the year 700.<sup>15</sup> The prominence of having been the entry point of Islam in the region led Aceh to be dubbed as *Serambi Mekah*, or the "front porch of Mecca."<sup>16</sup> In fact, Islam was promoted throughout Southeast Asia by the Acehnese alongside the Malays in Melaka and other Malay traders who had also converted to Islam.<sup>17</sup> Since Aceh's population has always emphasised its devoutness and regarded Islam and Islamic symbols as part of its national heritage, its religion and civilisation are intertwined with Acehnese cultural, social, political, historical, and ethnic identity. According to di Tiro:

Everything in Aceh is judged by Islamic standards. Islam is an inseparable part of Acehnese identity. As far as my people are concerned Aceh and Islam have the same meaning. If Aceh is a coin, Islam is the other side of that coinage. Aceh is a nation founded on Islam and lives by the law of Islam.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Kirsten E Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Sulistiyanto, "Whither Aceh," pp. 438-39.

<sup>15</sup> Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, "Aceh: Democratic Times, Authoritarian Solutions," p. 69.

<sup>17</sup> Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Hassan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hassan Di Tiro* (Ministry of Education and Information, State of Aceh-Sumatra, 1982), 15 December 1977, p.128.

In short, Islam has a major influence in determining the course of social and political change in Aceh in addition to providing a rallying point around which the Acehnese have been able to unite against the incursion of foreigners and outsiders.<sup>19</sup>

### 5.1.2 The History of the Acehnese Ethnic group in Indonesia

Unlike Patani (previously known as Langkasuka), which has a history that dates back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., the Sultanate of Aceh was only founded at the end of the fifteenth century. However, while Patani was made one of the Siamese vassal states following the invasion of the Sultanate of Melaka in 1511, the Acehnese Sultanate grew after a series of strong leaders annexed several nearby kingdoms that led to the Sultanate developing a great reputation as a regional military and economic power. In fact, Aceh's reputation as the most influential sultanate in the region grew not only due to the invasion of Melaka but also due to the fall of Pasai and Pedir in north Sumatra, which was caused by the constant military onslaught by the Portuguese (and Siamese). Towards the end of the sixteenth century until the first half of the seventeenth century, the Sultanate of Aceh was described as the "most dominant nation in the East Indies" and as the most powerful trading state in Southeast Asia.<sup>20</sup>

Historically, the Sultanate of Aceh experienced its golden age during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1581-1636). According to some classical texts such as the *Sejarah Melayu*, it has been well documented how Aceh, during the height of its power, not only controlled many Malay states on the Malay Peninsula - such as Perak, Johor, Pahang and Kedah - but also had a booming entrepôt trade.<sup>21</sup> Penang, which is one of the current states of Malaysia, became Aceh's 'gateway to the world' from about 1850,

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<sup>19</sup> Sulistiyanto, "Whither Aceh," pp. 438-39.

<sup>20</sup> Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p. 12, M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since C. 1300* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p. 355, Thaib, *The Politics and Governments of South East Asia*, p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> Osman Mohd. Taib, *Islamic Civilization in the Malay World* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, Istanbul, 1997), p. 22.



when Aceh's regular trade routes were reorganised.<sup>22</sup> In fact, in terms of its trading power, during the period from 1800 – 1870, Aceh provided about half of the world's pepper supply, which allowed the sultanate to develop strong trading links with a number of major countries at the time including Turkey, India, America, France and Italy.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, despite the presence of European powers in maritime Southeast Asia, beginning with Portugal's conquest of Melaka in 1511, three hundred years after the Dutch became the colonial power in Java and exerted their power over the rest of the East Indies, the Sultanate of Aceh was still recognised internationally as an independent sovereign state.

One of the major factors for Aceh's ability to maintain its independence was the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty whereby the Dutch agreed to the British demand that Aceh retain its separate status.<sup>24</sup> However, Aceh only managed to remain a separate entity from the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) until the Dutch invaded the territory on April 5, 1873. The Dutch invaded Aceh mainly as a result of the later Anglo-Dutch treaty, signed in 1871, that gave them free reign over Sumatra.<sup>25</sup> However, Aceh proved to be one of the most difficult territories for the Dutch to subdue. The Acehnese offered fierce resistance to the Dutch invasion. In fact, according to di Tiro, one of the decisive battles of history in which a European colonial power experienced their first defeat by a people of this region was "the Battle of Bandar Aceh" on 23 April 1873.<sup>26</sup> However, following the demise of the Acehnese Sultan Muhammad Daud Syah in 1903, the Dutch

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<sup>22</sup> Atjeh Verslag of C. Snouck Hurgronje, 1893, as translated in Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra: Atjeh, the Netherlands and Britain 1858-1898* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 269.

<sup>23</sup> Reid, "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh," p. 301.

<sup>24</sup> Hassan di Tiro, "The Case & the Cause: National Liberation Front Aceh Sumatra" (paper presented at the Scandinavian Association of Southeast Asian Social Studies, Goteborg, 23 August 1985), p. 2, Smith, "Aceh: Democratic Times, Authoritarian Solutions," p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, "Aceh: Democratic Times, Authoritarian Solutions," p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hassan Di Tiro*, 25 January 1977, p. 32.

finally subjugated the Acehnese after thirty years of brutal warfare (1873-1903).<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, small-scale resistance continued until the Japanese invasion in 1942.<sup>28</sup>

The Japanese invasion marked the end of the conflict between the Dutch and the Acehnese because the Japanese arrival completely removed the Dutch from Aceh. Following the surrender of the Japanese forces at the end of World War II (WWII), the Dutch colonial provinces, under the leadership of Sukarno, declared Indonesia's independence in 17 August 1945. Although the Dutch sought to restore their rule over the archipelago after WWII, they did not attempt to reclaim Aceh.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, Aceh regarded itself as having returned to its pre-colonial independent status.<sup>30</sup> On 27 December 1949, after a hostile armed struggle during the Indonesian National Revolution, the Dutch finally recognised Indonesia's independence. Under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), Round Table Conference Agreements were signed which allowed for the transfer of the remaining Dutch colonial provinces' territory to the fully independent Indonesia.<sup>31</sup> The Sultanate of Aceh was included in these agreements despite having never been formally recognised as one of the Dutch colonial provinces.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, Aceh joined the new republic after the persuasion made by Sukarno. The agreement to join Indonesia was decided on the basis that the Aceh would be given autonomy within Indonesia, and allowed to implement Islamic law.<sup>33</sup> In other words, unlike the Sultanate of Patani where it has been absorbed into a "foreign" state against

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<sup>27</sup> See Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since C. 1300*.

<sup>28</sup> There is substantial disagreement amongst commentators and scholars over when the Aceh War (or the Dutch War, as it is known in Aceh) ended. Some argue that the war only ended after Japanese invasion in World War II, while other suggests different dates in the early 1900s. Thus, the important point to note is that despite the Dutch achieving a degree of pacification by the early 1900s, the colonial power continued to face lower level resistance by the Acehnese.

<sup>29</sup> Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Sulistiyanto, "Whither Aceh," p. 439.

<sup>31</sup> Patricia Dexter, "Historical Analysis of Population Reactions to Stimuli - a Case Study of Aceh," (Edinburgh, Australia: Defence Science and Technology Organisation, Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2004), p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 117, "Islamic Law and Criminal Justice in Aceh," (Brussels: 31 July 2006), p. 2, Sulistiyanto, "Whither Aceh," p. 438.

its will, Aceh, on the other hand, was incorporated into Indonesia under its own free will.

The following section elaborates on the goals and particular characteristics of the ethno-nationalist movement in Aceh.

## 5.2 *The Ethno-Nationalist/Separatist Movement in Aceh*

After being incorporated into the Republic of Indonesia, Aceh was promised that it would be given political autonomy within Indonesia. However, in 1951, President Sukarno integrated the Sultanate into the Indonesian province of North Sumatra.<sup>34</sup> Two years after the dissolution of the autonomous Aceh province, the Acehnese, led by Daud Beureuh joined the Darul Islam (DI) rebellion in opposition against Jakarta.<sup>35</sup> The main reasons prompting the widespread rebellion were DI's intention to create an Islamic state of Indonesia, its desire for greater autonomy in matters of religion, customary law and education, and the perceived necessity to respond forcefully to Jakarta's decision to revoke Aceh's autonomous status in 1950.<sup>36</sup> However, the rebellion at this time did not advocate the independence of Aceh as an objective. In the event, the uprising was largely brought under control in May 1959 (some elements continued to fight until 1962) through an agreement that granted Aceh a special status called *Daerah Istimewa*,

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<sup>34</sup> Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 357.

<sup>35</sup> The *Darul Islam* (House of Islam) rebellion was launched on western Java in 1948 and that continued until the 1960s. The revolt was sparked after S.M. Kartosoewirjo accused the Indonesian leaders of committing 'crimes against Islam' as they had rejected Islam as the sole foundation of the state. The rebellion spread from Java to north Sumatra and south Sulawesi during the 1950s. For further details see, C. van Dijk, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), Michael Leifer, *Dictionary of the Modern Politics of South-East Asia*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 93-94, Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia's Search for Stability*, 2nd ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 169.

<sup>36</sup> See Shane Joshua Barter, "Holy War or Open Door? The Role of Islam in the Aceh Conflict" (paper presented at the Twelfth Annual CANCAPS Conference, Quebec City, Quebec, 3- 5 December 2004), Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," p. 242, Bilveer Singh, "The Challenge of Militant Islam and Terrorism in Indonesia," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 58, no. 1 (2004): pp. 50-51, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 175.

whereby the region can exercise autonomy in matters of *adat* (customary law), education, and religion.<sup>37</sup>

However, the decision of the Indonesian government to grant a special status to the Acehnese within Indonesia was just in theory, as it had never been implemented fully.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, this has created tensions, especially with regard to the nature of centre/periphery relations with the Indonesian central government. In consonance with its historical past, there is a widespread and strong sense of distinct ethnic and national identity in Aceh. Efforts to safeguard their societal security or in this particular case their distinct identity against Indonesia's dominant ethnic group, in addition to the realisation that the prospect for self-rule in Aceh was very unlikely if not impossible under President Suharto's "New Order" regime, led to a second revolt in 1976.<sup>39</sup> Unlike when the first revolt occurred, this time the Acehnese grouped under the leadership of Hassan di Tiro. They aimed to secede from the Republic of Indonesia and sought to re-establish an independent Acehnese state.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.2.1 Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM)

Hassan di Tiro, a descendant of a famous hero, Teungku Chik di Tiro, who led the war against the Dutch from 1874 - 1891,<sup>41</sup> formed the Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF), popularly known as the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* – GAM) in 1976. In fact, di Tiro has remained to this day the key leader of GAM. However, due to his health problems, Tengku Malik Mahmud, the Prime Minister of GAM and Zaini Abdullah, the Foreign Minister in-exile, have achieved more

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<sup>37</sup> Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 2, Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," p. 242.

<sup>38</sup> Kirsten E Schulze, "Aceh - a Year after the Tsunami: Dealing with Destruction," *The World Today* 62, no. 1 (2006): p. 12, Smith, "Aceh: Democratic Times, Authoritarian Solutions," p. 88.

<sup>39</sup> Rizal G. Buendia, "A Re-Examination of Ethnicity and Secessionist Movements in the Philippines and Indonesia: The Moros and Acehnese," *Philippine Political Science Journal* 46 (2002).

<sup>40</sup> Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*.

<sup>41</sup> Hassan di Tiro, "The Right of Aceh/Sumatra to Survive as a Free Independent State," (Norsborg: Information Department, NLF Aceh Sumatra, 1992), p. 18.

prominence in recent years. GAM's official leadership has been given sanctuary by the Swedish government in order to evade the Indonesian security forces.<sup>42</sup> In fact, di Tiro has been living in Sweden since 1979. The establishment of the movement was the outcome of di Tiro's political beliefs whereby the domination by one ethnic group - Javanese - over others has been at the heart of Indonesia's political troubles.<sup>43</sup> In general, GAM's ideology has revolved around two major concepts: Acehese nationalism and national liberation. It is an ethnic nationalist movement because it is based on the Acehese ethnic group's determination to be free from Javanese control. In the words of di Tiro, the formation of GAM represented a bid "to free my people from foreign domination, from the yoke of Javanese colonialism."<sup>44</sup> Di Tiro sees Javanese rule as tantamount to foreign domination because to him:

The Javanese are very different from us. They have never been independent in modern recorded history. Now they have the impudence to come here and colonise us after we helped them gain independence from the Dutch in the 1945-49 struggle.<sup>45</sup>

The Indonesian central government used to view GAM as a separatist movement rather than a national liberation organisation because when Indonesia won its independence from the Dutch in 1949, Aceh was part of the country. However, di Tiro has remained adamant that the incorporation of Aceh into Indonesia was illegal because Aceh to him did not voluntarily join the Republic in 1949. Instead, GAM argued that Aceh was at the time an internationally recognised independent state, as exemplified by the 1819 treaty between the Sultan of Aceh and the United Kingdom and the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. Another factor that has supported GAM's argument on the status

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<sup>42</sup> Stephen Sherlock, "The Tyranny of Invented Traditions: Aceh," in *Violence in Between: Conflict and Security in Archipelagic Southeast Asia*, ed. Damien Kingsbury (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), p. 189.

<sup>43</sup> Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin, "Issues and Politics of Regionalism in Indonesia: Evaluating the Acehese Experience," in *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Joo-Jock Lim and S. Vani (Singapore: Regional Strategic Studies Programme, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), pp. 114-15.

<sup>44</sup> di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hassan Di Tiro*, 28 October 1976, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 February 1977, p. 48.

of the Sultanate of Aceh was the decision taken by major powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Austria-Hungary to declare their neutrality when the Dutch declared war against the sultanate of Aceh on 26 March 1873.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, di Tiro strongly feels that Aceh's independence should have been returned to the Sultanate of Aceh rather than to the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>47</sup> As di Tiro said:

The Netherlands had declared war against the Kingdom of Aceh, not against "Indonesia" which did not exist in 1873; and "Indonesia" still did not exist when the Netherlands was defeated and withdrew from Aceh in March 1942. And when the Netherlands illegally transferred sovereignty to "Indonesia" on December 27, 1949, she had no presence in Aceh.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, GAM held that the incorporation of Aceh into Indonesia violated the Acehnese right to self-determination because the decision was made without any consultation of the Acehnese people.<sup>49</sup> As a result of perceiving that "Javanese Indonesia" (the terminology used by GAM) did not have a legitimate claim to Aceh by virtue of decolonisation, GAM issued a "Declaration of Independence of Aceh-Sumatra" on 4 December 1976 that stated that Aceh's independence would be an exercise of "our right of self determination" against "the Javanese colonialists" who had replaced the Dutch.<sup>50</sup>

### 5.2.2 GAM's Splinter Group

Internal differences among the key leaders of the GAM led to the formation of the Free Aceh Movement-Government Council (*Majlis Pemerintahan-Gerakan Aceh Merdeka-*

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<sup>46</sup> See Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 6, Thaib, *The Politics and Governments of South East Asia*, p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> Hassan di Tiro, *The Legal Status of Aceh-Sumatra under International Law* (National Liberation Front of Aceh-Sumatra, 1980).

<sup>48</sup> Hassan di Tiro, "The New-Colonialism; Denominated "Indonesians!"" (paper presented at the UNPO General Assembly, Hague, 20 January 1995), p.2.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>50</sup> Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front, *Declaration of Independence of Aceh-Sumatra* (4 December 1976).

MP-GAM). Originally, the MP-GAM was part of GAM because the main objective of its foundation was to serve GAM members who were living in Malaysia.<sup>51</sup> However, the group decided to break away from the original GAM because of a disagreement over Tengku Malik's appointment as the organisation's Prime Minister.<sup>52</sup> When MP-GAM officially separated from the original GAM in 1987, Teuku Don Zulfahri became the new group's Secretary General. MP-GAM perceived themselves as more Islamic than GAM.<sup>53</sup> GAM, on the other hand, claimed that the differences between them were nothing to do with Islam, but caused by the former's cooperation with the Indonesian intelligence to make them look "fanatical and fundamentalist."<sup>54</sup> MP-GAM, however, only has a significant following among Acehese exiles and has never had strong armed support inside Aceh.<sup>55</sup> Zulfahri, who had lived in Malaysia since 1981, held the post until his assassination - also in Malaysia - on 1 June 2000. Following the assassination, Husaini Hassan, formerly a cabinet minister of GAM, advanced as the main leader of MP-GAM.<sup>56</sup> MP-GAM suggested that the killing of Zulfahri took place in accordance with instructions received from the original GAM leadership.<sup>57</sup> The GAM leadership, on the other hand, attributes the assassination of Zulfahri to the Indonesian military.<sup>58</sup>

Significantly, the differences between the two Acehese organisations, especially after the signing of Peace Agreement in 2005, are no longer about who exercises power or ideological differences, but about the ultimate objective of the two

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Hassan.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," p. 252.

<sup>54</sup> Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?*, p. 61.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 21, Singh, "The Challenge of Militant Islam and Terrorism in Indonesia," pp. 50-51.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Hassan.

<sup>58</sup> Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p. 115.

groups.<sup>59</sup> According to Hassan, while the original GAM leadership under Tengku Malik “has placed Aceh under Indonesian occupation” by signing the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding of the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2005, the MP-GAM, on the other hand, has wanted to continue the struggle for the independence of Aceh.<sup>60</sup> The 2005 peace agreement between GAM and the Indonesian government (the Helsinki Accord) came after GAM set aside its demand for an independent Acehnese state. In essence, the accord requested GAM to demobilise all its guerrillas and to decommission its weapons. In addition, GAM also required surrendering and destroying the entire inventory of its firearms under international supervision. In return, Indonesia’s government agreed to grant an amnesty to all GAM members and supporters, and to release all political prisoners and detainees. In addition, the Indonesian government promised to allocate farming land and funds to assist with the reintegration into society of former combatants, besides compensating political prisoners and civilians who suffered losses in the conflict.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the Indonesian government will allow former GAM combatants to serve in the local Indonesian police and armed forces.<sup>62</sup> According to Hassan, this agreement was at odds with the Declaration of Independence promulgated by GAM on 4 December 1976 and therefore, his group, the MP-GAM, will therefore continue the struggle to regain Aceh independence.<sup>63</sup> However, the Indonesian government chose GAM as its negotiation partner because the organisation was known to have superior political and military forces on the ground.<sup>64</sup> For instance, in early 2001, around 60–80 per cent of Aceh was under GAM control whereby the organisation

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<sup>59</sup> For a discussion on the reasons for the split between GAM and MP-GAM, see Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 22. Interview with Hassan.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Hassan.

<sup>61</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 343. For the full text of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Indonesian government and the GAM, see Appendix 3.

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

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Hassan.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p. 114, Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 21.



had assumed responsibility for government services such as education, health care, and infrastructure.<sup>65</sup> In terms of its military strength, in 2001 -2002, the organisation was estimated to have about 15,000–27,000 regular and irregular soldiers.<sup>66</sup> In short, GAM had grown from a small ethno-nationalist organisation into a strong and popular resistance organisation. This meant the government of Indonesia had to take GAM seriously and engage with this organisation if peace in Aceh was to be attained.<sup>67</sup>

### 5.2.3 Analysis of the Acehese's Ethno-Nationalist Organisations

There are a number of different interpretations of why GAM led the Acehese struggle against the Indonesian government in 1976. The most common views hold that it is best explained as a consequence of Acehese resentment of the Javanese domination of Indonesia and because they believed that they had not benefited from the province's wealth.<sup>68</sup> In addition, a number of scholars have argued that the reasons for the Acehese revolt against Indonesia also included differences in lifestyles among them. While the Acehese are known to have a more pious Islamic culture, the Javanese, on the other hand, have a nominal Muslim lifestyle.<sup>69</sup> Because of the perceived differences between the Acehese and the Javanese in their practice, interpretation and approach to Islam, a number of media sources and some academics have taken the view that GAM was struggling for the establishment of an "Islamic State".<sup>70</sup> Many other scholars,

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<sup>65</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N°17, "Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace," p. 7, Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, p. 153.

<sup>66</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N°17, "Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace," p. 7, Michael L Ross, "Resources and Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia" (paper presented at the Yale-World Bank Project on "The Economics of Political Violence, 5 June 2003), p. 26.

<sup>67</sup> Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh," pp. 241-69, Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, p. 42, Singh, "The Challenge of Militant Islam and Terrorism in Indonesia," pp. 47-68, Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications," pp. 267-88.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 175.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh," pp. 241-69, Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia:

however, do not support this interpretation on the grounds that the question of Aceh as an “Islamic State” has never been formally raised by GAM, not even in its Re-declaration of Independence of Aceh.<sup>71</sup> That said, di Tiro made a claim in the 1970s and early 1980s that the memory of *Iskandar Muda*’s rule during the “Golden Age”, “will help us to regain our freedom and to restore what it was on the surface of this land of his”.<sup>72</sup> In a way, this statement infers that GAM’S main objective was to re-establish the sultanate rather than a theocratic Islamic state.<sup>73</sup> According to Thaib, the alleged goal of establishing an Islamic State was actually “raised solely by the Indonesian military authorities in Jakarta, as a scarecrow, to justify its aggression and colonisation of Aceh-Sumatra in the eyes of some of its uninformed western allies.”<sup>74</sup>

In a similar vein to Thaib, Rizal Sukma has portrayed the Acehnese rebellion in primarily nationalist terms. He has seen the rebellion as the result of the central government’s responses, rather than an outcome of religious motives.<sup>75</sup> The Declaration of Independence issued by GAM in 1976 tends to support this perspective.<sup>76</sup> In that declaration, di Tiro said that;

Holland [the Netherlands] was the first foreign power to attempt to colonise us when it declared war against the Sovereign State of Aceh on March 26, 1873, and on the same day invaded our territory, aided by Javanese mercenaries.....However, when, after the World War II, the Dutch East Indies was supposed to have been liquidated... our fatherland, Aceh, was not returned to us. Instead, our fatherland was turned over by the Dutch to the Javanese – their ex-mercenaries – by hasty fiat of colonial powers. The Javanese are alien and foreign people to us Acehnese Sumatrans. We have

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Persistence, Prospects, and Implications." Tan writes, “Although the rebellion is heavily Islamic in nature, there are also historical, nationalistic and economic factors at work” (p.34) and goes on to cite the linkages with “co-religionists” in southern Thailand, Malaysia and Libya.

<sup>71</sup> See Smith, "Aceh: Democratic Times, Authoritarian Solutions," p. 75, Thaib, *The Politics and Governments of South East Asia*, pp. 48.

<sup>72</sup> di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hassan Di Tiro*, 27 December 1977, p.126.

<sup>73</sup> See, for instance, Smith, "Aceh: Democratic Times, Authoritarian Solutions," p. 74.

<sup>74</sup> Thaib, *The Politics and Governments of South East Asia*, p. 48.

<sup>75</sup> Rizal Sukma, "The Secessionist Challenge in Aceh: Problems and Prospects," in *Governance in Indonesia: Challenges Facing the Megawati Presidency*, ed. Hadi Soesastro, et al. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003).

<sup>76</sup> For the full text of the Declaration of Independence of Aceh-Sumatra, see Appendix 2.

no historic, political, cultural, economic, geographical relationship with them. When the fruits of Dutch conquest are preserved, intact, and then bequeathed, as it were, to the Javanese, the result is inevitable that a Javanese colonial empire would be established in place of that of the Dutch over our fatherland [...].<sup>77</sup>

The Declaration of Independence shows that Aceh-Sumatra wanted to become independent not because Indonesia was not an “Islamic State”, but because it wanted to retain its identity, its rights, and its historic status as an independent and free nation. The leadership of GAM itself also supports the perception that GAM is a nationalist organisation. According to Tengku Malik Mahmud, the Prime Minister of the GAM, the organisation is based on Acehnese nationalism and therefore is not a religious organisation, although Islam is the religion of its members.<sup>78</sup> The main objective of GAM had been to regain the political rights of the Acehnese of which the latter were deprived by the Dutch, when they invaded Aceh in 1873, and followed by the Javanese when Aceh was handed over to Indonesia.<sup>79</sup> The conflict in Aceh also has no serious implications for the Global War on Terrorism, as GAM has little to do with international terrorism or even Islamic fundamentalism. Although elements of GAM have engaged in terrorist acts, GAM is not linked to the Al-Qaeda movement or to any other movement that threatens western interests.<sup>80</sup> As a matter of fact, GAM has carefully distanced itself from Islamist terrorist groups and radical Middle Eastern states.<sup>81</sup> There are also distinct differences between the Acehnese ethno-nationalist organisations with the Islamist terrorist groups in terms of their identity. The Acehnese have never claimed an identity based on the religion alone, and piety has never resulted in the kind of rigid puritanism

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<sup>77</sup> Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front, *Declaration of Independence of Aceh-Sumatra*.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Tengku Malik Mahmud, 9 September 2006.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. GAM dropped its objective to regain Aceh's Independence after signing peace agreement with Indonesia in August 2005.

<sup>80</sup> Anthony L Smith, "Indonesia's Aceh Problem: Measuring International and Domestic Costs," *Asia-Pacific Security Studies* 2, no. 5 (2003): p. 3-4.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.: p. 2.

associated with Saudi Arabia or the approach to Islam called salafism.<sup>82</sup> In fact, according to Smith, “the problems in Aceh relate primarily to local conditions, and linkage to problems of international terrorism would be unfortunate and wrong headed.”<sup>83</sup> In short, although Islam continued to be relevant in the sense that it was the stated religion of all members of GAM, the organisation was neither explicitly Islamic nor did it pursue Islamist political aspirations.<sup>84</sup> Rather, GAM is a national liberation organisation that defines its sense of identity through common ethnicity and also religious belief. Thus, while religion is an important identity marker for the members of GAM, it is difficult to attribute the existence of this national liberation organisation to an organisation that aims to establish an Islamic state in Aceh.

For the purpose of this dissertation, it is especially important to note that the leaderships of GAM, both that of GAM and the MP-GAM, were able not only to live/seek sanctuary but also establish their offices in Malaysia. The next section therefore analyses in more detail Acehnese perceptions towards their Malay brethren across the Straits of Malacca and vice versa. Above all, the section aims to establish the existence of kinship ties, both political and ethnic, between the Acehnese and the Malays.

### ***5.3 Relations between the Acehnese and the Malays in Malaysia***

Since the founding of the Sultanate of Aceh in the 1500s, links have been forged across the Straits of Malacca through political struggle, warfare, intermarriage, rich scholarly

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<sup>82</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 117, "Islamic Law and Criminal Justice in Aceh," p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Smith, "Aceh: Democratic Times, Authoritarian Solutions," p. 79.

<sup>84</sup> For views that GAM is not an Islamic organisation, see, for example, John Gershman, "Is Southeast Asia the Second Front?," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (2002): p. 67, Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 7.

exchange and, in particular, trade.<sup>85</sup> In actual fact, even after both the western and the eastern sides of the Straits of Malacca were demarcated by the Dutch and the British according to their colonial interest as stated in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, the straits continued to play a role as the sea that “joined” the lands at both sides of the straits.<sup>86</sup> According to Mahmud, many Acehnese actually view the Straits of Malacca only as a river,<sup>87</sup> which indicates the perceived closeness in terms of interaction and movement between the Acehnese and the Malays on the Malay Peninsula. Historically, Aceh and the Malay Peninsula had strong links with each other. Reid, for instance, acknowledged that,

“up until the Dutch conquest in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Aceh had economic, political and cultural linkages with the Indian Ocean and the Malayan Peninsula, but not with the Java Sea world, dominated first by Java and then the Dutch.”<sup>88</sup>

In fact, for more than a century after the fall of the Sultanate of Melaka to the Portuguese in 1511, Aceh could legitimately claim to be Melaka’s heir. Aceh’s example, like that of Melaka before, became a model for proper Malay behaviour and institutions, which were already emulated on the west coast and the northern half of the east-coast of Sumatra, as well as in a number of states on the Malay Peninsula such as in Perak, and Kedah.<sup>89</sup> According to Andaya, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Aceh became a serious contender for leadership in the Malay world by setting new standards for Malayness in the court, the economy, and in Islam.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Anthony Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier: Acehnese and Other Histories of Sumatra* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005).

<sup>86</sup> Alice M Nah and Tim Bunnell, "Ripples of Hope: Acehnese Refugees in Post-Tsunami Malaysia," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 26, no. 2 (2005): p. 251.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Mahmud.

<sup>88</sup> Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier: Acehnese and Other Histories of Sumatra*, p. 337.

<sup>89</sup> Leonard Y. Andaya, "The Seventeenth Century Acehnese Model of Malay Society," in *Reading Asia: New Research in Asian Studies*, ed. Frans Husken and Dick van der Meij (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), pp. 83-84.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

### 5.3.1 Ethnic Kinship between Acehese and Malays

The Acehese have very close ethnic and historical links with the Malays on the Malay Peninsula. According to Mahmud, in addition to the historical, religious, cultural and blood ties between the ordinary Acehese and the Malays, links also existed among the ruling elites because many of the Malay sultanates on the Malay Peninsula also had blood ties with the Sultan of Aceh.<sup>91</sup> In other words, according to Mahmud, the Acehese not only share the same roots with the Malays on the Malay Peninsula but they are actually “blood brothers” to each other.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, as for the Thai Malays, Malaysia can also to be considered as the ethnic kin state for the Acehese. Historically, these ties have roots traceable to the early kingdoms (Srivijaya) that ruled the region between the eighth and thirteenth centuries. For example, Malay and Sanskrit inscriptions found in the Palembang region in Sumatra suggest that present-day Malaysia was part of the vast trading site of Srivijaya that had Sumatra as its base.<sup>93</sup> These ties, however, did not end when the early kingdoms were eclipsed, but continued until the days of the Acehese Sultanates.

As put forward by Tengku Malik Mahmud, one of the key pieces of evidence of continued strong ties with the Acehese Sultanates is the latter’s decision to liberate Melaka from the Portuguese colonial subjugation by constantly waging war against the Portuguese.<sup>94</sup> For instance, in 1586, one of the Acehese Sultans attacked the Portuguese in Malacca with an armada of 500 warships and 60,000 marines.<sup>95</sup> According to Mahmud, the Acehese War against the Portuguese in Melaka weakened

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with Mahmud.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaya's Relations with Indonesia, 1957-1960," *Southeast Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Mahmud. See for instance Dexter, "Historical Analysis of Population Reactions to Stimuli - a Case Study of Aceh."

<sup>95</sup> Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p. 11, di Tiro, "The Case & the Cause: National Liberation Front Aceh Sumatra", p. 2.

the Portuguese substantially, so that it contributed to their inability to expand their colonisation beyond Melaka.<sup>96</sup> Tengku Malik Mahmud strongly believes that if Aceh had not weakened the Portuguese colonial power then, the Portuguese might have proceeded to conquer the entire Malay Peninsula, resulting in the conversion of Malays to Christianity.<sup>97</sup> Notably, Mahmud also strongly believes that the Malays resident on the Malay Peninsula should be very grateful to the Acehnese then for protecting them from being obliged to convert to Christianity.<sup>98</sup>

Although the source of Malay identity was actually Melaka, this identity was not confined territorially or by descent. As on the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, and elsewhere in maritime Southeast Asia, the court of Aceh also proudly proclaimed its awareness of maintaining Melaka/Malay standards.<sup>99</sup> In fact, according to Reid, Aceh was one of the birthplaces of the Malay-language Islamic culture, because they appear to have written in Malay as far back as “they were able to write”.<sup>100</sup> Even when Acehnese texts were written in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they were actually ‘framed’ in a context set by Malay and Arabic, whereby the beginning and end of the texts were in Malay, with an Arabic exordium.<sup>101</sup> As illustrated by Loeb and Heine-Geldern, “Malay political culture was reinforced by the profession of Islam, a widely circulating Malay-language literature, subscription to similar customs and traditions, loyalty to the Sultanates and frequent inter-marriage across the seas”.<sup>102</sup> In short, the Malay identity was actually based on the standards of language, literature, behaviour laws and Islam

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Mahmud.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. Among the main objectives for Portuguese colonialism was the goal to convert the inhabitants in the region to Christianity. See Robert Day McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002).

<sup>99</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, "Historicising 'Modernity' in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, no. 4 (1997).

<sup>100</sup> Reid, "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh," p. 303.

<sup>101</sup> Mark Durie, "Framing the Acehnese Text: Language Choice and Discourse Structures in Aceh," *Oceanic Linguistics* 35, no. 1 (1996): p. 113.

<sup>102</sup> Edwin M. Loeb and Robert Heine-Geldern, *Sumatra: Its History and People* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 7-12.

that were established by a living, vibrant society and not by any sacred command or ancestral prescription.<sup>103</sup>

Aceh had also established a strong presence on the Malay Peninsula during the height of power of the Acehese Sultanates. Historical research has suggested that Aceh used not only to conquer pepper-producing areas on both the east and west coast of Sumatra, but also to take control of the tin-rich mines of Perak, Kedah, Johor and Pahang on the Malay Peninsula.<sup>104</sup> In fact, during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Perak and Pahang acknowledged the overlordship of Aceh. Although Kedah was then under the suzerainty of Ayudhya (Siam), it also pledged allegiance to the Sultan of Aceh.<sup>105</sup> In addition, genealogical factors have also influenced the ties between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra because a vast majority of the Malays on the Peninsula are ethnographically almost indistinguishable from those on Sumatra, particularly those hailing from the northeastern part of the island.<sup>106</sup> Most of the Malays, particularly along the west coast of the Peninsula, can actually claim to be the descendants of Acehese and Minangkabau migrants.<sup>107</sup> For example, the Acehese started to migrate to the Malay Peninsula particularly during the conflict with the Dutch that lasted from 1873 and went on for almost three decades. In fact, the Malay Peninsula became the preferred destination among the Acehese to seek refuge and they subsequently established permanent settlements on the Peninsula, especially in the states of Kedah, Perak, Penang and Langkawi.<sup>108</sup> Given the constitutional definition of "Malay" in Malaysia, Acehese who lived on the peninsula prior to Malayan independence have also been categorised as Malays. As a matter of fact, in parts of the Malay Peninsula

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<sup>103</sup> Andaya, "The Seventeenth Century Acehese Model of Malay Society," p. 90.

<sup>104</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since C. 1300*, pp. 32-6.

<sup>105</sup> Andaya, "The Seventeenth Century Acehese Model of Malay Society," p. 102.

<sup>106</sup> Liow, "Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaya's Relations with Indonesia, 1957-1960," p. 96.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Nah and Bunnell, "Ripples of Hope: Acehese Refugees in Post-Tsunami Malaysia," p. 251.



(particularly in the state of Negeri Sembilan), the Malays have long been proud to hail from the Sumatran district of Minangkabau, which is regarded as the 'cradle' of their race.<sup>109</sup>

Although the Malays in Malaysia, in general, share a common racial grouping with the majority of people in Indonesia, there actually exist a number of differences between them, especially ethnographic ones. For instance, despite accepting Malay as a racial definition for the large majority of the population of Indonesia, the Javanese ethnic group view that in terms of an ethnic marker, 'Malayness' is only confined to the people that inhabit the Riau islands, the Malay Peninsula, and portions of north-eastern Sumatra.<sup>110</sup> In fact, the representation of all Indonesians as ethnic Malays is objectionable to the Javanese who comprise around 50 per cent of the total Indonesian population. One of the main reasons for the Javanese wanting to be seen as a distinct ethnic group is mainly because many of Indonesia's political traditions are drawn from the legacy of the Majapahit Empire (owing to Javanese political dominance). In fact, many Indonesian nationalists see the country as a continuation of the fourteenth century Empire, which during its "golden age" also claimed suzerainty over parts of the Malay Peninsula.<sup>111</sup> The political traditions of the Malays, on the other hand, differ from those of the Javanese as their traditions are drawn from the legacy of Srivijaya.<sup>112</sup>

The different political traditions have resulted in longstanding tension between Java and the ethnic Malay world, echoing the historical contestation between Srivijaya and Majapahit. Not surprisingly, such differences would also have an impact on the terms of affinity between Malaysia and Indonesia as interpreted and understood by their leaders. Accordingly, the Javanese, who wield most political power in Indonesia, regard

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<sup>109</sup> Liow, "Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaya's Relations with Indonesia, 1957-1960," p.97.

<sup>110</sup> Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: One Kin, Two Nations*, p. 50.

<sup>111</sup> Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, p. 21, Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since C. 1300*, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: One Kin, Two Nations*.

themselves as culturally more sophisticated and superior not only vis-à-vis the Malays but also in relation to other ethnic groups in the archipelago.<sup>113</sup> In fact, according to Shamsul, the Director of the Malay World and Civilization Institute at the National University of Malaysia, one of the main reasons why former President Habibie (1998-1999) did not even receive the support from his own political party to run in the Presidential election was his non-Javanese background.<sup>114</sup> President Habibie was the first and hitherto the last non-Javanese Indonesian president. According to Kingsbury, since many Indonesian nationalists perceived their country as the reinterpretation of a traditional Javanese empire, none of the other provinces in the country is politically equal.<sup>115</sup> Instead, Indonesia has become a centrist state, which is based in Jakarta. In other words, even if there is a Javanese high-ranking official appointed in the Indonesian government, the appointment is made primarily because as a subject of the empire he/she is actually expected to serve the Javanese empire.<sup>116</sup> Also, it is very unlikely that the Javanese people will make a non-Javanese person the head of the Indonesian state.

Clearer evidence of the close relationship between the Acehnese and the Malays also emerged when the Indian Ocean Tsunami hit Aceh in December 2004. Malaysian humanitarian organisations were the first to arrive in Aceh.<sup>117</sup> Despite being hit so badly by the tsunami, the Acehnese people notably still felt obliged to organise an official “welcoming ceremony” to receive their ‘relatives’ from Malaysia.<sup>118</sup> The fact that Tengku Malik Mahmud and Acehnese people refer to the Malays as their ‘relatives’

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<sup>113</sup> Ganesan, *Bilateral Tensions in Post-Cold War ASEAN*, p. 29, Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, p. 22.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Shamsul A.B., 8 April 2007. Former President Habibie is from Makasar, Sulawesi. He became the President of Indonesia not through election but was appointed by President Suharto (1967-1998) to lead the transitional government following Suharto’s resignation. However, when Indonesia held a presidential election Habibie did not participate in the Presidential election. Officially, he withdrew his Presidency nomination after members of Golkar rejected his “accountability speech” that outlined what he had achieved when he was leading the transitional government.

<sup>115</sup> Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, pp. 8-22.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Hassan.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Mahmud.

shows that despite both people being separated by international borders, the feeling of ethnic affinity with the Malays still exists between them. In short, Aceh is a very important part of the Malay world, and the relationship between the two is not limited to trade relations, customs and traditions, and politico-dynastic contacts, but also includes Islamic scholarship.<sup>119</sup> Due to the close links with the Malays, Aceh as a region and Sumatra in general have long been considered as an integral part of the Malay Peninsula, although the ties between the two are normally conceived of as a cultural rather than a political entity.<sup>120</sup>

This section has illustrated the depth of kinship between the Acehnese and the Malays, particularly those hailing from the Malay Peninsula. The next section analyses the Malaysian government's approach to the Aceh conflict. The objective is to investigate whether ethnic kinship between the Malays and the Acehnese has played a role in shaping Kuala Lumpur's policy and practice towards the conflict in Aceh.

#### **5.4 *Malaysia and Indonesia Bilateral Relations***

Despite the common perception by most scholars that close ethnic ties bind Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta,<sup>121</sup> Malaysia's bilateral relations with Indonesia have been problematic at times because historically, the Javanese and the Malays had never been united under one administration, but rather belonged to two rival ancient empires. Aceh is geographically and spiritually much closer to Malaysia than it is to Jakarta. The economic and political interaction between Aceh and the Malay sultanates over the centuries has resulted in many Acehnese settling on the peninsula, particularly in Kedah and Penang. In fact, several senior Malaysian government officials have Acehnese

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<sup>119</sup> Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*, p. 141.

<sup>120</sup> See Barnard, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity across Boundaries*.

<sup>121</sup> Baroto, "Similarities and Differences in Malaysia-Indonesia Relations: Some Perspectives," p. 2, Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: One Kin, Two Nations*.

roots.<sup>122</sup> Due to this close interaction across the straits, most Malaysian Malays perceive the Acehnese not only as close neighbours but also acknowledge the fact that there are political allegiances between them.<sup>123</sup>

The following sub-section looks at Malaysia's security practice towards Sumatra before the establishment of GAM in Aceh in 1976.

#### 5.4.1 Approach Towards Earlier Rebellious Movement in Sumatra

Before the formation of the Acehnese ethno-nationalist movement, Malaysia<sup>124</sup> was reported to have assisted earlier rebellious movements in Sumatra, particularly the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (*Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* - PRRI), which was formed in 1958 by a group of dissident politicians and military officers in Sumatra.<sup>125</sup> After all, as Liow pointed out, the fundamental feature of Peninsula-Sumatra kinship was a shared dislike for Javanese dominance.<sup>126</sup> The historical and cultural affinity between the Malays and the Sumatrans made it generally difficult for the Malaysian government, in which the Malays play a leading role, to be neutral in the Indonesian central government's suppression of their Sumatran cousins.<sup>127</sup> More importantly, the view that Sumatra is closer to Malaysia than to Java has also persistently been shared by the Sumatrans. For instance, following the 1957-1968 regional rebellion in Sumatra, the Sultan of Deli<sup>128</sup> commented that: "We

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<sup>122</sup> Interview with Hassan. For instance, the former Agriculture Minister and the state of Kedah's Chief Minister, Sanusi Junid, was a relative of the late Acehnese nationalist leader, Daud Beureueh. He is currently the President of the Acehnese Community in Malaysia. There are also many other Malaysian Malays of Acehnese descent who are heading a number of important government positions in Malaysia. See, Acheh Eye, *International Islamic University Malaysia Buka Cabang Di Aceh* (3 May 2007 [cited 7 November 2007]); available from [http://www.acheh-eye.org/a-eye\\_news\\_files/a-eye\\_news\\_bahasa/news\\_item.asp?NewsID=5441](http://www.acheh-eye.org/a-eye_news_files/a-eye_news_bahasa/news_item.asp?NewsID=5441).

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Mahmud.

<sup>124</sup> It should be noted that at the time of the PRRI's rebellion in Sumatra, the name of the country was still Malaya.

<sup>125</sup> Liow, "Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaya's Relations with Indonesia, 1957-1960," p. 96.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 98.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> According to Hassan, Deli was a province under the Sultanate of Aceh.

Sumatrans would do better to leave the republic altogether and join Malaya. Most of the Sultans are relatives of mine, and one really has so much more in common [compared to the Javanese]."<sup>129</sup>

Some scholars have suggested that during the period of the rebellion by the PPRI, the Malaysian government allowed the rebels to use military facilities in the country.<sup>130</sup> More significantly, PPRI rebels and sympathisers were permitted to visit Malaysia regularly to publicise their cause.<sup>131</sup> In addition, it was reported that the Malays on the peninsula also assisted the rebellion in a private capacity through fund-raising.<sup>132</sup> Later, when the uprising failed in 1968, the Malaysian government granted sanctuary to the leaders of the PPRI in Malaysia and refused requests for their extradition by the Indonesian government.<sup>133</sup> Due to this historical background of Malaysia's assistance towards its ethnic brethren across the Straits of Malacca, the perception remains that the Malaysian government is likely to continue giving support to other rebellious groups from Sumatra. As a result, in the case of the Acehese rebellion, Indonesia has long harboured suspicions that Malaysia discreetly supported the GAM, especially since there is evidence in the form of pro-GAM material that quotes Acehese sources in Malaysia and refers to rebels who have fled to Kuala Lumpur.<sup>134</sup>

#### 5.4.2 Malaysia's Assistance to the Acehese

In 1976, after the outbreak of the conflict in Aceh and especially between 1990 and 1998, when the Indonesian central government declared the province to be under military operations (Operation Red Net), several thousand Acehese sought asylum in

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<sup>129</sup> Quoted in James Mossman, *Rebels in Paradise: Indonesia's Civil War* (London: Cape, 1961), p. 75.

<sup>130</sup> Audrey Kahin and George McTurnan Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (New York: New Press, 1995), p. 222.

<sup>131</sup> Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: One Kin, Two Nations*, p. 98.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Baroto, "Similarities and Differences in Malaysia-Indonesia Relations: Some Perspectives," p. 151.

<sup>134</sup> "Aceh Unrest Leads to Mounting Death Toll," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 January 1991.

Malaysia.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, given the continuing military operations in Aceh, most Acehnese decided that it was safer to remain in Malaysia. According to Sulistiyanto, 5,000 Acehnese refugees sought refuge in Malaysia in the period from 1991 to 1995.<sup>136</sup> Although Malaysia did not grant political asylum to any refugee because the country never ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees,<sup>137</sup> the Acehnese continued to flee to Malaysia. The Acehnese knew that although Kuala Lumpur would label them as illegal immigrants, the Malays would still find a way to help them.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that besides Malaysia's geographic proximity to Aceh, its shared culture, and similar language, Malaysia has been the favourite destination for Acehnese fleeing their homeland due to the presence of a large and wealthy Acehnese diaspora community.<sup>139</sup> According to Barber, the estimated population of "rich and influential" Acehnese in Malaysia is close to 10,000.<sup>140</sup> The fact that Barber highlighted the role of the "rich and influential" Acehnese in Malaysia indicates that this community enjoys leverage over Malaysia's approach towards Aceh.

In fact, before 1998, rather than repatriating them, the Malaysian government normally granted the Acehnese refugees temporary residency.<sup>141</sup> For instance, in 1991, when 112 Acehnese refugees<sup>142</sup> landed in Penang and Kedah, they were initially classified as illegal immigrants, and hence due to be repatriated. When the Malaysian

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<sup>135</sup>See, for example, Dexter, "Historical Analysis of Population Reactions to Stimuli - a Case Study of Aceh," p. 6, Anja Jetschke, "Democratization: A Threat to Peace and Stability in Southeast Asia," in *Asia-Pacific Economic and Security Co-Operation: New Regional Agendas*, ed. Christopher M. Dent (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 180, Nah and Bunnell, "Ripples of Hope: Acehnese Refugees in Post-Tsunami Malaysia," p. 249, Sulistiyanto, "Whither Aceh," p. 442.

<sup>136</sup> Sulistiyanto, "Whither Aceh," p. 442.

<sup>137</sup> Refugees International, *Malaysia: Acehnese Refugees Face a Triple Threat* (2005 [cited 18 April 2007]); available from <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/5603/>.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with Hassan.

<sup>139</sup> Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," p. 244.

<sup>140</sup> See, for example, Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, pp. 20-21, Michael Vatikiotis, "Troubled Province," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (1991).

<sup>141</sup> "112 Acehnese Who Fled to Malaysia Can Stay If They Want to, Says Envoy," *Straits Times*, 1 June 1991, Dexter, "Historical Analysis of Population Reactions to Stimuli - a Case Study of Aceh," p. 6.

<sup>142</sup> There was also another wave of Acehnese refugees that fled to Penang in 1992.

government began to send back illegal Indonesian immigrants in 1997, the Acehese were still excluded from deportation.<sup>143</sup> Interestingly, despite several requests by the Indonesian government to extradite those refugees who were accused of rebelling against the Indonesian government, Malaysia sought assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in order to address the plight of the Acehese refugees.<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, after a period of intense lobbying by Indonesia, Malaysia finally decided to accede to the request by repatriating a small number of the Acehese refugees to Indonesia from 1998 to 2004.<sup>145</sup> Malaysia's decision to repatriate Acehese refugees led to a breakdown of trust between the Acehese towards Kuala Lumpur, particularly among the GAM leadership. According to Mahmud, although the GAM leadership knew that the Indonesian government put tremendous pressure on Malaysia, they were heartbroken to see Kuala Lumpur comply.<sup>146</sup>

Indeed, the level of trust between GAM and the Malaysian government sank to such a low that Malaysia was not even invited by GAM to send observers to monitor the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) that was concluded by GAM and the Indonesian government on 9 December 2002.<sup>147</sup> Rather, GAM and the Indonesian government agreed to invite only Thai and Filipino soldiers to work alongside them in a Joint Security Commission.<sup>148</sup> According to Mahmud, GAM decided not to invite Malaysia because they feared that Malaysia would no longer be a neutral observer under the COHA, but rather be biased towards Indonesia.<sup>149</sup> According to Syed Jaafar, however, the main reason why Malaysia was not invited to participate was because

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<sup>143</sup> Dexter, "Historical Analysis of Population Reactions to Stimuli - a Case Study of Aceh," p. 6.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Syed Jaafar Albar.

<sup>145</sup> *Straits Times Interactive*, 25 December 1996.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Mahmud.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 45.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Mahmud.

Kuala Lumpur was perceived by the Indonesian government as being pro-Aceh.<sup>150</sup> While different, Malaysia was thus not regarded as being able to act as a neutral observer in the mission. Notably, the policy of repatriating Acehese refugees back to Indonesia was changed again by Kuala Lumpur in the light of the tsunami disaster at the end of 2004. According to Mahmud, the tsunami helped the Acehese by showing the world what was really happening in Aceh.<sup>151</sup> The tsunami had placed the province in the international spotlight - something that GAM was previously unable to achieve through its international lobbying efforts. Prior to the tsunami, any news of the social and political upheaval in Aceh was only disseminated via the people who fled the province to other parts of Sumatra and Malaysia.<sup>152</sup> The disaster, however, had generated unmatched global humanitarian assistance.<sup>153</sup> Malaysia decided not to return the Acehese refugees to Indonesia but allowed them to work in Malaysia. In fact, in 2005, the Malaysian government issued between 32,000 and 35,000 work permits to Acehese refugees and migrants, which legalised their stay in Malaysia.<sup>154</sup> Interestingly, instead of the UNHCR distributing the work permits to the Acehese refugees, the process was handled by the Acehese community in Malaysia.<sup>155</sup> This indirectly shows that the Acehese community in Malaysia does indeed possess considerable influence over the Malaysian government. It should be noted that the refugees that originate from Aceh are among two groups that are allowed to work in Malaysia.<sup>156</sup> It would appear that the decision to allow the refugees from Aceh to work in the country stemmed from the view of the Malaysian leadership that it was necessary to ease the heavy burden that the

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with Syed Jaafar Albar.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Mahmud.

<sup>152</sup> Nah and Bunnell, "Ripples of Hope: Acehese Refugees in Post-Tsunami Malaysia," p. 250.

<sup>153</sup> Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>154</sup> U.S. Committee For Refugees and Immigrants, *Malaysia* (2007 [cited 1 November 2007]); available from <http://www.refugeesusa.org/countryreports.aspx?id=2008>.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> The other refugees that are allowed to work legally in Malaysia are the Moros from the Southern Philippines.



Acehnese were facing at the time. In addition, the Malaysian government also offered to share its urban planning expertise in the reconstruction of Banda Aceh.<sup>157</sup> In fact, according to Nah, the intertwined histories as well as geographical proximity appear to place Malaysia in an important position for the post-tsunami reconstruction of Aceh.<sup>158</sup>

There are few estimates on the exact number of Acehnese refugees in Malaysia because there are no official statistics. Indeed, Gunaratna claims that in 2001, there were merely 2,000 to 3,000 Acehnese living in Malaysia.<sup>159</sup> By far the largest total number estimated to have sought refuge is that of Ramasamy who has mentioned that in 2004, there were around 30,000 - 40,000 Acehnese refugees living in Malaysia.<sup>160</sup> The UNHCR provides statistics on the number of Indonesian refugees in Malaysia for the period from 1996 to 2005.<sup>161</sup> However, the UNHCR has not specified whether the refugees were Acehnese or from other areas of Indonesia because the report only uses the term "Indonesia". Yet, it can be inferred from the report that the Acehnese indeed represent the largest number of Indonesian refugees in Malaysia. The figures, however, only show the number of refugees that were registered with the UN agency. The International Crisis Group (ICG) put the actual number of Acehnese who fled to Malaysia much higher, as many of them failed to register with the UNHCR in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>162</sup> The total number of Acehnese refugees as given by the UNHCR is represented in Table 2 below:

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<sup>157</sup> Nah and Bunnell, "Ripples of Hope: Acehnese Refugees in Post-Tsunami Malaysia," p. 253.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, "The Structure and Nature of GAM," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 13, no. 4 (2001).

<sup>160</sup> P Ramasamy, "Regionalism and Ethno-Nationalist Conflict in Southeast Asia" (paper presented at the Conference on Southeast Asia: A Maturing Regional Power?, University of Essex, March 22 2006).

<sup>161</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), *Trends in Displacement, Protection and Solutions* (2007 [cited 1 November 2007]); available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics/openssl.pdf>.

<sup>162</sup> Crisis Group Asia Briefing N<sup>o</sup> 40, "Aceh: A New Chance for Peace," (Brussels: 15 August 2005).

**Table 2: Refugee Population from Indonesia in Malaysia, 1996 – 2005**

Year	No.*
1996	9
1997	20
1998	264
1999	181
2000	149
2001	83
2002	144
2003	3,198
2004	15,181
2005	19,153

\* Refugee population, end of year.

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR). 2007. Trends in Displacement, Protection and Solutions. In *Statistical Yearbook 2005*, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics/opendoc.pdf>. (accessed 1 November 2007).

Given that there has been an element of uncertainty on the part of the Indonesian government with regards to the real intention of the Malaysian government in aiding the Acehese refugees in the country, the existence of the Acehese refugees in Malaysia created a security dilemma for the Malaysian government. Similar to the case of the conflict in southern Thailand, the concept of security dilemma here is also not used in the usual context.<sup>163</sup> The Indonesian government fears for its territorial integrity especially since Malaysia has a history of aiding earlier rebellious movements in Sumatra.<sup>164</sup> For their part, the Malaysian authorities have had to choose between repatriation in order to maintain cordial bilateral relations with Indonesia or granting asylum to the refugees so that the Malays' ethnic brethren would be safe from persecution from the Indonesian military. In fact, according to the former Prime

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<sup>163</sup> For detailed discussion on how 'security dilemma' is defined, see Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theory and Realities*, Roe, "The Interstate Security Dilemma: Ethnic Conflict as a 'Tragedy'?", Wheeler and Booth, "The Security Dilemma."

<sup>164</sup> Liow, "Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaya's Relations with Indonesia, 1957-1960," p. 96.

Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, when the Acehnese sought sanctuary in Malaysia, it was difficult for the government to send them back because of Malaysian fears for their lives.<sup>165</sup> This shows that the Malaysian government is indeed concerned about the human security of the Acehnese, especially those who had already sought refuge in Malaysia. However, Malaysia was only willing to allow Acehnese refugees to remain in Malaysia on condition that they must not be active in supporting or/and undertaking any action directed against the Indonesian government.<sup>166</sup> It can also be assumed that the Malaysian government's decision not to repatriate the Acehnese to Indonesia was the result of a calculation whereby any such repatriation would amount to a very unpopular decision with the Malay public that might undermine the credentials of the ruling party (UMNO).

#### 5.4.3 Assistance to Gerakan Aceh Merdeka – GAM

The conflict in Aceh, especially in the 1990s, affected Indonesia's neighbouring countries. However, according to Smith, the conflict did not have immediate strategic implications for the ASEAN region.<sup>167</sup> This assessment is based on the argument that the conflict in Aceh was relatively contained – with the exception of illegal small arms shipments out of Thailand and the apparent funding of GAM from sympathetic elements in Malaysia.<sup>168</sup> It should be noted that with regard to the illegal arms supply from Thailand, it was actually the Malays in Southern Thailand who were responsible for the shipments of small arms to Aceh and not the Thai government.<sup>169</sup> Officially, the Malaysian government did not support the objective of an independent Acehnese state in

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<sup>165</sup> Interview with Mohamad.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Smith, "Indonesia's Aceh Problem: Measuring International and Domestic Costs," p. 3.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Zachary Abuza, "Al-Qaeda Comes to Southeast Asia," in *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia: Transnational Challenges to States and Regional Stability*, ed. Paul J. Smith (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), p. 52, Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications."

Sumatra. This becomes clear upon closer analysis of numerous statements made by the Malaysian leadership on the issue. Above all, the government in Kuala Lumpur had repeatedly reiterated that the conflict was an Indonesian domestic affair. For example, Mohamad, during his official visit to Indonesia in March 2000, expressed the Malaysian government's full support for Jakarta's policy with regard to Aceh. Moreover, he made clear that the Malaysian government would curb any activities in the country in support of the Acehese rebels, stating that, "we will not let anybody use Malaysia as a base for activities which are not good for neighbouring countries such as Indonesia."<sup>170</sup> During the former Prime Minister's official visit to Indonesia in March 2000, he expressed the Malaysian government's full support for Jakarta's policy with regard to Aceh. According to Mohamad,

'Our stance is that Aceh should be a part of Indonesia. If they want to have more autonomy that is up to them to negotiate, but our stance is that Aceh should remain part of Indonesia'.<sup>171</sup>

Before his official visit in 1999, the Malaysian Foreign Minister, Syed Hamid Syed Jaafar Albar made the very same point when he said that Malaysia wants 'to see Indonesia return to normality, its economy revived and Indonesia's integrity as a nation defended at all times'.<sup>172</sup> However, despite such repeated reassurances by the Malaysian government that it would uphold its official foreign policy of non-interference in the conflict and respect Indonesia's territorial integrity, there has been actual evidence of material support from Malaysia.

Although the Malaysian government advised its citizens not to get involved in the conflict, as this kind of support would create embarrassment to the government, the

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<sup>170</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 10 March 2000.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Quoted in Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 180.

success in achieving this aim has proved very limited.<sup>173</sup> As stated in Chapter 2, even if government leaders do not want to intervene in ethnic conflict across the border, they may not be in a position to restrain the citizens from becoming involved. While there is no evidence that the Malaysian government itself was involved in aiding the Acehnese other than by providing shelter to refugees, considerable sympathy has existed within the country, especially from the ethnic Malays and the Acehnese diaspora, who had indirectly helped GAM in order that it could continue its operation against Indonesia. It has also been reported that the Acehnese diaspora in Malaysia has been heavily involved in sending money, arms, and recruits back to their 'home' country.<sup>174</sup> Sukma, for example, estimated that in Kuala Lumpur alone at least 5,000 Acehnese provided GAM with regular donations that made Malaysia the largest source for the movement's 'foreign' funding.<sup>175</sup> GAM used the money to purchase weapons in Cambodia and smuggled them through Thailand before sending the weapons to Aceh.<sup>176</sup> The shipments of the weapons to Aceh were also reported to be made via the Malaysian states of Kelantan, Sarawak, and Sabah<sup>177</sup> and these were facilitated by GAM members based in Malaysia.<sup>178</sup> In December 1999, the Indonesian Home Affairs Minister publicly stated that Aceh rebels were smuggling weapons from Malaysia and urged that Malaysia

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<sup>173</sup> Interview with Mohamad.

<sup>174</sup> Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, p. 41, Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," p. 244.

<sup>175</sup> See, Rizal Sukma, CSIS, Jakarta, 24 April 2001, interviewed by Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," p. 258. There are two possible explanations for this 'foreign' funding from Malaysia. First, as mentioned in the previous section, a segment of the Malays in Malaysia are in fact from the Acehnese descent. Second, there is also Acehnese community of more recent exiles living in Malaysia.

<sup>176</sup> Peter Chalk, *Light Arms Trading in Se Asia* (Jane's Intelligence Review, 2001 [cited 10 August 2006]; available from <http://www.rand.org/commentary/030101JIR.html>, Rabasa and Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia*, p. 6, Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," p. 258.

<sup>177</sup> There is a high possibility that the shipments of weapons through Sabah were facilitated by the members of the Moro ethno-nationalist organisations in southern Philippines. According to the ICG report, 115 Acehnese fighters have been trained in the Philippines. See, Crisis Group Asia Report N<sup>o</sup>17, "Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace," n. 11 p. 3.

<sup>178</sup> Chalk, *Light Arms Trading in Se Asia*, Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh," pp. 241-69, "Mahathir's Aceh Dilemma," *Straits Times*, 22 December 1999, Rabasa and Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia*, p. 6, Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 33.

should be neutral in the conflict.<sup>179</sup> This, however, was immediately denied by the then Deputy Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, who declared, "What was said about our country is very difficult to believe", adding "Malaysia had no role in any activities with the [Aceh separatist] movement."<sup>180</sup> Interestingly, after 1999, the Indonesian government did not make any new accusations towards Malaysia. It was reported that weapons for GAM came through Malaysia only until the late 1990s.<sup>181</sup>

In addition, even though GAM's military capacity was almost paralysed as a result of Indonesia's counterinsurgency operations in 1992, GAM was able to keep their military operations alive because Malaysia has been a "useful" place for GAM not only for its financial support but also for its new recruits.<sup>182</sup> A number of top GAM commanders in addition to between 250 and 2000 GAM members were recruited primarily from among the Acehnese population in Malaysia.<sup>183</sup> These military commanders and recruits were given military and ideological training in Libya in the late 1980s.<sup>184</sup> In 1989, it was reported that between 150 and 800 Acehnese fighters trained by Libya sneaked into Aceh via Malaysia and Singapore.<sup>185</sup> In fact, the Indonesian government claimed that Malaysian identity cards were found on the bodies of Acehnese fighters killed in battle.<sup>186</sup> GAM fighters seem to have been able to organise themselves efficiently in Malaysia mainly due to the fact that GAM's operational command was said to be almost fully transferred to Malaysia, where it

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<sup>179</sup> "Aceh Rebels Smuggling Weapons from Malaysia," *Straits Times*, 24 December 1999.

<sup>180</sup> "We Have Never Helped Acehnese Rebels: Abdullah," *Straits Times*, 27 December 1999.

<sup>181</sup> Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, p. 152.

<sup>182</sup> See, for example, Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p. 31, Ross, "Resources and Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia", p. 17, Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM."

<sup>183</sup> Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?*, p. 9, Ross, "Resources and Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia", p. 6.

<sup>184</sup> Ross, "Resources and Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia", p. 6, Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 30.

<sup>185</sup> Vatikiotis, "Troubled Province."

<sup>186</sup> David McKendrik, "Indonesia in 1991: Growth, Privilege, and Rules," *Asian Survey* 32, no. 2 (1991): p. 109.

remained until 1998.<sup>187</sup> According to Husaini, who himself was given shelter in Malaysia for four years before moving to Sweden, although both Malaysia and Indonesia have established Interpol cooperation between them, the Malaysian police neither arrested nor repatriated Acehese rebels despite knowing of their whereabouts.<sup>188</sup> The assassination of Zulfahri in Kuala Lumpur severely embarrassed the Malaysian government because it indirectly indicated that members of the Acehese ethno-nationalist organisation were moving freely in Malaysia.<sup>189</sup>

In addition, it should be noted that as in the case of some of the ethno-nationalist organisations in southern Thailand, the *Partai Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS) also had direct links with GAM. According to Syed Azman Syed Nawawi, the Head of PAS's International Relations Bureau, the party leadership conducted a series of 'informal' meetings with the GAM leadership in Sweden.<sup>190</sup> The main objectives of these meetings were to discuss the ways and means of solving the conflict in Aceh peacefully.<sup>191</sup> In fact, according to Syed Nawawi, in a number of forums that were organised by international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), PAS has actively campaigned on behalf of GAM to "expose all injustices" by the Indonesian government in Aceh.<sup>192</sup> Syed Nawawi also claims that following the Tsunami disaster, PAS successfully persuaded GAM to negotiate with the Indonesian government, which resulted in the signing of the ceasefire agreement at the end of 2004.<sup>193</sup> In addition, PAS was apparently also instrumental in extending humanitarian assistance to the population in Aceh. This included extending help to orphans as well as providing medical supplies

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<sup>187</sup> See, for example, "Aceh Unrest Leads to Mounting Death Toll.", Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p.42.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Hassan.

<sup>189</sup> Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: One Kin, Two Nations*, p. 151.

<sup>190</sup> E-mail from Syed Nawawi.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

and education.<sup>194</sup> According to Mahathir, it was easier for PAS to be more vocal than the United Malays Nationalist Organisation (UMNO) in highlighting the injustices committed by the Indonesian authorities in Aceh because it was not the ruling party.<sup>195</sup> When it comes to shaping the country's policies towards the ethno-nationalist movement in Aceh, Malaysia, on one hand, is actually in a constant quest to balance the interests in abiding by ASEAN norms, maintaining its cordial bilateral relations with Indonesia and on the other hand, responding to domestic concerns. The latter is directly related to a shared identity with the Acehnese.

In short, Malaysia's approach to the conflict in Aceh can be summarised by Abuza's observations,

...for years the primary security threat in Indonesia was that of the Acehnese rebels, yet the Malaysians did little to curtail GAM's (Free Aceh Movement's) activities, including fund-raising, gun running, and transit, within their borders. Kuala Lumpur could have offered considerable assistance to Jakarta in their three-decade war with the GAM; yet, for the most part, the Malaysians turned a blind eye to their activities in Malaysia.<sup>196</sup>

The inaction on the part of the Malaysian government towards Acehnese activities on its soil indicates that Malaysia's security practice in relation to the conflict in Aceh was focused on safeguarding the societal security of the Acehnese. The sentiment that existed among the ordinary Malays, especially those of Acehnese descent, also affected the stance taken by the government itself. At the same time, the government has remained concerned about its own stability. As mentioned earlier, many of the Malays of Acehnese extraction established permanent settlements, especially in the states of Kedah, Perak, Penang and Langkawi.<sup>197</sup> As mentioned in the previous case study

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Interview with Mohamad.

<sup>196</sup> Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), p. 239.

<sup>197</sup> Nah and Bunnell, "Ripples of Hope: Acehnese Refugees in Post-Tsunami Malaysia," p. 251.



chapter, besides commanding a strong support base in Kelantan and Terengganu, PAS also has strong political influence in Kedah. This would be among the key reasons why the Malaysian authorities did not arrest the leadership and members of the Acehese ethno-nationalist organisation in the country although there was pressure on them to do so from the Indonesian government.<sup>198</sup> Despite their knowledge of the whereabouts of the leadership and members of the Acehese ethno-nationalist organisation in the country, the Malaysian authorities did not take any action against them as the government feared that this action would fuel support for PAS. Furthermore, the Malaysian authorities tended to ignore these activities as the government decided that they were not designed to destabilise Malaysia.

### ***5.5 The Influence of ASEAN on Bilateral Relations***

In general, all of the ASEAN member states strongly reiterate support for the 'sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of Indonesia.'<sup>199</sup> In fact, in 2003, all of the member states made a pledge 'to deny the separatist movement access to means of violence through, among all, preventing arms smuggling into Aceh province'<sup>200</sup> which means that ASEAN states have been willing to extend cooperation to the Indonesian government to curb the violence there. Besides being committed to ASEAN, Malaysia is also dedicated to ensuring that all other cooperation within ASEAN, such as sub-regional cooperation, like the Northern Growth Triangle (including North Sumatra), are smoothly implemented by all the respective participant countries. Therefore, Malaysia has to be very careful not to upset Indonesia when dealing with the Aceh problem.

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<sup>198</sup> Interview with Hassan.

<sup>199</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 179.

<sup>200</sup> Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), *Joint Communique of the 36th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting* (2003 [cited 17 April 2007]); available from <http://www.aseansec.org/14833.htm>.

As mentioned earlier, two ASEAN member states, the Philippines and Thailand, were also involved in COHA. Basically, COHA called for the cantonment or storage of GAM weapons, the relocation and reformulation of the role of the Indonesian forces, and the establishment of peace zones. The pact, however, unravelled by May 2003 following the Indonesian government's declaration of a "military emergency" in Aceh.<sup>201</sup> Among the issues that have been identified as causing COHA to collapse include the refusal of GAM to accept autonomy and to lay down its arms.<sup>202</sup> However, it should also be noted that the Indonesian police arrested five of GAM's key COHA negotiators before they could attend the final round of negotiations in Tokyo, Japan.<sup>203</sup> Following the December 2004 tsunami, both GAM and the Indonesian central government started to negotiate a new peace agreement brokered by the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) led by the former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, which was funded by the EU and several European states.<sup>204</sup> The intention of the peace talks was to find a comprehensive solution to the conflict within the framework of 'special autonomy'. In August 2005, GAM and the Indonesian government signed a comprehensive peace agreement called the Helsinki Accord, which provided for an Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM). This was led by the EU within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy and included personnel from several South East Asian states as well as Norway and Switzerland to oversee the implementation of these commitments. The AMM's tasks have included monitoring GAM's demobilisation and the destruction of its arms,

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<sup>201</sup> Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh*, Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*.

<sup>202</sup> For full discussion on this issue, see, Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh*, Aspinall and Crouch, *The Aceh Peace Process: Why It Failed*.

<sup>203</sup> Reid, "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh," p. 314.

<sup>204</sup> It should be noted that the tsunami was not the primary cause for GAM and the Indonesian government to return to the negotiating table. It was reported that prior to the natural disaster, both sides had already agreed to restart the peace talks. See, for example, Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?*, pp. 19-21, Schulze, "Aceh - a Year after the Tsunami: Dealing with Destruction," p. 12.

monitoring the withdrawal of non-organic Indonesian forces, monitoring the reintegration of GAM members, monitoring the human rights situation, and ruling on disputed amnesty cases.<sup>205</sup> The AMM included 130 European personnel and 96 from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.<sup>206</sup>

According to Syed Jaafar Albar, Malaysia joined the AMM mainly because the country was invited by the EU to participate in the mission.<sup>207</sup> However, it should be noted that before sending the Malaysian observers to Aceh, Malaysia requested that the EU ask the Indonesian authorities whether Malaysian observers were acceptable to them.<sup>208</sup> In other words, Malaysia participated in the mission only after Indonesia had given its explicit consent.<sup>209</sup> In a way, this indicates that while the Malaysian government was willing to indirectly help the Acehnese within its own borders, the government hesitated to extend assistance to the Acehnese rebels in Indonesian territory, as this could be seen as an act of interference in Indonesia's internal affairs. In addition, it is worth bearing in mind that Malaysia's membership of and commitment to ASEAN remain its primary foreign policy priority because stability within ASEAN has reduced the severity of potential threats to Malaysia from its immediate neighbours such as Indonesia.<sup>210</sup> In fact, one of the key aims of ASEAN's founders was to restrain Indonesia in its inclination towards *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation).

## 5.6 Conclusion

In short, although the Malaysian government's policy emphasises the importance attached to good relations with Indonesia, Kuala Lumpur did not hesitate to deviate from

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<sup>205</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey*, pp. 343-44.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Syed Jaafar Albar.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Singh, "Malaysia's National Security: Rhetoric and Substance," pp. 1-25.

this policy when their ethnic Malay brethren across the Straits of Malacca were in need. Consequently, despite repeated pledges by Malaysian government authorities that Malaysia has not supported GAM's cause, it is equally true that Kuala Lumpur has proved reluctant to launch crackdowns on Acehese refugees, or to directly support the Indonesian government over Aceh. The government was reluctant to launch a crackdown on the Acehese mainly because it did not want to alienate its own population, particularly the Malays, who have been very concerned about the societal security of their ethnic brethren.<sup>211</sup> In other words, Malaysia's security practice towards the ethno-nationalist movements in Aceh cannot solely be explained by having the same religion, primarily because the majority of Indonesians are also Muslims. Rather, there is a major distinction in terms of the Malay and the Javanese ethnic identities. In short, if the existence of the ethno-nationalist movement in southern Thailand has been the cause of occasional irritation in Malaysia's bilateral relations with Thailand, the same can be said of the situation in Aceh with regard to its bilateral relations with Indonesia. This holds even though the notion of kinship that often revolves around the idea of 'blood brotherhood' has been a prominent feature in the discourse of bilateral relations with Indonesia.<sup>212</sup> Looking at this particular case study, therefore, it can also be concluded that ethnic factors do influence Malaysia's security practice.

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<sup>211</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 78.

<sup>212</sup> Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: One Kin, Two Nations*, p. 2.

## Chapter 6: Malaysia's Security Practices Towards the Moro Region



**Map 5: The Philippines - Malaysia Borders**

Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/philippines\\_re193.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/philippines_re193.jpg)

## ***Introduction***

The Philippines, just like Thailand and Indonesia, also faces problems from Malay ethno-nationalist movements. The Bangsamoro<sup>1</sup> rebellion has been the largest and most persistent of the armed ethno-nationalist/separatist movements in the southern Philippines since 1975.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that over a period of 26 years (1970-1996), the conflict has led to more than 100,000 fatalities and left hundreds of thousands more injured.<sup>3</sup> The rebellion has deep-rooted causes with a strong historical underpinning that can be traced as far back as the colonial era. In October 1996, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) secured a peace agreement with the Moro Nationalist Liberation Front (MNLF) whereby the latter was given autonomy to govern some parts of the Moro region.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the fighting continued. In addition, the GRP signed a truce with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in October 2001. Peace talks with the MILF however, were suspended in March 2002 due to renewed hostilities between the two parties. The resumption of formal talks with the MILF took place in Kuala Lumpur in March 2003. However, both parties have yet to sign a peace agreement that will end the conflict permanently.

As in the previous two case studies, this chapter will not explore the various grievances behind the conflict.<sup>5</sup> Rather, it investigates whether Moro kinship with the Malays has had any impact on Malaysia's security practices towards the conflict in the

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter the terms Bangsamoro, Malay Muslims, and Moros will be used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> Abhoud Syed Mansur Lingga, "Role of Third Parties in Mindanao Peace Process" (paper presented at the International Conference on Peace Building in Asia Pacific: The Role of Third Parties, Khon Kaen, Thailand, 1 - 3 July 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Ganesan, *Bilateral Tensions in Post-Cold War ASEAN*, p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Kamarulzaman Askandar and Ayesah Abubakar, eds., *The Mindanao Conflict* (Penang: Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN), 2005), Eric U. Gutierrez, *Rebels, Warlords, and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000), Salah Jubair, *Bangsamoro, a Nation under Endless Tyranny* (Kuala Lumpur: IQ Marin Sdn. Bhd, 1999), Liow, *Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics*.

Moro region. Similar to the previous two case studies, the main argument here is that Malaysia's approach to the conflict in the Moro region is also best understood with reference to the framework of a common ethnic identity. The chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section [6.1] analyses the Moro ethnic identity and provides an overview of the history of the Malay Muslims/Moro ethnic group in the Southern Philippines. This section also highlights the differences between Moro and Filipino ethnic identities.<sup>6</sup> The primary purpose of this section is to illustrate the status of the Moro region before it was incorporated into the Republic of the Philippines. As in the previous two case studies, the region's previous status has frequently been cited as one of the main justifications for the region to be granted independence. The second section [6.2] gives an overview of the ethno-nationalist movement in the Moro region. The objective of this section is to explore the goals and particular characteristics of the Moros' ethno-nationalist organisations. The third section [6.3] analyses the close ethnic linkages that exist between the Moros and the Malays in Malaysia. In order to set the context for an analysis of how ethnic kinship between the Malays and the Moros has affected Malaysia's security practices in relation to the conflict in the Moro region, section [6.4] analyses Malaysia's bilateral relations vis-à-vis the Philippines. The section also focuses on how Malaysia has supported the peace agreement between the GRP and the Moro ethno-nationalist organisations and the previous stance of the Malaysian government in relation to the conflict prior to the agreements. Lastly, the fifth section [6.5] discusses the constraints imposed by ASEAN norms and cooperation.

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<sup>6</sup> Filipinos are the dominant ethnic group in the Philippines.

## 6.1 *The Moros in Southern Philippines*

The Philippines is a massive archipelagic state, with almost 7,100 islands stretching 1,760 kilometres from north to south and a total land area of around 300,000 square kilometres. Despite having a huge number of islands, the country is divided into three geographical areas namely Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. In terms of the ethnicity of its people, like in Malaysia, the Malays constitute the dominant ethnic group. However, despite sharing ethnic characteristics with the other Malays in South East Asia, the Malays in the Philippines differ from the rest of the Malay Archipelago in terms of culture, religion, history and politics.<sup>7</sup> The most distinct difference between Malays in the Philippines and their brethren in the Malay Archipelago is that they are predominantly Christian, while the Malays in the other countries are predominantly Muslim. In general, the Malays in the Philippines are divided into three major groups.<sup>8</sup> First, we have the “Filipinos”, who are predominantly Catholic Christian and constitute around 92 per cent of the 87 million inhabitants. The second group, the “indigenous people” or “Lumad”, represents three per cent of the total population and is concentrated in Mindanao and the Cordilleras of northern Luzon.<sup>9</sup> Third, the Islamised Malays, popularly known as ‘Moros’,<sup>10</sup> represent about 3 – 10 per cent of the total population. They are concentrated in the southern Philippines, especially in Maguindanao, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Palawan, Lanao del Sur and the Sulu Archipelago.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 222.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald J May, "Ethnicity and Public Policy in the Philippines," in *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), p. 321.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> The term Moro will be further analysed in the following section when the chapter analyses the ethnic identity of these people.

<sup>11</sup> The thesis will refer to this territory as the Moro region. See, for example, Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, p. 34, Miriam Coronel Ferrer, "The Philippine State and Moro Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict," in *The Mindanao Conflict*, ed. Kamarulzaman Askandar and Ayesah Abubakar (Penang: Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN), 2005), p. 8, Thomas M. McKenna, "Saints, Scholars and the Idealized Past in Philippine Muslim Separatism," *The Pacific Review* 15, no. 4 (2002): p. 541.



According to the Philippines' Deputy Presidential Advisor on the GRP-MILF Peace Process, Undersecretary Nabil Tan, there are no official statistics on the overall number of Moros in the Philippines, which has proved a source of continuous disagreement between the GRP and the Moros.<sup>12</sup> Officially, the government estimates that the Moros represent merely 3 – 5 per cent of the total population; however, the Moros themselves have claimed that they make up around 10 per cent.<sup>13</sup> Historically, the Moros have formed the majority in the Moro region. However, as a result of the transmigration of Christian Filipinos, particularly in the wake of the government's encouragement to settle in this area, the Moros now only constitute around 20 per cent of the total population in their erstwhile homeland.<sup>14</sup> In addition, many of the Moros have lost their land to immigrant settlers as a consequence of dubious legal transactions or outright confiscation.<sup>15</sup> The continuing dispossession of the Moros ancestral landholdings by the Christian migrant groups has been viewed by the Moros as a threat to their societal security and this was one of the main reasons that the Moro ethno-nationalist organisations led their struggle against the Philippine government in this region.

#### 6.1.1 Moros' Ethnic Identity

Originally, the term Moro did not refer to any particular ethnic group. The term was given to them by the Spanish colonists because like the Moors of North Africa who ruled the Iberian Peninsula for centuries, the Malays in southern Philippines are also

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Nabil A. Tan (Undersecretary), 22 February 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, "From Peripheral Communities to Ethnic Nations: Separatism in Southeast Asia," pp. 51-77, Islam, "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines," pp. 441-56.

<sup>15</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 237.

Muslim.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the term was used by the Spaniards to refer to all the various Islamised Malay tribes in the southern Philippines that they were unable to dominate. However, according to Collier, it would be difficult 'to speak of Moros constituting a single society and a single nationality' during the Spanish period as there is no evidence that the Malay Muslims did so themselves.<sup>17</sup> Actually, the indigenous Malay Muslims in the southern Philippines are divided into 13 ethno-linguistic groups. The three largest and politically dominant are the Maguindanaon of the Cotabato provinces; the Maranao of the two Lanao provinces; and the Tausug of the Sulu archipelago. The remaining ten are the Badjaw, Iranun or Ilanun, Jama Mapun, Kalagan, Kalibogon, Melebugnon, Palawani, Sama, Sangil and Yakan.<sup>18</sup> In other words, before the arrival of the Spaniards in the Philippines, a Moro nation by definition did not exist because the Malay Muslims in the Philippines have always been separated from one another in this archipelagic nation, due to significant linguistic and geographic distances.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, despite belonging to a different ethno-linguistic group, all of them readily agree to be identified as 'Bangsamoro', because it serves to unite those who are otherwise divided.

The Moro's identity is founded on several grounds namely; shared common racial origins (Indo-Malayan); common religion (Islam); shared history (more than 400 years of resistance to Spanish colonialism to defend their faith, people and homeland); organised government in the form of sultanates, and a defined territory (Mindanao,

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<sup>16</sup> Abhoud Syed Mansur Lingga, "Muslim Minority in the Philippines" (paper presented at the SEACSN Conference 2004, Penang, Malaysia, 12-15 January 2005), McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup> Kit Collier, "Dynamics of Muslim Separatism in the Philippines," in *Violence in Between: Conflict and Security in Archipelagic Southeast Asia*, ed. Damien Kingsbury (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), p. 161.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Jamail A Kamlain, "Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Southern Philippines: A Discourse on Self-Determination, Political Autonomy and Conflict Resolution," (Atlanta: School of Law, Emory University, 2003), Lingga, "Muslim Minority in the Philippines", Macapado A Muslim and Rufa Cagoco-Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," in *Compromising on Autonomy: Mindanao in Transition*, ed. Mara Stankovitch (London: Conciliation Resources, 1999), pp. 10-19.

<sup>19</sup> McKenna, "Saints, Scholars and the Idealized Past in Philippine Muslim Separatism," p. 541.

Palawan and Sulu).<sup>20</sup> However, it should be noted that although the Moros speak 13 languages or dialects, “the various Moro dialects contain derivatives or roots that have, beyond doubt, a strong Malay origin.”<sup>21</sup> The term Bangsamoro, however, does not refer only to the Islamised Malays but also includes the non-Islamised Malays or the indigenous people that reside in the Moro region.<sup>22</sup> Although there are many ethnic similarities between the Moros and the Filipinos - such as belonging to the wider Malay race (indeed they are physically indistinguishable) and the fact that the languages and dialects spoken by them belong to the same linguistic family - the Moros still perceive themselves as being very different from the Filipinos.<sup>23</sup> According to Muhammad al-Hasan:

We [Moros and Filipinos] are two different peoples adhering to different ideologies, having different cultures, and nurtured by different historical experiences.<sup>24</sup>

This feeling of separateness is still strong today, for whenever there are rallies and demonstrations, one can read placards saying “We are not Filipinos, we are Bangsamoro.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, although primordially both the Filipinos and the Moros are all Malays, differences in their religion, political and historical backgrounds have led the Moros to form an ethnic identity separate from the Filipinos. Filipinos cannot be classified as an ‘original’ Malay people because their identity was formed only

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<sup>20</sup> Jubair, *Bangsamoro, a Nation under Endless Tyranny*, pp. 19 - 25.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Mohagher Iqbal, 26 February 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Ghazali Jaafar, 26 February 2007, Lingga.

<sup>23</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, "Ethnicity and Islam in the Philippines," in *Ethnicities and Nations: Processes of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific*, ed. S. J. Tambiah, Remo Guidieri, and Francesco Pellizzi (Houston: University of Texas Press, 1988), pp. 364-67.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Peter G. Gowing, "Of Different Minds: Christian and Muslim Ways of Looking at Their Relations in the Philippines," *International Review of Missions* 265 (1978): p. 78.

<sup>25</sup> Abhoud Syed Mansur Lingga, "Understanding Bangsamoro Independence as a Mode of Self-Determination" (paper presented at the Forum on Mindanao Peace, Davao City, Philippines, 28 February 2002).

following a process of ‘fertilisation and racial infusion’ with a number of ethnic groups such as the Spaniards and Chinese mestizos.<sup>26</sup>

From the perspective of most Moros, the Philippine state is distant, alien and centred on the needs and interests of the national centre in “Imperial Manila” and the Christian majority. In short, since the Moros strongly believe that they belong to a separate nation by virtue of their distinct identity and the long history of their sultanates before the arrival of colonial powers, they claim that they have ‘a right to self-determination, including the right to a state’, at least in areas where they are in the majority.<sup>27</sup>

#### 6.1.2 The History of the Moro Ethnic group in the Philippines

Before the arrival of the Spaniards in 1565 (Spain was the first colonial power in the Philippines), the Bangsamoro were already organised into a number of different sultanates, including Sulu, Maguindanao, Bayan and Butig.<sup>28</sup> The Moros’ sultanates were established in Sulu by the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century and in Mindanao before the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>29</sup> During the height of the Sulu Sultanate, its territory covered the Sulu Archipelago, parts of Borneo, south Palawan, and parts of Mindanao.<sup>30</sup> By comparison, the Sultanate of Maguindanao was founded following the divisions of the Sulu Sultanate into a number of different sultanates in the second decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1571, the Spaniards defeated Raja Suleiman, the first Malay Muslim Sultan in the region of Manila.<sup>31</sup> In 1578, Spain declared war on the Malay Muslims and successfully defeated

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<sup>26</sup> Buendia, "A Re-Examination of Ethnicity and Secessionist Movements in the Philippines and Indonesia: The Moros and Acehnese," n. 10, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.: p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 186.

<sup>29</sup> McKenna, "Saints, Scholars and the Idealized Past in Philippine Muslim Separatism," p. 541.

<sup>30</sup> Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 191.

<sup>31</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, "Class and Colony in Mindanao," in *Rebels, Warlords, and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines*, ed. Eric U. Gutierrez (Quezon City: Institute for Popular

them in Luzon, Mindoro, and the Visayas.<sup>32</sup> Following this success, the Spaniards embarked on a series of military campaigns known as the “Moro Wars” against the Malay Muslims in the southern Philippines. Spain attempted to incorporate Mindanao into its Philippine colony over the next three centuries until 1898. During this period, the Spaniards were able to establish several footholds in Mindanao, particularly in the northern and eastern part of the island and in the Zamboanga peninsula.<sup>33</sup>

Despite successive and largely successful military campaigns, the Spaniards failed to completely subdue the Moros. The Moros perceived both the Maguindanao and Sulu sultanates as the two most important sultanates in the southern Philippines because they were the ones that acted as the main obstacle that prevented the Spaniards from colonising the whole of the Moro region. According to some scholars, one of the main reasons why the Moros so fiercely resisted the Spaniards and their Christian allies, whom they called *Indios* (Christianised Malays/Filipinos) was because of their fear of being forced to convert to Christianity.<sup>34</sup> One of the contributing factors that enabled the Moros to survive the Spaniards’ military campaigns was because during that period of time, they already had a “well-organised administrative and political systems”.<sup>35</sup> Although the Spaniards were unable to fully subdue the Moros, they were quite successful in negotiating treaties with particular sultanates. For instance, in 1878, Sultan Jama ul-Azam of Sulu signed a peace treaty with the Spanish government agreeing to bind his subjects to the Spanish king in exchange for autonomy.<sup>36</sup> This, however, did

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Democracy, 2000), p. 8, Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 186.

<sup>32</sup> May, "Ethnicity and Public Policy in the Philippines," p. 324.

<sup>33</sup> Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, May, "Ethnicity and Public Policy in the Philippines," p. 323, McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 90, Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 200.

<sup>35</sup> Lingga, "Role of Third Parties in Mindanao Peace Process".

<sup>36</sup> Liow, *Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics*, p. 9.

not mean that the Moros had surrendered to them. Instead, it was probably one of the ways that the Sultan thought he could find a peaceful solution that would enable the Moros to preserve their identity and social coherence. According to Marohomsalic, even towards the end of Spanish colonisation, the southern Philippines “was still a bastion of its many sultanates and principalities, unconquered, unbowed, proud and free.”<sup>37</sup> Due to the Spaniards inability to exercise effective sovereignty over the Moro region, the Moros disputed the handover of their homeland to the United States of America (US) in 1898.<sup>38</sup>

By the time that the US acquired the Philippines following the Treaty of Paris, with the exception of Mindanao and a few islands in the Philippine archipelago, the Moro population in the country had been either eliminated or converted to Christianity.<sup>39</sup> However, the Americans still had to engage with the Moros in a series of bloody battles that consequently allowed the Americans to gain control of western Mindanao and Sulu. Like the Spanish, the Americans were not able to fully control the Moro region.<sup>40</sup> Despite resistance from the Moros, the Sultan of Sulu was finally obliged to sign the Bates treaty with the US on 20 August 1899, in which the US recognised the sultanate as having “protected sovereignty”.<sup>41</sup> However, the Americans abrogated the treaty in 1902 in order to impose a policy of direct rule. This led to the creation of the Moro Provinces under the direct control of the colonial government in Manila.<sup>42</sup> According to Lingga,

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<sup>37</sup> Marohomsalic, *Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines*, p. 77.

<sup>38</sup> Eliseo R. Mercado, "Culture, Economics and Revolt in Mindanao: The Origins of the MNLF and the Politics of Moro Separatism," in *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Joo-Jock Lim and S. Vani (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), pp. 168-75.

<sup>39</sup> Bob East, "The Bangsa Moro: Fighting for Freedom During the War of Terror: The Muslim Independence Movement of the Southern Philippines" (paper presented at the Social Change in the 21st Century Conference, Queensland, 28 October 2005), p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> E San Juan Jr, "Ethnic Identity and Popular Sovereignty: Notes on the Moro Struggle in the Philippines," *Ethnicities* 6, no. 3 (2006): pp. 398-99.

<sup>42</sup> Islam, "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines," pp. 441-56.

the fact that the US created the Moro Provinces indicated that the Americans recognised that the Moros had an identity distinct from the Filipinos.<sup>43</sup>

As observed by Buendia, the “Muslims in the Philippines, at first, took the peaceful track in carving a nation-state.”<sup>44</sup> In 1921, the Moros petitioned the Wood-Forbes Commission to the effect that they wished to see their territory become a permanent territory of the United States in the event that the US granted independence to the Philippines.<sup>45</sup> One of the main arguments put forward by the Moros in their petition seeking to separate their territory from the Philippine state was that the Philippine Legislature had failed to pass any laws of benefit to Moro people.<sup>46</sup> In 1926, Congressman Bacon of New York introduced a bill for the separation of the Sulu Archipelago and Mindanao from the Philippines.<sup>47</sup> However, according to David Jr., “at this time, the Christian Nationalist Filipinos had established a better relationship with the Americans” which led the US Congress not to pass the bill.<sup>48</sup> In 1935, when the US announced its intention to grant independence to the Philippines, the Malay Muslims again drew up a petition called the “Dansalan Declaration” requesting their homeland to remain under direct control of the US and to be excluded from the proposed independence.<sup>49</sup> The following passage highlights the key points of the petition:

... We do not want to be included in the Philippines for once an independent Philippines is launched, there would be trouble between us and the Filipinos because from time immemorial these two peoples have not lived

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<sup>43</sup> Lingga, "Understanding Bangsamoro Independence as a Mode of Self-Determination".

<sup>44</sup> Buendia, "A Re-Examination of Ethnicity and Secessionist Movements in the Philippines and Indonesia: The Moros and Acehnese," p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> J.W Wheeler-Bennett, "Thirty Years of American-Filipino Relations, 1899-1929," *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 8, no. 5 (1929): p. 515.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ricardo A. David Jr, "The Causes and Prospect of the Southern Philippines Secessionist Movement" (Naval Postgraduate School, 2003), p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> Kamlain, "Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Southern Philippines: A Discourse on Self-Determination, Political Autonomy and Conflict Resolution.", McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 91.

harmoniously together. Our public land must not be given to people other than the Moros...<sup>50</sup>

According to Lingga, the Moros made the request in anticipation that the US would decolonise its colonies and other non-self governing territories, and expected that the Bangsamoro homeland would be granted separate independence.<sup>51</sup> Instead, the American government implemented a policy of integration of Malay Muslims into Christian Filipino society and granted independence to the Republic of the Philippines on 4 July 1946.<sup>52</sup> In 1961, the Moros tried to resolve peacefully the incorporation of their homeland into the Philippine state with Manila. In that year, Congressman Ombra Amilbangsa<sup>53</sup> filed a bill during the fourth session of the Philippines's Fourth Congress that sought the granting and recognition of the independence of Sulu.<sup>54</sup> However, the Congress did not take any positive action on the bill because no political support was forthcoming, primarily due to the small number of Muslim members of Congress.

The incident on Corregidor Island in March 1968 proved to be the turning point for the Moros from a peaceful struggle, which sought the return of their homeland region, to a violent insurgency. According to reports, 64 Moro recruits were massacred<sup>55</sup> by their Christian Filipino superiors on Corregidor. Jubair argues that when Jibin Arola, the only survivor of the incident, was called by the Philippines' Joint House-Senate Investigation to testify on the incident, he claimed, "They were shot because they

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<sup>50</sup> Philippine Muslim News (Manila), Vol.2, No.2, July 1968, pp.7-12 quoted in Kamlain, "Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Southern Philippines: A Discourse on Self-Determination, Political Autonomy and Conflict Resolution."

<sup>51</sup> Abhoud Syed Mansur Lingga, "Mindanao Peace Process: The Need for a New Formula," in *The Mindanao Conflict*, ed. Kamarulzaman Askandar and Ayesah Abubakar (Penang: Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN), 2005), p. 35.

<sup>52</sup> McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 91.

<sup>53</sup> Congressman Amilbangsa was a descendant of the Sultans of Sulu. Before he was appointed as a Congressman after WWII, he was the Governor for Sulu province.

<sup>54</sup> Jubair, *Bangsamoro, a Nation under Endless Tyranny*, pp. 304-05.

<sup>55</sup> There were different figures reported for the number of trainees killed in the incident. See, for example, McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 93, Muslim and Cagoco-Guam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 13.



refused to follow orders to attack Sabah".<sup>56</sup> The judgement made by the court martial to acquit the accused military personnel sparked the Moros' uprising against the GRP.<sup>57</sup> The Moros denounced the verdict as a "whitewash", and accused the government under the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos (1965-1986) of having "criminal intentions" and pursued a policy that aimed for the "systematic extermination" of their people.<sup>58</sup> In short, the Moros feared that their societal security would be seriously threatened by the GRP, which consequently led to the establishment of their ethno-nationalist organisations.

## **6.2 The Ethno-Nationalist Movement in the Moro Region**

As a result of the execution of the Bangsamoro recruits and the verdict of the court martial, Datu Udtog Matalam, a provincial governor of Cotabato, formed the Muslim (later Mindanao) Independence Movement (MIM) in May 1968.<sup>59</sup> The MIM called for the outright secession of the Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan regions from the Republic of the Philippines 'in order to establish an Islamic state'.<sup>60</sup> In 1969, it was reported<sup>61</sup> that some of the Moros from MIM's youth section were sent to receive their military training in Malaysia. One of the groups went to the state of Sabah, another group was said to have received their training close to the Thai border and others were apparently sent to Pangkor Island off the coast of Perak (a state located at the west coast of the Malay

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Jubair, *Bangsamoro, a Nation under Endless Tyranny*, p. 132.

<sup>57</sup> David Jr, "The Causes and Prospect of the Southern Philippines Secessionist Movement", p. 62.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 93, Muslim and Cagoco-Guam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 15.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 144-46.

<sup>61</sup> According to reports, these military training received the support of Sabah Chief Minister, Tun Mustapha, with the tacit agreement of the Malaysian government. However, the Malaysian government has never admitted that it has any role in the training of these youth.

Peninsula).<sup>62</sup> One of the MIM's "trainees" in Malaysia, Nur Misuari,<sup>63</sup> a former University of the Philippines' Political Science lecturer, founded the Moro Nationalist Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1969.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, the MIM was dissolved in favour of the MNLF. Until the early 1980s, support for the MNLF among the Bangsamoro was almost universal,<sup>65</sup> making the MNLF the official representative for promoting the Moro cause through armed struggle, Islamic diplomacy, and peace negotiations.<sup>66</sup>

### 6.2.1 The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)

When the MNLF was first established, its original objective was to form an independent Bangsamoro Islamic state. However, it should be noted that although the MNLF names Islam as the reason for the struggle, the movement has been consistently classified as having a secular nationalist orientation.<sup>67</sup> In fact, the MNLF's decision to expand the term 'Moro' to include all native inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu whether they are Muslim, Christians or Lumad (the indigenous people), especially for those who have accepted the distinctiveness of the Moros as a separate nation from that of the Filipinos in Luzon and Visayas,<sup>68</sup> show that the organisation is ethno-nationalist rather than Islamic in nature. Among the areas identified as MNLF strongholds are Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan and the Zamboanga Peninsula. The MNLF also has a strong presence in

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<sup>62</sup> See, for example, David Hawkins, *The Defence of Malaysia and Singapore, from AMDA to ANZUK* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1972), pp. 50-52, Marohomsalic, *Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines*, p. 166, Mercado, "Culture, Economics and Revolt in Mindanao: The Origins of the MNLF and the Politics of Moro Separatism," p. 157.

<sup>63</sup> His full name is Nurallaji Misuari

<sup>64</sup> Gutierrez, *Rebels, Warlords, and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines*, p. 152.

<sup>65</sup> Ahmad, "Class and Colony in Mindanao," p. 25.

<sup>66</sup> In July 1975, at the "Sixth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers", held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the MNLF was granted the observer status in the Organisation of Islamic Conferences (OIC). See, for example, East, "The Bangsa Moro: Fighting for Freedom During the War of Terror: The Muslim Independence Movement of the Southern Philippines", p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> Soliman M. Santos, *Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations* (Davao City, Philippines: Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao, 2005), p. 61, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 240.

<sup>68</sup> Muslim and Cagoco-Guam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 15.

parts of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and South Cotabato. The members are predominantly, but not exclusively, from the Tausug, Samal and Yakan ethno-linguistic groups.<sup>69</sup> In 1986, the MNLF's Bangsa Moro Army (BMA) was estimated to be 10,000 strong and was organised into 10 provincial armies.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the MNLF's National Mobile Forces were divided into 4 armies, occupying at least 13 permanent camps.<sup>71</sup> In 1994, the MNLF was estimated to have 14,080 fighters.<sup>72</sup>

The MNLF signed the Tripoli Agreement (under the auspices of the Organisation of Islamic Conferences - OIC) with the GRP in 1976 following its willingness to settle the conflict with the government within the framework of a unitary state and the territorial integrity of the Philippines.<sup>73</sup> In fact, the OIC was instrumental in making the MNLF relinquish its bid to seek an independent Moro state. Following the OIC's pressure and promise to form the Filipino Muslim Welfare and Relief Agency, which was aimed at extending welfare and relief aid directly to Muslims in the Southern Philippines by seeking to improve the Moros' conditions and enhance their social and economic well-being, the MNLF agreed to drop its bid for independence.<sup>74</sup> The OIC also promised more economic assistance once agreements were reached.<sup>75</sup> However, despite signing the Tripoli Agreement in 1976, hostilities between the two parties resumed after the GRP broke the Agreement when the GRP under President Marcos

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>70</sup> Ferrer, "The Philippine State and Moro Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict," p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, pp. 192- 93.

<sup>72</sup> Ferrer, "The Philippine State and Moro Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict," p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Buendia, "A Re-Examination of Ethnicity and Secessionist Movements in the Philippines and Indonesia: The Moros and Acehnese."

<sup>74</sup> Lingga, "Role of Third Parties in Mindanao Peace Process".

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

implemented its own version of autonomy and established a separate regional government.<sup>76</sup>

In 1996, the MNLF signed the Final Peace Agreement (FPA), also known as the Jakarta Accord,<sup>77</sup> during the administration of Ramos, whose presidency was said to be the most successful with regard to negotiating the peace processes with the Moros.<sup>78</sup> With the signing of the FPA, peace between both parties materialised temporarily.<sup>79</sup> Following the signing of the agreement, Misuari was elected governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) comprising the four provinces of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, and Lanao del Sur in 1997. Concurrently, he became the Chairman of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), an executive body representing the three major ethno-religious communities in Mindanao: Christians, Muslims and indigenous Lumads.<sup>80</sup> The 1996 Peace Agreement enabled the integration of some 7,750 MNLF fighters or their next of kin into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the police force.<sup>81</sup> However, in November 2001 Misuari revolted because he felt he was being eased out of positions of authority, especially because he could not secure by legal means a second term as the ARMM regional governor.<sup>82</sup> After his short-lived rebellion, he abandoned his post as governor and escaped to Sabah, Malaysia. However, within weeks the Malaysian police arrested him and deported him to Manila. At the time of writing, he is still under house arrest

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<sup>76</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *The Politics of Islamic Reassertion* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 225, Muslim and Cagoco-Guam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 17.

<sup>77</sup> Peace negotiations under Ramos were held from 1992 to 1996, with exploratory talks in Tripoli and Cipanas, Indonesia, four rounds of formal talks in Jakarta, and nine Mixed Committee Meetings mainly in the Southern Philippines.

<sup>78</sup> Carmen A Abubakar, "Review of the Mindanao Peace Processes," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5, no. 3 (2004): p. 455.

<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that despite signing the FPA, there were incidences where military clashes between the AFP and the MNLF fighters took place.

<sup>80</sup> Rabasa, *Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Moderates, Radicals and Terrorists*, p. 52.

<sup>81</sup> Ferrer, "The Philippine State and Moro Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict," p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Santos, *Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations*, p. 64, Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy*, p. 146.

while awaiting his trial for rebellion charges.<sup>83</sup> Dr. Parouk Hussin, the MNLF's former Head of Foreign Affairs (2001-2005), took over Misuari's position following the rebellion. In 2005, Zaldy Ampatuan<sup>84</sup> became the Governor of the ARMM, but he has no affiliation with the MNLF. Due to Misuari's rebellion against the GRP and inter-factional rivalries within the MNLF<sup>85</sup>, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has become "the main standard bearer of Moro aspiration."<sup>86</sup>

### 6.2.2 The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

Originally, the MILF was called the New MNLF when it separated from the MNLF shortly after the collapse of the Tripoli Agreement in 1978.<sup>87</sup> The former vice chairman of the MNLF, Hashim Salamat, founded the New MNLF. Salamat was also reported to be among the Moro youths who were trained in Malaysia in 1972.<sup>88</sup> The proclamation of the establishment of the MILF was made in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1984. In August 2003, following the death of Salamat, Al-Haj Murad Ibrahim, the MILF Vice Chairman for Military Affairs and Chief of Staff of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) became the chairman. Unlike Salamat, Murad was secularly educated, with a degree in civil engineering from a local Philippine university.<sup>89</sup> In fact, the other top two leaders

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<sup>83</sup> Kamlain, "Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Southern Philippines: A Discourse on Self-Determination, Political Autonomy and Conflict Resolution."

<sup>84</sup> Zaldy Ampatuan is a descendant of the royal clan of Maguindanao.

<sup>85</sup> The MNLF is now split into four factions: the Misuari group, the anti-Misuari Executive Council of 15 (EC-15), the anti-Misuari Islamic Command Council (ICC), and the pro-Misuari group of Alvarez Isnaji. See, for example, Santos, *Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations*, p. 65.

<sup>86</sup> Andrew T. H. Tan, "The Indigenous Roots of Conflicts in Southeast Asia: The Case of Mindanao," in *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Kumar Ramakrishna and See Seng Tan (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2003), p. 112.

<sup>87</sup> Liow, *Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics*, p. 12, Santos, *Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations*, p. 61.

<sup>88</sup> Ferrer, "The Philippine State and Moro Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict," p. 5, McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 95.

<sup>89</sup> Ferrer, "The Philippine State and Moro Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict," p. 5.

of the MILF – Ghazali Jaafar and Mohagher Iqbal – are also from the secular elite, and, like the MNLF leader, Misuari, they were Moro students in the late 1960s.<sup>90</sup>

Historically, the MILF split from the MNLF due to a clash of interests between the two leaders; Salamat's conflict with Misuari was neither a simple "clash of personalities" nor merely an instance of "contrasting modes of leadership."<sup>91</sup> The difference was that for Salamat, the political leadership was about executing or implementing policies, which were determined by a group of Islamic scholars (*Ulamas*). Misuari, on the other hand, perceived policy-making to be the responsibility of the political leadership that would from time to time seek guidance from Islamic scholars.<sup>92</sup> In other words, the Islamic scholars play a more significant role for the leadership of the MILF.<sup>93</sup> As stated by Mohagher Iqbal, the Secretary General of the MILF, while the MNLF has no clear ideology, the MILF, on the other hand, uses Islam as its ideology.<sup>94</sup> Although Islam is invoked as its ideology and has "served as a rallying call and focal point of resistance"<sup>95</sup> vis-à-vis the GRP, this does not mean that the MILF is an Islamic or even an Islamic fundamentalist organisation.

According to some scholars, the MILF uses Islam to advance certain political interests, which are aimed at enticing Muslim support both domestically and internationally - although it is principally a nationalist and territorial organisation.<sup>96</sup> Analysing the comments made by the top MILF leaders themselves actually supports this perception of the MILF. According to Ghazali Jaafar, the MILF Vice Chairman of

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<sup>90</sup> Miriam Coronel Ferrer, "The Philippine State and Moro Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict" (paper presented at the SEACSN Conference 2004, Penang, Malaysia, 12-15 January 2005).

<sup>91</sup> Eric U. Gutierrez, "The Reimagination of the Bangsa Moro: 30 Years Hence," in *Rebels, Warlords, and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines*, ed. Eric U. Gutierrez and Institute for Popular Democracy (Philippines) (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000), p. 320.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 86.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Iqbal.

<sup>95</sup> Tan, "The Indigenous Roots of Conflicts in Southeast Asia: The Case of Mindanao," p. 112.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Rizal G. Buendia, 24 February 2007, Tan (Undersecretary). See, for example Tan, "The Indigenous Roots of Conflicts in Southeast Asia: The Case of Mindanao," p. 112.

Political Affairs, the main reason why the organisation was renamed MILF was that they wanted to avoid confusion with the original MNLF.<sup>97</sup> According to Iqbal, the organisation separated from the MNLF because that organisation had abandoned the self-determination of the Moro people.<sup>98</sup> Instead of seeking genuine autonomy, the MNLF considered allowing itself to be integrated within the GRP.<sup>99</sup> The MILF has taken on the task of continuing the struggle to regain the Bangsamoro's freedom and independence. However, the MILF is only seeking independence in areas where the Moros are in a majority; i.e. the provinces of Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, the cities of Marawi, Cotabato and Isabela.<sup>100</sup>

Another important difference between the two organisations is in terms of the make-up of their respective members, who are broadly divided according to their ethno-linguistic groups. For instance, the main ethno-linguistic group making up the MILF are the Maguindanaos from Central Mindanao, whereas for the MNLF it is the Tausugs from Sulu.<sup>101</sup> The difference in terms of the ethno-linguistic make-up, especially among the Maguindanaos and Tausugs, indicates that the historical influence of the sultanates of Maguindanao and Sulu remains strong. In other words, the Moros are still very tribal and disunited, with their liberation front being divided along ethno-linguistic lines.<sup>102</sup> According to Jaafar, since 2003 the MILF has therefore started to reorganise, aiming to attract more members among the Tausugs.<sup>103</sup> After all, the MILF is supposed to represent all the Bangsamoro people, including the indigenous people.<sup>104</sup> This suggests

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<sup>97</sup> Interview with Jaafar.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Iqbal.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Lingga, "Muslim Minority in the Philippines".

<sup>101</sup> Kamlain, "Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Southern Philippines: A Discourse on Self-Determination, Political Autonomy and Conflict Resolution.", Santos, *Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations*, p. 61.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Buendia.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Jaafar.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

that the split between the two Bangsamoro organisations occurred not because of religion but rather because of ethno-linguistic differences among the Moros.<sup>105</sup>

The MILF is highly organised and capable of forming a government if circumstances permitted.<sup>106</sup> According to Von Al Haq, the Chairman of the MILF Coordinating Committee on The Cessation of Hostilities, the chairman, and the three Vice-Chairmen in charge of the Military Affairs, Political Affairs, and Internal Affairs head the MILF.<sup>107</sup> In addition, the organisation also has at least seven standing committees that are responsible for Information, Foreign Affairs, Religious Affairs (*Da'wah*), Social Welfare Community (Women's Affairs), Economic and Development, Health, and Education.<sup>108</sup> However, according to East, besides having the seven committees, as listed above, the MILF also has additional committees on intelligence, communications, and transport.<sup>109</sup> The Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) is divided into Divisions, Battalions and Composites, including guerrilla forces. In 1994, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) estimated the BIAF's strength at 5,420 fighters. By comparison, in December 1999, AFP Chief of Staff Angelo Reyes claimed that the MILF was 15,690 strong, an apparent increase of almost 300 per cent on 1994 estimates.<sup>110</sup> Having demonstrated a capacity to wage interminable warfare, the MILF signed a truce with Manila under the Arroyo administration in October 2001.

Peace talks were, however, suspended in March 2002 due to renewed hostilities between the two parties. The resumption of formal talks with the MILF took place in Kuala Lumpur in March 2003. Since then, the two parties have met for exploratory talks

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<sup>105</sup> Kamlain, "Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Southern Philippines: A Discourse on Self-Determination, Political Autonomy and Conflict Resolution," p. 61.

<sup>106</sup> East, "The Bangsa Moro: Fighting for Freedom During the War of Terror: The Muslim Independence Movement of the Southern Philippines".

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Von Al Haq, 26 February 2007.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> East, "The Bangsa Moro: Fighting for Freedom During the War of Terror: The Muslim Independence Movement of the Southern Philippines".

<sup>110</sup> Ferrer, "The Philippine State and Moro Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict," p. 5.



on eight occasions. All the talks were held in Kuala Lumpur. Among the issues being negotiated are those of land redistribution, recognition of Syariah law, rehabilitation of war-ravaged areas, and the implementation of previous agreements sealed by the MNLF and the government.<sup>111</sup> Following the temporary suspension of MILF's secessionist agenda, another Moro organisation claims to be the champion for the Moros in order to achieve "an independent Islamic state" for them, this being the Bearer of the Sword (Abu Sayyaf Group – ASG).<sup>112</sup>

### 6.2.3 The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, a Tausug who participated as a mujahideen in the Afghan war in the late 1980s, founded the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in 1992.<sup>113</sup> It was initially called the Harakatul Islamia, which was later changed to Abu Sayyaf.<sup>114</sup> Abdurajak was killed in a shootout with the police in December 1998. His younger brother, Khadaffy Janjalani, became the titular head of the ASG following the killing of Abu Sabaya in 2002 and the capture of Ghalib Andang in 2003.<sup>115</sup> In September 2006, Khadaffy was believed to have died after he apparently became involved in a clash with the AFP.<sup>116</sup> Currently, it is reported that the ASG is under the leadership of Radullan Sahiron.<sup>117</sup> Some scholars have suggested that the main objective of the ASG is to create an Independent Islamic State in Mindanao.<sup>118</sup> However, according to Buendia, "apart

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<sup>111</sup> San Juan Jr, "Ethnic Identity and Popular Sovereignty: Notes on the Moro Struggle in the Philippines," p. 405.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> East, "The Bangsa Moro: Fighting for Freedom During the War of Terror: The Muslim Independence Movement of the Southern Philippines".

<sup>114</sup> Kamlain, "Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Southern Philippines: A Discourse on Self-Determination, Political Autonomy and Conflict Resolution."

<sup>115</sup> Zachary Abuza, "Abu Sayyaf Group's Notorious Chieftain: A Profile of Khadaffy Janjalani," *Terrorism Monitor* 3, no. 32 (2006).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> See, for example, Chalk and Rabasa, "Muslim Separatist Movements in the Philippines and Thailand.", Kamlain, "Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Southern Philippines: A Discourse on Self-Determination, Political Autonomy and Conflict Resolution," p. 89.

from slogans and propaganda released in the press, there exists no reliable and verifiable information that substantiates their demands for an Islamic state."<sup>119</sup> Rather, the group is better known for its criminal and terrorist activities in the Philippines. Among the ASG activities that consequently brought them international notoriety are the kidnapping of 21 foreign tourists on Sipadan Island, Sabah, Malaysia on 23 April 2000 and the bombing of a super ferry in Manila Bay in 2004, where more than 100 passengers died.<sup>120</sup> In fact, according to official sources in the Philippines, the ASG are both "terrorists" and "bandits" who pose a major threat to the security of the Philippine state and who are probably linked to Al Qaeda terrorists.<sup>121</sup>

The ASG is reported to draw its members from those who were originally affiliated with both the MILF and the MNLF but became unhappy with their leadership.<sup>122</sup> It is also reported that the ASG has links with certain elements within the MILF.<sup>123</sup> However, the MILF has strongly denied any connections with the ASG.<sup>124</sup> In fact, the MILF has openly condemned the criminal activities of the ASG such as bombings, assassinations, extortion and kidnapping-for-ransom, which are perceived as un-Islamic and doing a disservice to the religion.<sup>125</sup> In short, the ASG is not regarded as a Moro ethno-nationalist organisation but only as a terrorist organisation that specialises

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<sup>119</sup> Buendia, "A Re-Examination of Ethnicity and Secessionist Movements in the Philippines and Indonesia: The Moros and Acehnese."

<sup>120</sup> For a detailed list of activities attributed to ASG, see, Crisis Group Asia Report N° 80, "Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process," (Brussels: 13 July 2004), Mark Turner, "The Management of Violence in a Conflict Organization: The Case of the Abu Sayyaf," *Public Organization Review* 3 (2003).

<sup>121</sup> Zachary Abuza, "The Moro Islamic Liberation Front at 20: State of the Revolution," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28 (2005): pp. 470-74, Turner, "The Management of Violence in a Conflict Organization: The Case of the Abu Sayyaf," p. 387.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, Ferrer, "The Philippine State and Moro Resistance: Dynamics of a Persistent Conflict," p. 6, San Juan Jr, "Ethnic Identity and Popular Sovereignty: Notes on the Moro Struggle in the Philippines," p. 405.

<sup>123</sup> For detailed illustrations on how the ASG is reported to have links with the MILF, see, Abuza, "The Moro Islamic Liberation Front at 20: State of the Revolution."

<sup>124</sup> Kamlain, "Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Southern Philippines: A Discourse on Self-Determination, Political Autonomy and Conflict Resolution."

<sup>125</sup> See for example, Interview with Eid Kabalu, MILF Spokesman, Cotabato, 9 January 2002 quoted in Abuza, "The Moro Islamic Liberation Front at 20: State of the Revolution," p. 470.

in kidnapping-for-ransom and bombing.<sup>126</sup> However, the existence of this group complicates efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Moro problem in the Southern Philippines. In fact, the ASG is also considered to be one of the major obstacles to tackling the Mindanao conflict through its terrorist and lawless activities.

#### 6.2.4 Analysis of the Moro's Ethno-Nationalist Organisations

Despite having multi-dimensional elements in their identity, Islam has been highlighted by the Moro ethno-nationalist organisations as the defining and unifying concept because this element has been the strongest factor in binding together all the thirteen or so ethno-linguistic groups. In line with the Moro ethno-nationalist organisations' efforts to establish a new Moro nation, the organisations' leaders adopted the prefix *Bangsa*, the Malay term for a nation, to their identity (Bangsamoro - Moro nation) which implies that it is this identity that forms the backbone of the new and distinct nation.<sup>127</sup> According to Dr. Parouk Hussin, a former ARMM Governor and former Head of Foreign Affairs for MNLF,<sup>128</sup> despite the split between the MNLF and the MILF, both organisations are always united whenever there are serious issues concerning the interests of the Bangsamoro.<sup>129</sup> The cooperation between the two main Moro organisations is confirmed by the Secretary General of the MILF, Mohagher Iqbal, saying that the MILF and the MNLF have indeed been holding a series of bilateral dialogues.<sup>130</sup> Al Haq said that the MILF was very optimistic that both organisations would be reunited soon, as the split

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<sup>126</sup> However, it should be noted that there is a report that indicates an attempt by the ASG's leadership at "reasserting the organisation as a legitimate national liberation organisation." For further details, see, *Ibid*.

<sup>127</sup> Lingga, "Muslim Minority in the Philippines", Muslim and Cagoco-Guam, "Mindanao Land of Promise."

<sup>128</sup> The MNLF Central Committee has stripped Dr. Parouk Hussin's position as its Foreign Affairs Chief in December 2006.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Dr. Parouk Hussin, 20 February 2007.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Iqbal.

reflected simply an internal problem within the Bangsamoro people.<sup>131</sup> An example that indicated that both organisations could work together despite having a different “ideology” was the signing of a unity agreement between them in August 2001 in Putrajaya, Malaysia.<sup>132</sup> The agreement has enabled both organisations to reach a common understanding and to coordinate their efforts for the cause of the Bangsamoro struggle.<sup>133</sup> In fact, following the signing of the agreement, the leaders of the MNLF have been advising the MILF on how to outwit politically the GRP, because the MNLF has had more experience dealing with the GRP in a series of peace agreements.<sup>134</sup>

In short, rather than looking at the conflict in the Moro region as a war over religion or more specifically a clash between Islam and Christianity, Moro resistance is basically a Bangsamoro nationalist/national liberation struggle to free themselves from the Philippines, and their claimed homeland from Filipino colonialism and oppression. Even most MILF members tend to view their struggle more in terms of a ‘semi-conventional war’ of liberation rather than a religious-based insurgency.<sup>135</sup> In fact, even the GRP admits that its conflict with the Moros is not due to religious issues but due to the Moros’ perception that they are not getting a fair share in governance.<sup>136</sup> While Islam is used as the major vehicle to unite the different Moro ethno-linguistic groups, their struggle against the GRP is due to their determination to preserve their Malay identity.<sup>137</sup> Despite converting to Islam, all the Moro ethno-linguistic groups retained much of their pre-Islamic beliefs, which indirectly mean that the religion played a

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with Al Haq.

<sup>132</sup> Santos, *Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations*, p. 18.

<sup>133</sup> Mel C Labrador, "The Philippines in 2001: High Drama, a New President, and Setting the Stage for Recovery," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 1 (2001): p. 146.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Al Haq.

<sup>135</sup> Marites Dañguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo Center for Social Policy & Public Affairs: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000), p. 107.

<sup>136</sup> Interviews with Buendia, Lingga, Tan (Undersecretary).

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, Gopinath, "International Aspects of the Thai Muslim and Philippine Moro Issues: A Comparative Study," pp. 125-47, Jha, *Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia and Quest for Identity*, p. 68.

secondary role in comparison to the 13 distinct ethno-linguistic identities that continued to divide the community.<sup>138</sup> Although the Moro ethno-nationalists organisations, particularly the MILF, have benefited from foreign ideological and material support from radical global jihadi network such as Al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah,<sup>139</sup> the MILF leadership has not echoed the pan-Islamic agenda of these groups that aimed to bring into realisation of a region-wide Islamic state.<sup>140</sup> In other words, international Islamic solidarity is very much a secondary consideration to the more immediate goal of independence or greater autonomy for the Moro people in their own homeland.<sup>141</sup> Another common characteristic of all these organisations is that, like the ethno-nationalist organisations in southern Thailand and Aceh, both the Moro ethno-nationalist organisations have “linkages” with Malaysia. The next section therefore analyses in general terms the perception of the Moros towards the Malays in Malaysia and vice versa and examines whether ethnic kinship ties exist among the Moros and the Malays.

### **6.3 Relations between Bangsamoro and the Malays in Malaysia**

According to Marohomsalic, “the Moro, by physical character and culture, belongs in general to the Malay race and the Malay culture”.<sup>142</sup> In fact, the Moros identify themselves as belonging to the “*Dunia Melayu*” (Malay World).<sup>143</sup> However, unlike the Thai Malays and the Acehnese whose ethnic kinship ties with the Malays in Malaysia are more extensive, those between Malays in Malaysian and in the Moro region are not

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<sup>138</sup> Peter G. Gowing, *Understanding Islam and Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1988), Suzaina Kadir, "Mapping Muslim Politics in Southeast Asia after September 11," *The Pacific Review* 17, no. 2 (2004): p. 207.

<sup>139</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N<sup>o</sup> 80, "Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process."

<sup>140</sup> Liow, *Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics*, p. 24.

<sup>141</sup> Ibrahim Karawan, *The Islamist Impasse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1997).

<sup>142</sup> Marohomsalic, *Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines*, p. 5.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Lingga.

so obvious. One needs to go back to the history of the Moros to find out about their links with the Malays in Malaysia. Geographic location is one of the possible reasons why the Moros developed close ties with the Malays in Malaysia, particularly those living in the Southern Philippines, on the island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. Both Mindanao and the Sulus are located along historical trade routes, thus facilitating contact and communication with other Malay principalities in the region.<sup>144</sup> Consequently, like the Thai Malays and the Acehnese, many of the Moros have been moving to Malaysia (Sabah) and returning to the southern Philippines without any restrictions. Similarly, Malaysians (those from Sabah) have travelled freely to the Moro region.<sup>145</sup> In general, the ties between the Moros and the Malays in Malaysia can be traced to the similarities they share concerning religion, cultural practices and the social structure within their societies. In fact, the Moros share the same sense of identity with their brethren in Malaysia whereby like the Malays, “to be a Moro is to be a Malay Muslim”.<sup>146</sup> Due to the common religion shared between the Moros and the Malays in Malaysia, there is a common feeling of solidarity between them, although the Filipino Christians also belong to the Malay ethnic group. Consequently, this had led the Moros to readily identify themselves closely with the Malays and naturally, to look towards their ethnic brethren in Malaysia for support.<sup>147</sup> In other words, Malaysia is seen by the Moros as their ethnic kin state.

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<sup>144</sup> Lingga, "Muslim Minority in the Philippines".

<sup>145</sup> Ma. Luisa D Barrios-Fabian, "Case Study of Zamboanga City (Forced Migration Area)," in *PIDS Discussion Paper Series* (Makati City: Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2004), p. 13.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Michael O. Mastura, 27 February 2007.

<sup>147</sup> Gowing, "The Muslim Filipino Minority," p. 19, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 269.

### 6.3.1 Ethnic Kinship Between Bangsamoro and Malaysian Malays

The anthropologist, H. Otley Beyer, states “the Mohammedan Empire of Malacca and its successors had an active part to play in the cultural history of Sulu”.<sup>148</sup> Historically, the first ruler of Sulu was Rajah Baginda who hailed from Minangkabau, Sumatra.<sup>149</sup> As illustrated in Chapter 3, the Malays regard Minangkabau as the cradle of their race. From Sulu, the Malay sultanate expanded and by 1475, Sherif Muhammed Kabungsuwan founded another Malay sultanate in Mindanao.<sup>150</sup> Kabungsuwan was from the royal family of Johor, a Malay sultanate on the Malay Peninsula.<sup>151</sup> According to Shamsul, the Director of the Malay World and Civilization Institute at the National University of Malaysia, there are still today very strong ties between members of the Malay royalty in Malaysian states and the Moro royalty.<sup>152</sup> In addition, both of their societies are structured in accordance with the *Datu* system, a pre-Islamic institution.<sup>153</sup> In the *Datu* system, among the positions that are similar to the ones in Malaysia are those of the *Datu Bendahara*, *Datu Maharajah-lela*, *Datu Tumanggung* and many others.<sup>154</sup> These positions or titles are conferred upon respected members of society by the respective Sultans in Malaysia or by the Sultans in the Moro region.

The incorporation of Sabah into the Federation of Malaysia further strengthened Bangsamoro ethnic ties with the Malays in Malaysia because the people in Sabah are linked to the Sulu Sultanate ethnically, historically and geographically. In addition, Sabah has also indirectly played a major role in the reasons why the Moros formed their

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<sup>148</sup> Quoted in McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 18.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>150</sup> See, for example, Lingga, "Muslim Minority in the Philippines", Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, p. 185.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Iqbal, McAmis, *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 19.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with A.B.

<sup>153</sup> In Malaysia, the system is called Dato' (for state level) and Datuk (for federal level).

<sup>154</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1999), pp. 390-91.

ethno-nationalist movements. In 1962, the GRP had made a claim that Sabah was part of its territory on the basis that the Sultan of Sulu had only 'leased' not 'ceded' Sabah to the British North Borneo Company in 1878, after which it passed on to the British Crown.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, the GRP felt that when Britain left Sabah, the territory ought to have reverted to the Philippines, the "reversionary heir of the Sultan of Sulu" rather than becoming part of the Malaysian Federation.<sup>156</sup> As part of a wider clandestine operation that aimed to infiltrate Sabah as a prelude to military invasion, the Philippine government provided military training to the young Moro recruits on Corregidor Island.<sup>157</sup> As mentioned in the previous section, the Moro recruits were executed following their refusal to follow orders to attack Sabah. The decision made by the Moro recruits was based on their belief that the Malaysians were their "brothers" and they did not have any quarrel with them.<sup>158</sup> In short, due to common ethnic identity as is the case with the Malays in Southern Thailand and the Acehnese - the Moros also have strong ties of ethnic kinship with the Malays in Malaysia.

This section has illustrated the depth of ethnic kinship between the Moros and the Malays in both Sabah and the Malay Peninsula. The next section analyses the Malaysian government's approach to the conflict in the Moro region. The objective is to investigate whether ethnic kinship ties between the Malays and the Moros have played a role in shaping Kuala Lumpur's policy and practice towards the conflict in the Moro region.

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<sup>155</sup> Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," p. 226.

<sup>156</sup> Lake and Morgan, *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, p. 322.

<sup>157</sup> Jubair, *Bangsamoro, a Nation under Endless Tyranny*, p. 132, Muslim and Cagoco-Guam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 13.

<sup>158</sup> Jubair, *Bangsamoro, a Nation under Endless Tyranny*.



#### 6.4 *Malaysia and the Philippines Bilateral Relations*

The previous two case studies illustrated that ethnic minority issues have affected Malaysia's relations with Thailand and Indonesia and indeed, as discussed below, the same applies to Malaysia's relations with the Philippines. In addition, Malaysia's bilateral relations with the Philippines since 1962 have been clouded because of Manila's territorial claim to Sabah. Some scholars suggest that one of the main reasons for Malaysia's involvement in the conflict in the Moro region is its desire to retaliate against President Marcos' sponsorship in 1968 of military training on Corregidor for an intended separatist rebellion in Sabah.<sup>159</sup> Whether or not the Malaysian government provided assistance to the Moros in order for the government to retaliate against the GRP is uncertain, as Kuala Lumpur has never publicly admitted its involvement in the Moro struggle. One thing is certain, however: Malaysian assistance gave the essential incentive to the Moro separatists and exposed their issue to the international community."<sup>160</sup> For instance, in 1972, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, endorsed the Moro case submitted to him and asked King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and President Qaddāfi of Libya to help in persuading other OIC member states to support it when he was the Secretary General of the body in 1972.<sup>161</sup> In addition, despite acknowledging that the conflict in the Moro region was the Philippines' internal affair, Malaysia repeatedly expressed concerns over the Moros' plight, especially during the height of the conflict in the 1970s. In fact, Dr. Parouk Hussin stated that Malaysia had been in the forefront of rendering support to the

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<sup>159</sup> See, for instance, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 238, Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," p. 226.

<sup>160</sup> Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, pp. 138-71.

<sup>161</sup> Abdul Samad and Abu Bakar, "Malaysia-Philippines Relations: The Issue of Sabah," pp. 559-60, Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, pp. 138-71.

Bangsamoro for many years primarily because Malaysia is very concerned about its ethnic kin.<sup>162</sup>

#### 6.4.1 Malaysia's Assistance to the Moros

According to the Malaysian Foreign Minister, Syed Hamid Syed Jaafar Albar, "the feeling of affection towards the Moros and the view that they are indeed part of us are the main motivating factor and the driving force for the Malaysia government to ensure the well-being of the Malays"<sup>163</sup> in the Moro region. One of the examples to indicate that the Malaysian government is indeed concerned about their ethnic brethren's societal security in the Moro region is the decision to allow the Moros to seek shelter in the country. For instance, in the 1970s, when the fighting between the GRP's security forces and MNLF worsened, thousands of Moros are reported to have fled to Malaysia. At one stage, approximately 100,000 Moros landed in Sabah, where they were given food and shelter.<sup>164</sup> Like the number of refugees from Aceh, there are also few existing estimates on the exact number of Moro refugees in Malaysia. In 1994, even when there were less serious clashes between the GRP and Moro ethno-nationalist movement, it was reported that many of the Moros ventured to Sabah in search of greener pastures, leading to an illegal immigrant population estimated at 600,000 people.<sup>165</sup> As of 2002, as many as 500,000 Moros are estimated to have sought refuge in Malaysia to escape the long-standing conflict between Moros' ethno-nationalist organisations and the AFP.<sup>166</sup> However, according to the leaders of the Filipino community in the Philippines, the number of these immigrants has already exceeded the one million mark, which makes

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<sup>162</sup> Interview with Hussin.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Syed Jaafar Albar.

<sup>164</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Viewpoints* (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1978), p. 137.

<sup>165</sup> See Vinasithamby Dharmalingam, "The Shadow Life of Filipinos in Sabah," *Asiaweek* 20, no. 16 (1994): pp. 34-39.

<sup>166</sup> Barrios-Fabian, "Case Study of Zamboanga City (Forced Migration Area)," p. 12.

them the “biggest concentration of Filipino illegal immigrants in any part of the world”.<sup>167</sup>

The latest statistics available from the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR) are for the total number of Filipino refugees from 1998 – 2002. This is shown in Table 3 below.<sup>168</sup>

**Table 3: Refugee Population from the Philippines in Malaysia, 1998 – 2002**

Year	No.*
1998	45,100
1999	45,100
2000	45,100
2001	45,100
2002	45,107

\* Refugee population, end of year.

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR). 2007. Trends in Displacement, Protection and Solutions. In *Statistical Yearbook 2002*, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics/opendoc.pdf>. (accessed 1 November 2007).

However, it should be noted that the numbers only represent those who actually registered with the UN Agency. In addition, like in the case of the refugees from Aceh, UNHCR did not specify whether the refugees were Moros because the report only uses the term “Philippines”. It can be inferred from the report that the Moros indeed represented the largest number of Filipino refugees to Malaysia. Notwithstanding their number, the Moro population is reasonably well accommodated in Sabah. For instance, in 2005, the Malaysian government is reported to have continued to allow some 68,600 Moro refugees from the conflict of the 1970s to work in Malaysia.<sup>169</sup> The permission to

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<sup>167</sup> Kamal Sadiq, "When States Prefer Non-Citizens over Citizens: Conflict over Illegal Immigration into Malaysia," *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2005): p. 108.

<sup>168</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), *Trends in Displacement, Protection and Solutions*.

<sup>169</sup> U.S. Committee For Refugees and Immigrants, *Malaysia*.

work legally in Malaysia is only granted to refugees from Moro and Aceh. In addition, according to Tan, around 300,000 of the Moros in Sabah have been given Malaysian citizenship by the Sabah state government.<sup>170</sup>

Interestingly, despite the large number of Moro refugees and illegal immigrants, they are accommodated reasonably well by Kuala Lumpur. However, it should be noted that one of reasons that the Malaysian government is ever willing to extend assistance to the Moros whenever they are in need is due to the leverage that the Moros have on the Malaysian government, especially on the federal government. Unlike in other Malaysian states, where the Malays have had political dominance since Malaysia was created, this was not the case in Sabah. Rather, the Christian Kadazan in Sabah successfully ruled the state for two electoral terms from 1985 - 1994.<sup>171</sup> In order to ensure that the Malays achieved political dominance in Sabah, the federal government has not only allowed a large number of Moros to settle in Sabah, but has also given them Malaysian citizenship.<sup>172</sup> As a result of the federal government policy to increase the pool of Malay Muslim electoral votes by encouraging large-scale immigration of Malay Muslims from the Moro region, the BN coalition political party managed to gain control of the Sabah state government in 1994, and has ruled the state ever since.<sup>173</sup>

At present, it is been reported that about one third of the population in Sabah are Moro descendants.<sup>174</sup> Subsequently, the Malaysian government has to ensure that the

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<sup>170</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 233.

<sup>171</sup> A.B., "A History of Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia Reconsidered," p. 364.

<sup>172</sup> See for example, Ganesan, *Bilateral Tensions in Post-Cold War ASEAN*, p. 47, Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications," p. 277, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 139.

<sup>173</sup> For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Sadiq, "When States Prefer Non-Citizens over Citizens: Conflict over Illegal Immigration into Malaysia."

<sup>174</sup> Soliman M. Santos, "Malaysia's Role in the Peace Negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front," in *The Mindanao Conflict*, ed. Kamarulzaman Askandar and Ayesah Abubakar (Penang: Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN), 2005), p. 65.

interests of these people are served. In other words, if Kuala Lumpur wants to ensure that UMNO continues to rule Sabah, the interests of the Moro descendants have to be taken seriously. These may include extending assistance to the Moros in the southern Philippines and also include turning “a blind eye to the anti-Philippines activities”<sup>175</sup> in Sabah. Among the assistance rendered to the Moros in the region by the Malaysian government is providing capacity-building support to the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) through its Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP).<sup>176</sup> These programmes were given to the Moros in anticipation that the Moros would be able to govern their own region one day. The BDA, which was created as a result of the peace negotiations between the GRP and the MILF, is mandated to determine, lead and manage relief, rehabilitation and development of the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. Malaysia is organising training programmes for the Moros with a view to building management and leadership capacity among the group.<sup>177</sup>

#### 6.4.2 Malaysia’s Assistance to the Ethno-Nationalist Organisations

According to Jubair, the former Chief Minister of Sabah, Mustapha Harun (1967-1975) was the Malaysian leader, at least at the state level, who extended concrete help to the Moros.<sup>178</sup> In fact, it was reported that the formation of the MNLF and the intensifying Moro struggle within the GRP was to some extent aided by the independent initiatives of Mustapha.<sup>179</sup> Mustapha was known to allow Sabah to be used by the Moros as their training camp, supply depot, communication centre and sanctuary, besides encouraging

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<sup>175</sup> Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications," p. 277.

<sup>176</sup> Santos, *Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations*, p. 87.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Othman Razak, 20 February 2007.

<sup>178</sup> Jubair, *Bangsamoro, a Nation under Endless Tyranny*, p. 174.

<sup>179</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p. 180.

them to migrate to Sabah.<sup>180</sup> In addition, Mustapha was also reported to have allowed members of the MNLF to acquire motorboats in Sabah that were to be used to smuggle arms and ammunition to the rebels in Mindanao and to bring casualties back to Sabah for treatment.<sup>181</sup> The assistance rendered to the Moros enabled them to elevate the level of conflict from a fight for equality and justice, to a war of liberation demanding self-determination. One of the main reasons why Mustapha came to the rescue of the Moros was his sense of identity with the Moros.<sup>182</sup> The Malaysian government, on the other hand, denied that it offered support to the Moros, but at the same time, Kuala Lumpur did not stop Mustapha from extending such support.<sup>183</sup>

However, assistance to the Moros from Sabah was seriously affected following Mustapha's resignation as Sabah's Chief Minister in 1975. Mustapha resigned from the post following the ruling party's (*Barisan Nasional* -BN) decision to accept defectors of his party, who formed the People's Racially-United Front of Sabah (*Berjaya*), as a member of the BN while ruling that Mustapha's party, the United Sabah National Organization (USNO) was no longer a member.<sup>184</sup> This move was apparently made as an effort by the ruling party to oust Mustapha from power for he was suspected of wanting to secede and contemplate the founding of a new state that would include Sabah, Mindanao, Palawan and Sulu.<sup>185</sup> Although Mustapha was no longer in power after 1975, GRP officials continued to accuse Malaysia of assisting the Moro ethno-nationalist organisations. For instance, in October 1980, the GRP accused Malaysia of

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<sup>180</sup> See, for example, Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, p. 139, Morrison and Suhrke, *Strategies of Survival: The Foreign Policy Dilemmas of Smaller Asian States*, pp. 165-66, Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," p. 226, David Wurfel, *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay, Politics and International Relations of Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 163.

<sup>181</sup> Abdul Samad and Abu Bakar, "Malaysia-Philippines Relations: The Issue of Sabah," pp. 558-59.

<sup>182</sup> Mustapha claimed that he was a distant relative of the Sultan of Sulu. His mother was a Tausug and, therefore he was as much a Moro as the rest of his brethren.

<sup>183</sup> Muslim and Cagoco-Guam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 94.

<sup>184</sup> R.S. Milne, "Malaysia and Singapore, 1975," *Asian Survey* 16, no. 2 (1976): p. 189.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

tolerating secessionist Moro training camps in Sabah, and that it was acting as a supply base.<sup>186</sup> In November 1981, former Philippine Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile referred to “anti-government activities” in Sabah, primarily of the Philippine Democratic Socialist Party, which was using the state as a “southern backdoor: commuting between Sulu and Sabah.”<sup>187</sup>

In short, although it seems that some of Malaysia’s high-level officials have been involved in supporting the Moro, it is uncertain whether the support was given officially by the Malaysian government itself. Nevertheless, according to Tan,

“While there is some evidence that certain Islamic groups in Malaysia have been involved in aiding the Moro, it also does appear that the Malaysian government had simply not actively prevented them from doing so, in recognition of the potentially serious domestic fallout from its local Muslim constituency”.<sup>188</sup>

Basically, there are at least two “Islamic groups” from Malaysia that are known to have been offering assistance to the Moros; the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia – ABIM*) and the Islamic Party of Malaysia (*Partai Islam Se-Malaysia – PAS*). The activities carried out by ABIM include sponsoring the Moro students to study in Malaysia and sending medical support, such as supplying artificial limbs and medicine.<sup>189</sup> With regard to PAS, according to Syed Nawawi, besides being active campaigners on behalf of GAM, the Islamic Party are also doing the same for the MILF to “expose all injustices” by the GRP in the Moro region in a number of forums that have been organised by international Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs).<sup>190</sup> In addition, PAS was also instrumental in extending humanitarian assistance to the Moros such as helping orphans, providing medical

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<sup>186</sup>Paridah Abdul Samad, "Internal Variables of Regional Conflicts in ASEAN's International Relations," *The Indonesian Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1990): pp. 173-74.

<sup>187</sup> Abdul Samad and Abu Bakar, "Malaysia-Philippines Relations: The Issue of Sabah," p. 559.

<sup>188</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 29.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Hussin.

<sup>190</sup> E-mail from Syed Nawawi.

supplies and improving education.<sup>191</sup> Interestingly, as argued by Tan, the Malaysian government has to date not prevented such assistance to the Moros.<sup>192</sup> In other words, looking at this context, the Malaysian government is indeed concerned about the human security of the Moros, although the government itself is not extending any assistance.

However, assistance from Malaysia towards the Moro ethno-nationalist organisations can be said to have been significantly “reduced”, especially during the administrations of President Corazon Aquino (1986-1992) and President Fidel Ramos (1992-1998). Indeed, during her time in power, President Aquino successfully signed the Jeddah Accord with the MNLF in January 1987, which saw an agreement on a long-term ceasefire that was generally respected by both the MNLF and the AFP forces until the end of Aquino’s presidency in 1992.<sup>193</sup> Significantly, it should also be noted that during the administration of Aquino, the GRP formally withdrew their claim to Sabah by not mentioning Sabah or asserting a territorial claim in its 1987 constitution. However, when Aquino submitted a bill to Congress in November 1987 that would have made the Philippines formally renounce Sabah, Congress did not act on it.<sup>194</sup> Despite not resolving the Sabah issue, Malaysia is said to have played an instrumental role in the signing of the FPA between the MNLF and the GRP in 1996. Syed Serajul Islam claimed that the Ramos administration only agreed to enter peace talks with the MNLF after the Malaysian government urged them to do so.<sup>195</sup> In part, this reflected a more mature attitude from the Malaysian government on the Sabah issue. President Ramos was reported to be aware that since the founding of the MNLF, the organisation had had

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 29.

<sup>193</sup> See, for example, Buendia, "A Re-Examination of Ethnicity and Secessionist Movements in the Philippines and Indonesia: The Moros and Acehnese.", Collier, "Dynamics of Muslim Separatism in the Philippines," p. 168.

<sup>194</sup> Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, p. 37.

<sup>195</sup> Islam, "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines," p. 455.



a cordial relationship with Malaysia<sup>196</sup> and Malaysia had been persistently extending support to their ethnic kin. In addition, he apparently believed that Malaysia possessed leverage over the Philippines mainly because the GRP was also aware that a large number of Filipinos were working in Malaysia and their remittances contributed to the foreign exchange of the Philippines.<sup>197</sup> When President Joseph Estrada (1998-2001) came into power, the GRP signed an “agreement of intent” with the MILF, which embodied both parties’ commitment “to pursue talks on the substantive issues” of the Mindanao conflict in 1998.<sup>198</sup> However, the peace talks were suspended by the MILF following Estrada’s “all-out-war” against them.<sup>199</sup> Following the AFP’s military campaign against the MILF, it was reported that Hashim Salamat took refuge in Malaysia.<sup>200</sup>

#### 6.4.3 Malaysia’s Role in the GRP-MILF Peace Talks

After President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed office in January 2001, she sought assistance from Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad to convince the MILF to return to the negotiation table.<sup>201</sup> Following the MILF’s willingness to accept Malaysia’s mediatory role, Malaysian officials were sent to meet the Chairman of the MILF to persuade him to resume peace talks. In the event, on 24 March, 2001 the MILF and GRP signed an agreement for the resumption of peace talks in Kuala Lumpur. Interestingly, all of the parties involved espoused different reasons for resuming the

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, "Back to War in Mindanao: The Weaknesses of a Power-Based Approach to Conflict," *Philippine Political Science Journal* 21, no. 44 (2000): p. 118.

<sup>199</sup> Ronald J May, "Muslim Mindanao: Four Years after the Peace Agreement," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2001): p. 272, Santos, "Malaysia's Role in the Peace Negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front," p. 54.

<sup>200</sup> May, "Muslim Mindanao: Four Years after the Peace Agreement," p. 270.

<sup>201</sup> The MILF withdrew from negotiation with the GRP in June 2000 following the former Philippine President Joseph Ejercito Estrada’s “all-out-war” against the MILF, which featured the Philippine military’s capture of all the MILF’s fixed camps, including its main camp, Abubakar. President Arroyo assumed office after President Estrada was deposed by EDSA II, the second people power revolution.

peace talks. Arroyo sought Malaysian assistance primarily because the GRP knew that due to links between the Malaysian government and the MILF, Kuala Lumpur might be able to influence the MILF on the question of a return to the negotiating table. The MILF, on the other hand, gladly agreed to Malaysia's mediatory role given that they had been asking Malaysia for all sorts of political and religious advice anyway.<sup>202</sup> Othman Razak, the Special Advisor to the Malaysian Prime Minister on the GRP-MILF Peace Process, has argued that the MILF believes that Malaysia will be able to help to ensure that negotiations with the GRP are fair.<sup>203</sup>

As for Malaysia, according to Secretary Silvestre Afable, the Chairman of the Philippine Government Peace Panel for Talks with the MILF and Presidential Communications Director, it is in the Malaysian national interest to ensure that the peace talks go smoothly and real peace is achieved as soon as possible.<sup>204</sup> Any disturbance in the peace talks is considered to have direct implications for Malaysia's national security. There are a number of issues in this regard. First, Sabah remains the most common destination for Moros fleeing their home whenever violence erupts in the region.<sup>205</sup> Second, Malaysia is concerned about potential weapons smuggling. There are at least 70,000 weapons in the southern Philippines, which could easily find their way to Sabah.<sup>206</sup> Therefore, Malaysia is very much concerned with ensuring that these weapons will be surrendered to government authorities in the Philippines.<sup>207</sup> This goal predates 9/11. Third, Malaysia is also concerned about transnational crime that originates from the Moro region. Zakaria Abd. Hamid of the Prime Minister's Department, when

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<sup>202</sup> Interview with Iqbal. According to Dr. Syed Azman Syed Nawawi, Head of PAS International Bureau, although the Malaysian government is the official mediator in the peace negotiations, the MILF also always referring to them on many various related issues.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with Razak.

<sup>204</sup> Interview with Silvestre Afable Jr., 22 February 2007.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. It should be noted that the first two issues are from the perspective of the Philippine government on why Malaysia wanted peace to be attained in the Moro region. For a detailed discussion on the issue of light weapon trade in Southeast Asia see, Chalk, *Light Arms Trading in Se Asia*.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Afable Jr.

delivering his opening remarks during the second formal peace talks on 24 July 2001, said:

As a close neighbour, we watch closely the events in south Philippines. And lately it has become part of our national interest. The prolonged conflicts and instability have turned Mindanao into a breeding ground for the undesirable elements such as the Abu Sayyaf Group and also staging points for other transnational crime syndicates. This has raised security concern not only to the countries of the region but also to the international community.<sup>208</sup>

In short, due to the security threat that Malaysia has to counter as a result of the prolonged conflict in the Moro region, Malaysia is keen to participate in bringing stability and peace to the Moro region.

Since the GRP requested that Malaysia facilitate the peace talks, Malaysia has hosted eight exploratory talks in the country. In fact, Malaysia's role as third party facilitator<sup>209</sup> has been said to constitute the most important ever international involvement in the GRP-MILF peace negotiations.<sup>210</sup> Besides serving as a host, Malaysia's facilitation also involves the following: 1) acting as go-between conveying positions of the parties, 2) providing a conducive atmosphere and facilities; 3) being present in the talks to witness any commitments and understandings; 4) helping to bridge differences by shuttling between the parties; 5) acting as an administrator of the talks; and 6) recording and keeping minutes of discussions and other protocols.<sup>211</sup> In

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<sup>208</sup> Remarks by Datuk Zakaria Abd. Hamid, Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia during the Opening Ceremony of the Second Round of the GRP-MILF Formal Peace Talks on July 21, 2001 at Guoman, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia quoted in Santos, "Malaysia's Role in the Peace Negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front," p. 63.

<sup>209</sup> According to Secretary R. Ermita, the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, the Philippines, in the case of Malaysia's role as 'third-party facilitator' in the GRP-MILF peace process means that Malaysia's representative is present in the talks to help bridge differences if there are problems during sessions, and doing this during breaks by shuttling between the parties. In addition, Malaysia, as the third party facilitator of the peace process is expected to be a witness to important commitments or understandings, some of which may not have been put in writing. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>210</sup> Besides Malaysia, the US through its agency, United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is also an international party that is involved in the GRP-MILF peace negotiations. See, for example, East, "The Bangsa Moro: Fighting for Freedom During the War of Terror: The Muslim Independence Movement of the Southern Philippines".

<sup>211</sup> Santos, *Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations*, p. 87.

effect, Malaysia's role of facilitation has been moving towards mediation.<sup>212</sup> Malaysia has been giving suggestions and also promotion towards a certain direction for both the GRP and the MILF in order to resolve the conflict in the Moro region. According to Santos, these suggestions include the following political parameters:

Suggesting the framework of the Philippine Constitution, Tripoli Agreement, and Jakarta Accord; respect for Philippine territorial integrity and sovereignty; no secession or independence; assurance of the rights of the Moros as citizens; MNLF-MILF unity may complement existing solutions; and for the Moro movement to combat radicalism and the militant tendency.<sup>213</sup>

According to Afable, Malaysia's role as mediator is important for the peace talks given that Malaysia – besides being a facilitator – has also provided crucial advisory and consultative support.<sup>214</sup> Malaysia's advantage is that its officials know the situation of the Moros very well and are able to create confidence and trust in the peace process among the conflicting parties.<sup>215</sup> Even when the parties have problems and are not talking to each other, the Moros will talk to the Malaysian mediators and the Malaysians will convey the message to the GRP and vice versa.<sup>216</sup> In fact, according to Dr. Parouk, if it had not been for Malaysia, the peace process between the GRP and the MILF would have long since collapsed.<sup>217</sup>

In addition to acting as the mediator/facilitator in the peace talks, Malaysia also leads the International Monitoring Team (IMT) tasked with keeping track of the ceasefire in Mindanao and overseeing the process of rehabilitation and development in

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<sup>212</sup> Mediation includes, amongst other things, devising or promoting a solution, loosening the tension between the parties, creating an atmosphere conducive to negotiation, being an effective channel of information, and providing the parties with suggestions. See, J. G. Merrills, *International Dispute Settlement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 34-35, 41.

<sup>213</sup> Soliman M. Santos, "Delays in the Peace Negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front: Causes and Prescriptions " in *Working Papers* (Washington D.C: East-West Center, 2005), p. 23.

<sup>214</sup> Interview with Afable Jr.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Interview with Hussin.

the southern Philippines.<sup>218</sup> The IMT was created as the result of the Implementing Guidelines on the Security Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement, signed on 7 August, 2001, which called on the OIC to provide ceasefire monitors that would be assisted by both the GRP and MILF. However, due to technical problems, the OIC did not take direct action. Subsequently, in its effort to ensure that peace be attained in the region, Malaysia decided to lead a team that also comprised representatives from Brunei and Libya, and officially arrived in Mindanao in October 2004. The IMT is an independent body working in conjunction with a number of GRP and MILF units. To preserve its independence, the IMT is not affiliated with the Malaysian government representatives who are responsible for facilitating peace negotiations in Kuala Lumpur. Rather, it is an operation headed by the Malaysian Army that works together with the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the GRP's body entrusted to overseeing the negotiations and ceasefire with the MILF. Originally, the mandate of the IMT was to be in the southern Philippines for only a year.<sup>219</sup> However, since neither party has signed any peace agreement, Malaysia decided to extend its tour of duty. According to Othman Razak, the Malaysian government has paid the observers allowances of RM 10 million (US\$ 2.7 million) a year.<sup>220</sup> This, however, does not include other necessary expenditure to maintain its army personnel there. In other words, the cost of maintaining the personnel is very high, at least by Malaysian standards. This shows that Malaysia is very committed and keen to see that a peaceful solution to the conflict can be achieved.

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<sup>218</sup> See, for example, Ayesah Abubakar, "Keeping the Peace: The International Monitoring Team Mission in Mindanao," in *The Mindanao Conflict*, ed. Kamarulzaman Askandar and Ayesah Abubakar (Penang: Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN), 2005), p. 91, Michael O. Mastura, "A Time for Reckoning for the Bangsamoro People," in *Discussion Paper* (Cotabato City, Philippines: Institute of Bangsamoro Studies, 2001). Interview with Razak.

<sup>219</sup> Abubakar, "Keeping the Peace: The International Monitoring Team Mission in Mindanao," p. 92. Interview with Al Haq.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with Razak.

### 6.5 *The Influence of ASEAN on Bilateral Relations*

As a member of ASEAN, Malaysia has always supported the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines. In fact, under the principle of non-interference within ASEAN, all member countries are committed to the principle of not supporting neighbouring opposition movements, particularly the ethno-nationalist organisations operating in its member countries. However, as analysed in this chapter, on several occasions this principle has been ignored in practice by Malaysia. It should be noted that the principle has not been disavowed, but has acted as an important restraint against support to insurgents escalating to “intolerable levels”.<sup>221</sup> Malaysia is continuously looking for avenues to render assistance to the Moros and yet not be seen to be in violation of the principle of international law and the key regional norm, which is non-interference in other ASEAN members’ internal affairs. In this case, it can be said that the Malaysian government’s policy agenda towards the Moro has focused increasingly on long-term goals, primarily through economic aid and cooperation as a means for obtaining their security. For example, Malaysia is among the most active members in the formation of the BIMP-EAGA (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines – East ASEAN Growth Area) that includes the Southern Philippines (Mindanao island and the province of Palawan), East Malaysia (the states of Sabah and Sarawak and the federal territory of Labuan), the provinces of Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku and Irian Jaya in Indonesia, and the whole of Brunei.<sup>222</sup> Since its inception in 1994, BIMP-EAGA has developed rapidly.<sup>223</sup> Such effort has allowed for economic growth in the less developed

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<sup>221</sup> John Funston, “ASEAN and the Principle of Non-Intervention – Practice and Prospects” (paper presented at the Council of Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific 7th Comprehensive Security Working Group Meeting, Seoul, 1-2 December 1999), pp. 3-4.

<sup>222</sup> It should be noted that the idea to create this subregional cooperation in these areas was initiated by President Fidel Ramos.

<sup>223</sup> Pushpa Thambipillai, “The ASEAN Growth Areas: Sustaining the Dynamism,” *The Pacific Review* 11, no. 2 (1998): p. 258.

areas, especially in Mindanao.<sup>224</sup> It has been recognised that strong support by the four participating governments and the active role of the private sector has contributed to the rapid development of the BIMP-EAGA.<sup>225</sup> Although the Asian financial crisis in 1997 reduced the capability of most of its member countries to sustain and promote further economic growth within the region, recent economic indicators show that these economies are reviving.<sup>226</sup>

## 6.6 Conclusion

In short, as in the previous two case studies, the Malaysian government's policy also emphasises good relations with the Philippines government. However, since the Malay ethnic group played a leading role in Malaysia's politics, the government leaders and also the general Malay public could not afford just to ignore the difficulties that their ethnic brethren were facing in the Moro region. The chapter has provided supportive evidence that ethnic factors do play a major role in explaining the issue of Malaysian security practice towards the Moros. However, in the case of the conflict in the Moro region, Malaysia has the opportunity to play a larger role than in the conflicts in southern Thailand and Aceh. This is because in the case of the southern Philippines, the Malaysian government was invited by the GRP to act as the facilitator for peace talks between the parties in conflict. This invitation shows that the Philippines government believes that Malaysia can play a positive role in finding a solution to the conflict, despite having close links with the Moros organisations. Obviously, the GRP issued the invitation because while they know that Malaysia is very concerned about the conflict,

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<sup>224</sup> For the impact of BIMP-EAGA on the Moro region's economy especially in terms of its export, see, Larry N. Digal and Milva Lunod, "Impact of BIMP-EAGA on Mindanao Exports," *Banwa* 1 no. 1 (2004).

<sup>225</sup> Thambipillai, "The ASEAN Growth Areas: Sustaining the Dynamism," p. 257.

<sup>226</sup> See, for example, Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Technical Assistance for Strengthening Subregional Cooperation in the Transport Sector of the EAGA and the IMT-GT Regions* (2001 [cited 26 April 2007]); available from [http://www.adb.org/Documents/TARs/REG/r5\\_02.pdf](http://www.adb.org/Documents/TARs/REG/r5_02.pdf), Ishak Yussof and Mohd Yusof Kasim, "Human Resources Development and Regional Cooperation within BIMP-EAGA: Issues and Future Directions," *Asia-Pacific Development Journal* 10, no. 2 (2003).

the GRP strongly believes that Malaysia is not interested in seeing the disintegration of the Philippines. In fact, this was the main reason why the GRP has “allowed” Malaysia to play a bigger role in the peace process from being just a facilitator to moving towards becoming a mediator.

Apart from its other national interests, particularly those of an economic nature, Malaysia is very interested in helping to find a peaceful solution to the conflict because Kuala Lumpur wants to ensure the societal security of its ethnic brethren in the Philippines and not just the wellbeing of particular leaders. Indeed, this had been proven by the arrest and deportation of the MNLF leader, Nur Misuari, after he escaped to Malaysia following his unsuccessful rebellion in 2001. The willingness of the Malaysian government to continuously provide training programmes aimed at increasing the Moros’ capacity for administrating their own region in the future and its preparedness to accept refugees/migrants from the southern Philippines also show that Malaysia is indeed willing to extend assistance to Malays outside its territorial jurisdiction. Looking at this particular case study, therefore, it can again be concluded that ethnic factors do indeed play a major role in Malaysia’s security practice.



## Chapter 7: Assessment and Conclusions

### *Introduction*

The thesis has two main objectives. The first is to analyse whether ethnic considerations have any impact on Malaysian security practices, especially in relation to the conflicts in southern Thailand, Aceh and in the Moro Region. The second purpose is to analyse whether the preservation of the interests of ethnic Malays,<sup>1</sup> which has been identified as one of Malaysia's national security objectives, is only pursued within the parameters of the country's domestic politics or is also a feature of Malaysian foreign/security policy. It should be noted that both objectives are interrelated. If the second purpose is pursued, then so too is the first. Based on the analysis of Malaysia's security practices in all three areas of conflict - southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro Region - the thesis concludes that in the case of Malaysia, ethnicity has a major impact on Kuala Lumpur's security practices in relation to all of these conflict areas. In fact, the Malay elite's perception of national security is not only limited to striving for the protection of the country's core values, which include the political stability of the country, the survival and well-being of the people, and the state's territorial integrity, but also extends to securing the societal security of its ethnic kin across international boundaries. Ethnicity implies a sense of a shared common descent that ties people by notions of kinship, political solidarity vis-à-vis other groups, shared customs, language, religion, values, morality and etiquette.<sup>2</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Two, striving for societal security involves a society attaining the ability to maintain its essential character, such as its traditional patterns of language,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance; A.B., "Bureaucratic Management of Identity in a Modern State: "Malayness" In Postwar Malaysia," pp. 135-50, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Weber, Mills, and Gerth, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*.

culture, religious and national identity and customs under changing conditions and possible or actual risks.<sup>3</sup> It also involves protecting the physical survival, economic wellbeing and, in some instances, an ethnic group's political rights in their homeland. However, when it comes to identifying the core security referents in the case of Malaysia, the thesis demonstrates that the pursuit of the societal security of the ethnic Malays in these conflict areas is closely interlinked with the security of the Malaysian government itself.

This concluding chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section [7.1] reviews the main findings of this thesis. The second section [7.2] begins by analysing the implications of the empirical conclusions for the literature. The primary purpose of this section is to highlight the shortcomings of the literature when explaining Malaysia's security practices towards the ethnic conflicts in southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro region. This section also summarises Malaysia's security practices in relation to the conflicts in southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro region. The main objective of this sub-section is to compare and contrast all of the approaches taken by the Malaysian government in relation to these ethnic conflicts. The third section [7.3] discusses this thesis' contribution to the literature. Finally, the fourth section [7.4] attempts to outline tentatively the future development of Malaysia's security practice in these conflict areas. This section also attempts to outline the prospects of ASEAN, particularly with respect to its norms of non-interference among member states.

## **7.1 Main Findings**

This thesis has shown that Malaysia's security practice towards the ethnic conflicts in southern Thailand, Aceh, and in the Moro Region is best understood with reference to

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<sup>3</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security in the Post-Cold War Era*, p. 19, Wæver, "Societal Security: The Concept," pp. 17-40.

the importance that shared ethnicity has played for Malaysian policy-makers. Indeed, the thesis argues that the primary influence underpinning the country's security practice is ethnic identity. This point applies to Malaysia's bilateral and regional relationships. To this end, this thesis illustrates in detail the close ethnic ties that the Malay political elite see between the Malays in Malaysia and those Malay groups who are located outside Malaysia's international borders. This perception of strong ethnic ties is rooted in longstanding and extensive historical relations. What is important is that ethnic considerations have led the Malaysian government to engage either directly or indirectly in conflicts where the Malays are caught up in southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro region. As analysed in all of the case study chapters, Kuala Lumpur has not only extended support and assistance to ordinary Malay people in the respective conflict areas, but also to some extent to their ethno-nationalist organisations. As analysed in the respective case study chapters, Malaysia has maintained close relations with almost all of the key ethno-nationalist organisations operating in the conflict areas. For instance, as analysed in Chapter 4, most of the Thai Malays' ethno-nationalist organisations were either founded or had their bases in Malaysia, particularly during the initial period of their establishment.<sup>4</sup> Chapter 5 has shown that although the Acehese ethno-nationalist organisation was not formed in Malaysia, the country can still be perceived as having had a close link with the Acehese ethno-nationalist organisation, mainly because the Acehese organisation had almost fully transferred their operational command to Malaysia where it remained until 1998.<sup>5</sup> As discussed in Chapter 6, both the Moro

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<sup>4</sup> Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, p. 108, Mahyiddin, "Letter to Barbara Whittingham Jones Dated 14 March 1948.", Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand*, p. 229.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, "Aceh Unrest Leads to Mounting Death Toll.", Barber, *Aceh: The Untold Story: An Introduction to the Human Rights Crisis in Aceh*, p.42.

ethno-nationalist organisations, the MNLF and the MILF, also have close relations with Malaysia. In fact, the MNLF can be considered as having been established in Malaysia.<sup>6</sup>

It should also be noted that Malaysia's security practices towards these ethnic conflicts are influenced by a combination of factors, ranging from domestic political pressures to affective and instrumental motivations.<sup>7</sup> As outlined in Chapter 1, affective motivations relate to considerations of justice, as well as humanitarian, ethnic and religious concerns. They may also find expression in the leadership's ideological affinity with the ethno-nationalist organisations.<sup>8</sup> Instrumental motives for supporting the ethnic kin group, on the other hand, are linked to the promotion of its own self interest.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Malaysia, although there are various types of motivation, the thesis argues that the Malaysian government's main motivation to assist its ethnic kin has been interlinked with other concerns - particularly humanitarian and religious issues. The thesis, however, argues that these assistances were not due to the Malaysian government leadership's ideological affinity with the ethno-nationalist organisations. As analysed in all the case study chapters, the assistance provided serves only to protect the societal security of the Malay minority; it does not involve supporting either their irredentist or separatist leanings. For instance, Chapter 4 argues that one of the main reasons why the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations had to change their objective from wanting to join Malaysia to seeking independence was due to the lack of support from the Kuala Lumpur government for their irredentist demands. Chapter 5 has shown that the Malaysian government only agreed to allow the Acehnese refugees to seek shelter in the country if they did not actively support and/or undertake any action

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Hawkins, *The Defence of Malaysia and Singapore, from AMDA to ANZUK*, pp. 50-52, Marohomsalic, *Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines*, p. 166, Mercado, "Culture, Economics and Revolt in Mindanao: The Origins of the MNLF and the Politics of Moro Separatism," p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> Carment, "The Ethnic Dimension in World Politics," pp. 551-82.

<sup>8</sup> Heraclides, *The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics*, n. 3 p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*, n. 4, p. xvi.

directed against the Indonesian government.<sup>10</sup> In the case of the conflict in the Moro region, it can also be seen that the Malaysian government does not have an ideological affinity with the Moros. As analysed in Chapter 6, the Malaysian government, as the mediator/facilitator of the GRP-MILF peace process, has even been promoting the idea that the MILF should not be demanding secession or independence from the GRP.<sup>11</sup> In short, despite the fact that the Malaysian government has been concerned about the societal security of its ethnic kin, this concern does not come to the extent of violating the territorial integrity of its neighbouring countries.

Furthermore, the thesis demonstrates that instrumental motives have also influenced Malaysia's security practice. As examined, the mishandling of these conflicts by the Malaysian government in order to achieve the societal security of their ethnic brethren would have had a negative impact on the ruling government's ability to preserve its political hegemony. The thesis argues that both the major ethnic Malay-based political parties (UMNO and PAS) have been voicing serious concern regarding the fate of their ethnic kin caught up in conflict outside Malaysia, in part to boost their popularity, especially in those states that border on the conflict areas. This phenomenon is due to the fact that the Malays living along these borders tend to be particularly concerned about the security situation experienced by their ethnic kin. Therefore, while the Malaysian government seeks to maintain good relations with all of its neighbours, it also needs to cater for the actual and perceived domestic pressures in order to extend assistance to the ethnic Malays in neighbouring countries. In addition to boosting the ruling political party's popularity amongst the Malay ethnic group, there are also other specific interests that influence Kuala Lumpur's security practices, especially in southern Thailand and the Moro region. As for the former, Malaysia has been interested

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Mohamad.

<sup>11</sup> Santos, "Delays in the Peace Negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front: Causes and Prescriptions ", p. 23.

in seeking assistance from the Thai Malay organisation to help the Malaysian armed forces suppress the communist insurgency operating against the Malaysian government from the Thai side of the border. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 4, the military cooperation with the Thai Malays had contributed to the CPM's decision to halt their insurgency against the Malaysian government in 1989.<sup>12</sup> However, in the Moro region, Malaysia's interest has been to retaliate against the Philippines for attempting to invade Sabah.<sup>13</sup> As highlighted in Chapter 6, the GRP under the administration of President Marcos aimed to invade Sabah by sponsoring military training to the Moro recruits on Corregidor Island in 1968.<sup>14</sup> Table 4 summarises the factors that have influenced Malaysia's security practice towards all the respective conflict areas.

**Table 4: Motivation Underlying Malaysia's Security Practice Towards Conflict Areas**

Conflict Areas	Type of Motivation				
	Affective Motivations				Instrumental Motivation
	Justice	Humanitarian	Ethnic	Ideological Affinity	Other Self Interest
Southern Thailand	-	√	√	-	√
Aceh	-	√	√	-	-
Moro Region	-	√	√	-	√

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>13</sup> Jubair, *Bangsamoro, a Nation under Endless Tyranny*, p. 132, Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 238, Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," p. 226.

## 7.2 *Implications of the Empirical Conclusions for the Literature*

Some scholars argue that since the ethno-nationalist movements in all of the respective countries are religiously motivated, Malaysia has offered assistance to them because the Malays in Malaysia (and also those in the Malaysian government) share a common religion with them.<sup>15</sup> This thesis, however, suggests that in their relations with all of the key ethno-nationalist organisations in southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro region, the Malaysian decision makers have been more motivated by consideration of a shared ethnic identity than by religion. The same applies to the ethno-nationalist movements. In the case of the Thai Malays, Chapter 4 has shown that although Malays in southern Thailand have increasingly embraced a Muslim identity, they have done so for instrumental reasons only. In effect, by emphasising religion, they hoped to be able to expand their support base, especially among the global Muslim community. Essentially, the calculation has been that a larger support base within the international community, particularly from the Muslim world, would increase the probability of the Thai government succumbing to their political demands. Despite there being a religious factor in this conflict, the main motivation for the struggle remains Malay nationalism.<sup>16</sup>

As for the Aceh conflict, Chapter 5 has shown that even though Islam has been an important identity marker for the Acehnese population, it was difficult to attribute GAM's struggle solely to religion because this ethno-nationalist organisation was neither explicitly Islamic nor did it pursue Islamist political aspirations.<sup>17</sup> Scholars tend to explain the conflict in religious terms primarily because Aceh has a history of

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Rabasa and Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia*, p. 82, Wardhani, "External Support for Liberation Movements in Aceh and Papua", Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy*, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N° 98, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad.", Liow, *Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics*.

<sup>17</sup> For views that GAM is not an Islamic organisation, see, for example, Gershman, "Is Southeast Asia the Second Front?," p. 67, Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, p. 7.

rebelling against the central government in order that their province be governed by Islamic law. In fact, the movement led by GAM is based on the Acehese ethnic group's determination to be free from Javanese control.

Lastly, with respect to the Moros, Chapter 6 has discussed that religion has been used only as the major vehicle to unite the very different Moro ethno-linguistic groups. Unlike the Thais of Malay descent<sup>18</sup> and the Acehese, both of whom were historically ruled by one sultanate, the Moros experienced rule under at least two major different sultanates that were founded by different ethno-linguistic groups. However, despite their different historical backgrounds, the Moro also organised themselves politically to struggle against the central government in order to preserve their Malay identity, very much like the Malay movements in southern Thailand and Aceh.<sup>19</sup> The Islamic factor, therefore, deserves to be downplayed. Indeed, Islam has only been utilised by all three ethno-nationalist movements as one of the most convenient and powerful tools to attain political ends, the unity of the people, and their nationalist aspirations. Thus, the thesis argues that while Islam should be regarded as an important factor in explaining how these ethno-nationalist movements have succeeded in sustaining their struggle against their respective governments, religion per se cannot explain satisfactorily the cause of their struggle. Instead, the key to the origins of these struggles are identity needs or specifically fear about losing ethnic identity. This claim holds especially true in the case of Indonesia, where Islam is the dominant religion in the country.

As analysed in all of the case study chapters, the heavy-handed, often insensitive attempts by the respective governments to impose "national" values have tended to reflect the values of the dominant group. They have resulted in resentment among ethnic Malays and the latter's fear of losing their own identity to what they have

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<sup>18</sup> With an exception of the province of Satun.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Gopinath, "International Aspects of the Thai Muslim and Philippine Moro Issues: A Comparative Study," pp. 125-47, Jha, *Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia and Quest for Identity*, p. 68.



perceived as “foreign values”. In other words, they have been concerned greatly with the perceived threat to what the Copenhagen School terms societal security. The thesis has demonstrated that in each of the conflict areas under discussion, the Malay communities challenge their respective governments for related but analytically distinct reasons. As analysed in Chapter 4, the Thais of ethnic Malay descent decided to form their ethno-nationalist organisations to conduit a struggle in protest at Bangkok’s policies, which alienated them socially, culturally and religiously within the country. Meanwhile, as discussed in Chapter 5, the Acehnese formed their ethno-nationalist organisation following the Indonesian government’s decision to withdraw the special status given to their province, an act that was viewed as an attempt by the Javanese to “colonise” Aceh. By contrast, as shown in Chapter 6, the Moros organised themselves against Manila as a result of perceiving that their physical existence was under threat in the wake of the Corregidor affair. In short, what all of these Malay communities have in common is that they shared a sense of acute threat to their societal security posed by their respective governments.

The thesis has also shown that although the Malays in Malaysia share a common religion with their ethnic kin in neighbouring conflict areas, religion is not the main motivation for Malaysia to offer assistance to them. Nevertheless, it should be noted that religion is one of the main elements of Malay ethnic identity. As argued, in order for any individual to be categorised as Malay, the individual must be Muslim. Despite being one of the core elements of Malay ethnic identity, religion has, however, never occupied a central position in Malaysia’s foreign policy. In fact, Malaysian policy makers have never pretended to be dedicated to the Islamic cause internationally.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the argument that religion is the main motivation underpinning Malaysia’s

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<sup>20</sup> Abu Bakar, "Islam in Malaysia's Foreign Policy: The First Three Decades (1957-1987)," p. 17.

support towards the Malays across its borders is not persuasive. As the current analysis has shown, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which dominates the ruling coalition government in Malaysia, is a Malay ethno-nationalist political party whose main objective is to protect the interests of the Malay ethnic group. As argued, one of the ethnic group's interests is in fact to ensure that its ethnic kin's security is not threatened.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, even international boundaries do not cause members of ethnic groups to ignore the condition of their ethnic kin.<sup>22</sup> This thesis has revealed that the Malays in Malaysia do maintain strong ethnic, historical and political links with their brethren. These extensive ties among the Malays have been the major factor that has motivated the Malaysian government's concern about the societal security of their ethnic brethren. This concern consequently shapes the country's security practices towards all of the respective conflict areas.

In addition, this thesis has highlighted the differences between the Malays in Malaysia and the dominant ethnic groups in Indonesia (Javanese) and in the Philippines (Filipinos). As discussed in the respective case study chapters, although both of these ethnic groups can be classified as belonging to the larger Malay ethnic group according to the anthropological definition, they are not however, perceived by the Malays in Malaysia as part of their ethnic group. This is primarily due to the lack of common ethnic identity and historical linkages between the Malays and both the Javanese and the Filipinos. Whilst the Javanese have a long history of enmity towards the Malay and have never viewed themselves as belonging to the Malay ethnic group, the Filipinos lack one of the core elements of Malay identity according to the Malaysian government's definition of what constitutes a Malay: namely, that a Malay must be Muslim. Therefore, this thesis claims that Malaysia's assistance rendered to the people in all of

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<sup>21</sup> Moore and Davis, "Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy," pp. 89-103.

<sup>22</sup> Carment and James, "Two-Level Games and Third-Party Intervention: Evidence from Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans and South Asia ": pp. 521-54.

these conflict areas is actually due primarily to their ethnic linkages rather than their religious similarity.

Some scholars have argued that even if the Malaysian government is concerned about the plight of its ethnic brethren in the region, the government would not interfere in these conflicts because as a member of ASEAN, the government has given a higher priority to the principle of territorial sovereignty especially among fellow member states.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, one of the key objectives of ASEAN's norms is to ensure that member states adhere to the principle of non-interference. It is also maintained that as one of the founders of this regional organisation, Malaysia remains committed to upholding its basic principles. In fact, this argument has some validity in the sense that Malaysia has indeed never officially criticised these principles, even though sometimes these policies might be perceived by the Malaysian government as allowing for the suppression of the Malay ethnic minority in the conflict areas discussed in the thesis. In fact, Malaysia's decision to rigorously adhere to the regional norm whereby member states do not criticise each other publicly can be credited as being one of the main reasons why Malaysia has not been involved in any interstate armed conflicts with its neighbours since the establishment of ASEAN. In short, the claims made by these scholars appear well-founded since 'ASEAN' has been quite successful in restraining its member states from interfering, and members have encouraged each other to settle their disputes in a peaceful manner. However, it should also be noted that in spite of the Malaysian government's tendency to refrain from publicly criticising regional governments, on several occasions, the government did become involved in a "war of words" with its neighbours. This is mainly due to the Malaysian government's decision

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<sup>23</sup> See for example; Carment, "Managing Interstate Ethnic Tensions: The Thailand-Malaysia Experience," p. 16, Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, p. 202, Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, pp. 171-205, Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy*, p. 34.

to extend both passive and active support to their ethnic kin in the conflict areas and to their respective ethno-nationalist movements.

The policy of not criticising its neighbours openly, however, does not mean that Malaysia is not concerned about its ethnic brethren. As the thesis has shown, although the Malaysian government highly regards the principle of territorial integrity, the government has not failed to offer assistance to the ordinary members of the Malay ethnic group and also to all the major ethno-nationalist organisations in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Interestingly, in spite of the Malaysian government offering such assistance, the latter has not caused/engendered any serious interstate tension between Kuala Lumpur and its neighbouring countries, and has neither led these conflicts to deteriorate nor fomented major interstate tensions, let alone war. In other words, in contrast to popular perceptions by many scholars whereby third party involvement by a kin state tends to lead to intensified interstate strife,<sup>24</sup> the experience of Southeast Asian countries is that in the case of ethnic conflicts in the region, the third party involvements did not intensify interstate conflict. However, it should be noted that there are incidences whereby both Bangkok and Jakarta did engage with Malaysia in a 'war of words'. However, these incidences are limited to a series of accusations by both governments, who 'perceived' that Malaysia had been playing a role in supporting the ethnic Malay minority in southern Thailand and Aceh. These accusations by both governments, however, did not have any negative impact on their diplomatic relations with Malaysia. Therefore, the thesis suggests that the existence of a regional grouping such as ASEAN should be taken into account in order to explain the formulations of foreign/security policy of kin states' toward conflicts involving its ethnic brethren across international boundaries. One of the main reasons for the region remaining peaceful

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Davis and Moore, "Ethnicity Matters: Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior.", Ryan, "Ethnic Conflict and the United Nations," pp. 24-28.

despite Malaysia's engagement in all of the three conflicts is because of cooperation between Malaysia and all the three respective countries to tackle the problem. Obviously, if all of the respective governments believe that Malaysia has the intention of either intensifying these conflicts or even aiming at disintegrating their countries, none of these governments would come to any agreement with Malaysia on these issues. In other words, the main objective of Malaysia's engagement in these conflicts is to seek peaceful solutions to the conflicts; it is not interested in violating the territorial integrity of the countries involved.

#### 7.2.1 Malaysia's Assistance Via ASEAN and Bilateral Cooperation

As analysed in the thesis, Kuala Lumpur has been offering assistance to these Malays via bilateral cooperation with all the respective countries and also through the framework of ASEAN itself. However, it should be noted that Malaysia had never agreed to enter into any joint cooperation with any of the respective governments that aims to suppress these movements. Malaysia has been engaging with all of the respective governments within the framework of ASEAN to develop various economic programmes, such as the Growth Triangle initiative, that aim to uplift the economic status of Malays in each of the conflict areas. Significantly, such assistance is targeted towards all Malays in the respective conflict areas rather than at particular ethno-nationalist organisations.

#### Malaysia's Assistance Via ASEAN Cooperation

Within ASEAN, Malaysia has been a member to two of the Growth Triangle initiatives that incorporate all of the conflict areas under discussion in this thesis: (1) the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) which includes southern Thailand and Aceh; and (2) the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines – East ASEAN

Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) that includes the Moro region. At the time of writing, neither growth triangles has achieved their intended objectives, which among others is to improve the living standards of the people residing in those areas. As discussed in the thesis, all of these conflict areas are either among the least developed areas in their respective countries or perceived as not benefiting from their province's wealth.<sup>25</sup> The establishment of the growth triangles is not only aimed at accelerating economic growth in all the respective areas but also at reviving the economic and cultural ties between neighbouring regions. As discussed in the thesis, historically, all of these conflict areas had extensive trade links with some of the states in Malaysia.<sup>26</sup> One of the main reasons why the growth triangle has not produced any positive results is due to suspension of their economic activities following the 1997 Asian financial crisis. All of the countries in this subregional arrangement only decided to revive the growth triangle initiatives in January 2007 when the respective leaders signed the two subregional agreements at the ASEAN Summit in Cebu, the Philippines.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the growth triangles in achieving their objectives.

#### Malaysia's Bilateral Cooperation With Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines

Bilaterally, the level of cooperation extended to Bangkok, Jakarta and Manila has differed. Although the Malaysian government has extensive bilateral cooperation with Thailand and the Philippines, it does not, however, have such cooperation with the Indonesian government. In the case of the conflict in Southern Thailand, although the Malaysian government has not been involved in any peace process, both governments

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh," pp. 241-69, Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, p. 42, Croissant, "Unrest in South Thailand: Contours, Causes, and Consequences since 2001," pp. 21-43, Singh, "The Challenge of Militant Islam and Terrorism in Indonesia," pp. 47-68, Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications," pp. 267-88.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, King, "The Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle: How the South Was Won...And Then Lost Again," pp. 93-108, Lingga, "Muslim Minority in the Philippines", Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier: Acehnese and Other Histories of Sumatra*, p. 337.

<sup>27</sup> "ASEAN Summit: Thailand Signs Regional Trade Pact," *The Nation*, 16 January 2007.

have implemented various programmes targeted towards the Malays in Southern Thailand. As discussed in Chapter 4, among the bilateral cooperation that has been established between Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok is the Joint Development Strategy (JDS) which like the IMT-GT, also aims to foster economic cooperation between Thailand's southern provinces and Malaysia's northern states. The establishment of the JDS has resulted in the creation of 'Task Force 2010'. So far, the Task Force has been very active in coordinating assistance from Malaysia to southern Thailand. However, the Task Force has not been effective in restoring peace in southern Thailand. One of the main reasons for its ineffectiveness in this area is due to the fact that the Task Force overlooked the fact that economic issues are not the key reason that Thai Malays continue their struggle through their ethno-nationalist organisations.<sup>28</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 6, in the case of the conflict in the Moro region, Malaysia has the opportunity to play a larger role than in the conflicts in Southern Thailand and Aceh. This is because in this conflict, the Malaysian government was invited by the GRP to act as the facilitator for the peace talks between the parties in conflict. The invitation extended by the GRP to Malaysia has focused on KL mediating the peace talks between them and the Moro ethno-nationalist organisation (MILF).<sup>29</sup> In addition, Malaysia has also been providing capacity-building support to the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) through its Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP).<sup>30</sup> The BDA, since May 2002, has been mandated to manage the development in all of the MILF areas.<sup>31</sup> All of these kinds of cooperation with the Philippines

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Khan.

<sup>29</sup> Santos, "Delays in the Peace Negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front: Causes and Prescriptions", p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Santos, *Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations*, p. 87.

<sup>31</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N<sup>o</sup> 80, "Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process," p. 32.

government indicate that the GRP believes that Malaysia is able to play a neutral role in finding a solution to the conflict, despite having close links with the Moro organisations.

By comparison, the bilateral cooperation regarding the conflict between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta is limited to the issue of deportation of Acehese refugees. However, as argued in Chapter 5, such cooperation came about following a period of intense lobbying by Indonesia vis-à-vis the Malaysian government. One of the factors contributing to the lack of bilateral relations between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta aimed at solving the conflict in Aceh, is the Javanese perception of the Malays in Malaysia. As discussed in Chapter 5, the Javanese in Indonesia regard themselves as culturally more sophisticated and superior not only vis-à-vis the Malays, but also in relation to other ethnic groups in the archipelago.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the Javanese tend not to initiate any kind of cooperation with the Malaysian government whom they view as inferior, especially when it comes to solving their own domestic affairs. In fact, as the thesis has shown, the Indonesian government did not initiate the invitation to Malaysia to participate in the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM). Rather, Malaysia's participation in the AMM was due to a recommendation made by the European Union, which was later agreed to by the Indonesian government. The thesis argues that due to its ethnic ties and the concern about the societal security of the Acehese, the Malaysian government willingly participated in the AMM, which aimed at achieving peace in the province.

In many ways, the Malaysian government's bilateral cooperation with Jakarta is limited to the repatriation of Acehese refugees. There is no incidence where the members of the Acehese ethno-nationalist movements are being deported by the Malaysian government. However, Malaysia did repatriate members of the Thai Malay and the Moro ethno-nationalist organisations. However, this kind of cooperation with

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<sup>32</sup> Ganesan, *Bilateral Tensions in Post-Cold War ASEAN*, p. 29, Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, p. 22.



both Bangkok and Manila was not continuous, but only implemented on an “ad hoc” basis with both governments. As the thesis has demonstrated, the Malaysian government only deported members of the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisation in 1998 where it involved the leader of the New PULO and its military commander. With regard to the cooperation with Manila, the Malaysian government arrested and deported the founder of the MNLF in 2001. This was also the first and (until the writing of this thesis) the last where Malaysia deported the key leader of a Moro ethno-nationalist organisation. Although Malaysia did deport ordinary citizens to Indonesia, the UMNO-led government, however, has not done the same with the ordinary refugees from Southern Thailand and the Moro region. Therefore, it can be deduced that the support given is due to concern for the societal security of its ethnic brethren that results from the government’s awareness of the neighbouring governments’ stance towards these Malays, rather than because of the ethno-nationalist organisations’ irredentist or separatist leanings.

Table 5 summarises the assistance provided by Malaysia through the framework of ASEAN and also through its bilateral cooperation with all the respective governments.

**Table 5: Malaysia Assistance Via ASEAN and Bilateral Cooperation**

Conflict Areas	Malaysia's Assistance	
	Via ASEAN	Via Bilateral Cooperation
Southern Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deporting some of the leaders of the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations</li> <li>Task Force 2010/Technical Training</li> <li>Joint Development Strategy (JDS)</li> </ul>
Aceh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT)</li> <li>Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM)*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deporting some of the refugees from Aceh</li> </ul>
Moro Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-The Philippines Growth Triangle (BIMP-EAGA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in Peace Process</li> <li>Deporting the leader of the MNLF</li> <li>Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA)</li> </ul>

\* This mission was led by the European Union.

In addition to multilateral and bilateral cooperation that aimed to extend assistance to their ethnic kin, Malaysia also initiated a number of approaches unilaterally. However, according to scholars, this form of extending assistance to their ethnic brethren is said to be limited to welfare-oriented programmes.<sup>33</sup> This thesis has found that besides welfare-oriented programmes, some of the assistance given is in fact due to Malaysia's political concern towards its ethnic brethren. Therefore, to suggest

<sup>33</sup> Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," p. 217.

that Malaysia did not offer tangible assistance to the respective ethno-nationalist organisations is inaccurate. However, it should be emphasised again that the Malaysian government does not support the ethno-nationalist organisations in their objective to seek independence. The assistance rendered to its ethnic kin is primarily the result of the government's concern for their societal security. As analysed in all the case study chapters, the members of the Malay ethnic minority in the conflict areas feel that in addition to their ethnic identity, their political rights in their own homeland are also being threatened by the respective central government. In fact, as the thesis has shown, the establishment of these ethno-nationalist organisations was a response to their respective government's unfavourable policies towards them.

#### 7.2.2 Malaysia's Unilateral Assistance to its Ethnic Kin

The extent of Malaysia's unilateral assistance in response to these conflicts has varied. The Malaysian government has utilised various channels and approaches to ensure the societal security of the Malays across its international boundaries. Among the government's various approaches, it is possible to distinguish four main responses, which are: (1) accepting the Malay refugees from conflict areas, (2) offering a safe haven to members/leaders of the ethno-nationalist organisations, (3) offering small scale military assistance, and lastly, (4) offering assistance via NGOs, opposition political party (PAS) and diaspora communities. As mentioned before, the assistance provided serves only the protection of the societal security of the Malay minority; it does not involve supporting either their irredentist or separatist leanings. It should be noted that there are both similarities and differences in terms of the type of assistance offered to Malays in each conflict area.

### Accepting the Malay Refugees from Conflict Areas

Although Kuala Lumpur had a policy that no Indochinese refugees who land in Malaysia can expect to become settlers,<sup>34</sup> the policy towards refugees from these conflict areas differs remarkably. In fact, the thesis demonstrates that with regards to the refugees that originated from all of the conflict areas in the region, the Malaysian government has been fairly accommodating. As analysed in all of the case study chapters, not only is Kuala Lumpur generally willing to offer shelter, the government has also decided to ignore the request made by all the respective governments to repatriate systematically all of the refugees originating from the respective conflict areas. In addition, in certain cases Kuala Lumpur has even offered Malaysian citizenship to refugees, especially those who have been living in the country for some years. Although the number of these refugees is high, they have always been allowed to gain entry to Malaysia, especially when the conflicts become more violent. However, the Malaysian government's willingness to accept these refugees does not only stem from the government being concerned about their human security. The influx of refugees who share a common ethnic identity with the Malaysian Malays is also viewed by the government as one of the ways to help boost the demographic strength of Malays vis-à-vis the large Chinese and Indian minorities in the country, besides ensuring that Malays achieve and maintain political dominance, especially in a state like Sabah.<sup>35</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, preserving Malay dominance in the country remains the primary goal of Malaysian domestic security objectives.

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<sup>34</sup> See, Osborne, "The Indochinese Refugees: Cause and Effects," pp. 48-49.

<sup>35</sup> See for example, Cribb and Narangoa, "Orphans of Empire: Divided Peoples, Dilemmas of Identity, and Old Imperial Borders in East and Southeast Asia," p. 175, Ganesan, *Bilateral Tensions in Post-Cold War ASEAN*, p. 47, Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications," p. 277, Tan, *Security Perspectives of the Malay Archipelago: Security Linkages in the Second Front in the War on Terrorism*, p. 139.

### Offering a Safe Haven to Members/Leaders of the Ethno-Nationalist Organisations

In addition to allowing the ordinary Malays from conflict areas to seek refuge in the country, Kuala Lumpur, in principle, has also been willing to accept or grant a safe haven to the members of all of the respective ethno-nationalist organisations. This decision provides evidence that the Malaysian government is indeed concerned about the security of its ethnic brethren. As explained by the former Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, “it was difficult for the government to send them back because Malaysia fears for their lives”.<sup>36</sup> Although they were all granted a safe haven, the differences were in terms of the locations where they were given sanctuary. As analysed in Chapter 4, the Thai Malays were given a safe haven mainly in the northern part of Malaysia, particularly in the state of Kelantan, and Terengganu. Concerning the conflict in Aceh, Chapter 5 has shown that the Acehnese were allowed to find refuge along the western coast of the Malay Peninsula, especially in Kedah, Perak, and Penang. As regards the Moros, as discussed in Chapter 6, almost all refugees were given shelter in Sabah. In other words, Malay refugees have been given sanctuary in Malaysian states that are nearest to their homeland. The Malaysian government’s decision to provide partisan support to the Thai Malays, Acehnese, and the Moros in these parts of Malaysia is linked to efforts to placate the concerns of the local population. This shows that the Malaysian government has conceded that the stronger the ethnic ties are, the more pressure there is on the government to play an active role in the conflict areas either to help in achieving peace or extending assistance to the ethnic Malay minority.

Although the members of the ethno-nationalist organisations who have been granted sanctuary in Malaysia are requested by the Malaysian government not to take up activities against their respective governments,<sup>37</sup> the fact that they were permitted a safe

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mohamad.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

haven indicates that Malaysia was concerned about their human security. However, it should be noted that there were a number of incidences whereby leaders of ethno-nationalist organisations were repatriated to their respective countries. While the Malaysian government had deported a number of the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist leaders and also the founder of the MNLF, it had never repatriated any of the Acehese ethno-nationalist leaders. In the case of the leaders of Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations, as Chapter 4 has discussed, three PULO leaders were deported by the Malaysian government in 1998. The decision to deport these leaders was closely linked to the country's economic interest. It was reported that Thailand had threatened to suspend economic cooperation with Malaysia.<sup>38</sup> Since Malaysia was experiencing economic downturn as a result of the Asian financial crisis, the government had to concede to the Thai's threat. However, it should be noted that since that event whereby PULO leaders had been deported, the Malaysian government has been extremely reluctant to repatriate any other Thai Malay ethno-nationalist leaders. This is mainly due to the domestic political fallout in Malaysia following the alleged mistreatment of the Thai Malay leaders in Thai detention.<sup>39</sup>

With respect to the case of repatriation of the founder of the MNLF, Nur Misuari, the Malaysian government decided to arrest and deport Misuari mainly due to his revolt against the GRP in 2001, which was perceived by the government as an attempt to destabilise the Moro region. As discussed in Chapter 6, the peace agreement in 1996 between the GRP and the MNLF was actually brokered by the Malaysian

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<sup>38</sup> Ganesan, *Bilateral Tensions in Post-Cold War ASEAN*, p. 29, Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> In fact, in November 2006, General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin, the Thai military commander who led the military coup in September 2006, admitted that the Thai government during Thaksin's administration had executed the leaders of the Thai Malays ethno-nationalist deported to Thailand from Malaysia. See, for example, "Thaksin Had Rebels Killed," *The Star*, 28 November 2006.

government.<sup>40</sup> The arrest of Misuari, however, created a diplomatic tussle between Malaysia and the Philippines over his extradition. The GRP feared his presence in the Philippines would affect the ongoing elections in the ARMM. The Malaysian government, on the other hand, was concerned about the implications of detaining Misuari in the country for a longer period, as Malaysia is the home to a large number of refugees from the Moro region. As the result of the GRP failure to bring Misuari back to the Philippines before 24 December, 2001 the deadline given by the Malaysian government, the government threatened to turn him over to a third country.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, the Philippines took possession of Misuari in January 2002.<sup>42</sup>

#### Military Assistance

This thesis has argued that Kuala Lumpur has also given military assistance to ethno-nationalist organisations. However, it was suggested that this assistance has been limited to the ethno-nationalist organisations in southern Thailand and the Moro region. Although there were reports that some of the weapons procured for GAM were sent to Aceh through Malaysia, there is no evidence that these activities were either supported or known about in advance by the Malaysian government. However, military assistance has been made available both to the Thai Malays and the Moros only sporadically. The rationale for providing this assistance seems to have differed over time. As for the Thai Malay organisations, assistance was given in return for the agreement to help the Malaysian armed forces to suppress the communist insurgency operating against the Malaysian government from the Thai border. Above all, this assistance was only limited

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<sup>40</sup> Islam, "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines," p. 455.

<sup>41</sup> Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, p. 218.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

to the supply of military equipment.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, the assistance offered to the Moros was made available in apparent retaliation to the Philippines' attempt to infiltrate Sabah as a prelude to military invasion.<sup>44</sup> However, it should be noted that Kuala Lumpur has never publicly admitted its involvement in the Moro struggle. The military assistance rendered to the Moros was more extensive than that offered to the Thai Malays because in addition to providing military equipment, the Moros were also given military training.<sup>45</sup> Following the success of the Malaysian government in securing a peace agreement with the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) to end its insurgency in 1989 and the Philippine government's decision to formally withdraw their claim on Sabah by not mentioning Sabah or asserting a territorial claim in its 1987 constitution, Malaysia terminated this type of assistance. In other words, the military assistance provided to both the Thai Malay and Moro ethno-nationalist organisations had two different objectives. As for the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisations, the assistance was provided to assist Malaysia in tackling the communist insurgency. By comparison, the assistance for the Moros was given in order to put pressure on the Philippine government to 'drop' its claim to Sabah. Although the Philippine Congress never acted on the bill that was submitted by President Aquino in 1987 that would have formally renounced Philippine claims to Sabah, since then, and until at least the time of writing of this thesis, the GRP has not brought up the issue of the Sabah claim. In short, despite small scale military assistance provided by Malaysia to these ethno-nationalist organisations, there is no evidence to indicate that Malaysia did so in order to undermine

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<sup>43</sup> Pitsuwan, "The Ethnic Background of Issues Affecting Bilateral Relations between Malaysia and Thailand," p. 324.

<sup>44</sup> Jubair, *Bangsamoro, a Nation under Endless Tyranny*, p. 132, Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, p. 139, Morrison and Suhrke, *Strategies of Survival: The Foreign Policy Dilemmas of Smaller Asian States*, pp. 165-66, Wan Abdul Latif, "Malaysia and the Muslims of Southeast Asia: Islamic Brotherhood Versus National Interests," p. 226, Wurfel, *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay*, p. 163.



the territorial integrity of either country. Rather, it was done in order to protect its own territorial integrity from apparent foreign threats.

#### Assistance via NGOs, Opposition Political Party and Diaspora Communities

Besides extending direct support to its ethnic brethren outside Malaysia, the UMNO-led government has also provided “passive support” to them. This support has involved the Malaysian government not restraining the assistance made available to the Malays in these conflict regions either by its citizens, particularly from the Malay ethnic group, the respective diaspora communities living in the country, the state governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and even the Malay-based opposition party. As the cases examined in the thesis demonstrated, the support offered by the above-mentioned has taken the form of funding, advice and help with representing their cause in international fora. In other words, although the government is aware of the assistance given out by Malay civil society to its ethnic brethren, no action has been taken against the people concerned or the organisations involved. The practical support rendered by Malay individuals or organisations are normally not classified as official support by the government, and thus would normally not be viewed as constituting interference in other members’ domestic affairs.

As the thesis has shown, this kind of support has been “tolerated” in all of the conflict areas in which ethnic Malay people have been caught up. For instance, besides extending humanitarian assistance, the Malay-based opposition party, PAS, has been actively playing the role of spokesman for the Thai Malay ethno-nationalists over the years, besides regularly voicing its concern in international fora about the conflicts in Aceh and the Moro region. In fact, as discussed in Chapter 4, the Kelantan state government, under the administration of PAS, has been identified as the prime supporter of the Thai Malay ethno-nationalist organisation. With regard to the Malaysian NGOs’

participation in extending humanitarian support to the Malays in these conflict areas, the most active of these is the Malaysian Youth Islamic Movement (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* – ABIM). There is also an NGO based in Malaysia, the Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO), who have been very active in mediating peace talks between the Thai Malays ethno-nationalist organisations and the Thai government. In fact, the mediation occurs with the full knowledge of the Malaysian government and has produced a number of successful outcomes, such as the appointment of a Thai Malay as the Governor of Yala in November 2006, the commitment made by the Thai government to introduce the Malay language into the curriculum of public schools in southern Thailand<sup>46</sup> and the agreement for the Thai government to use the Malay language as the medium of instruction in 200 schools in Thailand's southern provinces.<sup>47</sup> Lastly, the thesis shows that the Malaysian government has allowed diaspora communities to extend assistance to the ethno-nationalist organisations from their respective area of conflict especially in the case of Aceh. As analysed in Chapter 5, it has also been reported that the Acehnese diaspora in Malaysia has been heavily involved in sending money, arms, and recruits back to their 'home' country.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, although much of the assistance is not coming officially sanctioned by the Malaysian government, it can still be considered part of Malaysia's security practice. This is mainly due to the fact that it is almost impossible to render these types of assistance to these organisations or to the respective conflict areas without the knowledge of the security agencies, or specifically, the federal government. After all, most assistance offered by respective state governments, NGOs and opposition political party tend to be in the public domain because it is in their best interest that their

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<sup>46</sup> "Malay Muslim Is Yala Head."

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Mahathir.

<sup>48</sup> Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, p. 41, Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," p. 244.

assistance to the Malays in the conflict areas is made public. As discussed earlier, this enables them to boost their popularity at least amongst the Malay ethnic group in the country. However, it should be noted that the same argument could not be applied in the case of the alleged smuggling of weapons through Malaysia. Malaysia is divided by the South China Sea into two geographical entities: the Malay Peninsula (formerly referred to as West Malaysia) and East Malaysia (comprised of Sarawak and Sabah). This separation requires the government to patrol long coastlines and defend large maritime territories, which presents a daunting security challenge.<sup>49</sup> The border at the Straits of Malacca, alone, has continued to be the site of an active smuggling trade throughout the twentieth century: "the long coastline and the fringing mangrove swamps has, over the centuries, provided shelter for entire navies of smugglers and pirates."<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the coastline of Sabah runs almost 250 miles and its proximity to several islands in Philippine waters allows for easy travel across state boundaries. There are almost 200 small islands off Sabah's east coast, of which only 52 are inhabited.<sup>51</sup> The Sulu Sea, which has been identified as a pirate's haven, separates Sabah from the Philippines and in some places it takes less than 20 minutes by boat to reach Sabah's waters from the Philippines.<sup>52</sup> In other words, while the Malaysian government is aware of the activities of most of the actors in the country that offer assistance to its ethnic kin, the same argument cannot be applied with the problem of weapons smuggling.

Table 6 summarises the similarities and differences of how the Malaysian government has approached all of the conflicts involving their ethnic brethren in Southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro region.

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<sup>49</sup> Andrew T. H. Tan, "Malaysia's Security Perspectives," in *Working Paper No. 367* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 2000).

<sup>50</sup> Carl A Trocki, "Borders and the Mapping of the Malay World" (paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies Annual Meeting, San Diego, California, 9-12 March 2000).

<sup>51</sup> Sadiq, "When States Prefer Non-Citizens over Citizens: Conflict over Illegal Immigration into Malaysia," p. 106.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

**Table 6: Malaysia's Assistance to Its Ethnic Brethren in Conflict Areas**

Conflict Areas	Type of Assistance			
	Accepting Refugees among ordinary people	Safe Haven to the members/leaders of ethno-nationalist organisations	Military Assistance/ Training/ Weapons Procurement	Via Malaysian NGOs/ Opposition Political Party/Diaspora Communities
Southern Thailand	√	√	√	√
Aceh	√	√	-	√
Moro Region	√	√	√	√

The aim of Malaysia's Assistance towards the Malays in the Conflict Areas

As an ethnic kin state, the Malaysian government has to fulfil its responsibility to extend help when the ethnic Malay brethren across its international boundaries are in need. However, the assistance extended to the Malays in the conflict areas is limited to an extent where it is highly unlikely to lead to interstate conflict. In fact, the thesis argues that the main objective of Malaysia's security practice towards the Malays in those conflict areas is to secure the societal security of the Malays' ethnic kin rather than to destabilise the territorial integrity of its neighbouring countries. As analysed in the case study chapters, the Malaysian government's policy has been to emphasise the good bilateral relations with the respective governments, along with sound multilateral relations among the ASEAN members. In fact, the thesis has shown that the Malaysian government has not hesitated to offer to cooperate with all the neighbouring

governments to address the respective conflicts whenever all the governments concerned are seen to be at least partially accommodating to the requests of the Malays in their country.

### 7.3 *Contribution to the Literature*

The thesis has made four main contributions. First, it contributes to literature on the influence of the ethnic factor on Malaysia's security practice. The thesis has shown that in the case of Malaysia, ethnicity not only has a role in the domestic securitisation process or the country's ethnic politics, but also influences the country's external security outlook. Indeed, this thesis has shown that ethnic affinity has impacted on Malaysia's domestic and international security practice. The thesis has also shown that Malaysian political leaders - as leaders of a kin state - are influenced by a combination of factors: political pressures from constituencies and affective and instrumental motivations in conflicts where ethnicity is prominent. In other words, the thesis has maintained the claim made by various scholars that in conflicts where ethnicity is prominent, the leaders in kin states are influenced by a combination of factors such as political pressures from constituencies and affective and instrumental motivations that lead them to offer assistance to their ethnic kin caught up in conflicts.<sup>53</sup> And in the effort to secure the ethnic kin's societal security, there are various ways and means that kin states could extend support, which range from providing advice, arms, money, a safe place to organise and train to offering various types of diplomatic assistance, including representing their cause in international fora.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Carment, "The Ethnic Dimension in World Politics," pp. 551-82, Heraclides, *The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics*, n. 3 p. 52, Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict*, p. 168.

<sup>54</sup> Gurr and Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*.

Second, the thesis contributes to the research of the role of ethnicity in international relations, especially in Southeast Asia. This thesis has shown that ethnicity has a role in shaping the behaviour of the state in its interaction with other states. In this regard, ethnicity has been proven to be one of the important contributing factors that may determine the condition of bilateral relations among the countries in Southeast Asia. Also, this thesis sustains the claims that ties between an ethnic group and its disadvantaged kin help to explain a state's policies towards conflict crises.<sup>55</sup> However, this thesis also shows that the argument whereby an ethnic group which is dominant or has been in an advantaged position, is more hostile toward a country which is disadvantaged or even persecutes ethnic kin,<sup>56</sup> is not necessarily sustained with reference to Southeast Asia. This thesis provides evidence that the existence of a regional grouping like ASEAN is able to play a role in minimising the inter/intra-regional tension, especially between bordering countries. In fact, since ASEAN was established, there has been no incidence of a member country settling their disputes by military force.

Third, the thesis illuminates a dimension of the international politics in Southeast Asia on which light is not shed very often. Despite ASEAN member states having established security cooperation either multilaterally or bilaterally, ethnic ties have an impact on the effectiveness of such cooperation. For instance, as shown in the thesis, Malaysia has not cooperated with any of its neighbouring countries in suppressing the ethno-nationalist movements that exist in southern Thailand, Aceh and the Moro region, and also has not agreed to requests to treat these ethno-nationalist movements as

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<sup>55</sup> Saideman, "Explaining the International Relations of Secessionist Conflicts: Vulnerability Versus Ethnic Ties," pp. 721-53.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Davis and Moore, "Ethnicity Matters: Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior," pp. 171-94, Davis, Jagers, and Moore, "Ethnicity, Minorities and International Conflict," pp. 148-63, Moore and Davis, "Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy," pp. 89-103.

enemies. Many of the scholars (especially among the neo-realists) do not agree that this factor has a role among the small states.<sup>57</sup> This thesis has also maintained the claim that in order to explain small state foreign policy, scholars should look to domestic institutional choices rather than international determinants,<sup>58</sup> although there are suggestions that the foreign policies of small states should be best explained by simply examining structural/systemic rather than domestic level factors. In this context, domestic politics - particularly the interest of the dominant ethnic group - has been one of the major factors in shaping a country's foreign security practice. Lastly, the thesis contributes to the literature on the interaction of ethno-nationalist movements with national governments that they are in conflict with, and with supporter governments.

#### **7.4 Prospect for Future Developments**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Malaysian government through its main political party in the National Front (*Barisan Nasional* - BN), the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), has promoted the interests of the Malay ethnic group by implementing a wide range of policies and rules to influence various sectors in ways that are favourable to them.<sup>59</sup> One of the main reasons why the government has been practising these policies is mainly due to the fact that the Malays maintain political hegemony in the country. Given that the Malay ethnic group dominate the country's political life, Malaysia's security practices are consequently shaped in such a way that they are designed to

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<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Hey, *Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior*, Pace, "Small States and the Internal Balance of the European Union," pp. 107-19.

<sup>58</sup> Elman, "The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in Its Own Backyard."

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Alagappa, "Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN Countries," 50-78, Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, p. 53, Horowitz, "Cause and Consequence in Public Policy Theory: "Ethnic Policy and System Transformation in Malaysia", " pp. 249-87.

accommodate and promote Malays' ethnic interests.<sup>60</sup> As the thesis has analysed, one of their ethnic interests is to secure their ethnic kin from threat from their respective governments. Based on the political dynamics in Malaysia, therefore, it is very likely that the Malaysian government will remain committed to assisting its ethnic kin when the latter's societal security is at stake in neighbouring countries. For instance, in the case of southern Thailand, it is very likely that Malaysia will agree to participate in and offer assistance to any programmes initiated by the Thai government designed to reduce the grievances among the Thai Malays. However, at the same time, it is very unlikely that the government in Kuala Lumpur will pressure the Thai government to seek political reconciliation with the Thai Malay movement, as this would be seen as interfering in Thai domestic affairs, an action which is against the norm of ASEAN's non-interference principle.

Although the principle of non-interference in ASEAN is expected to remain as one of the core principles within this regional organisation, there is the possibility the principle may be modified slightly in order to allow member states to engage with the domestic affairs of others, especially if the issues concerned have a spillover effect on other states. After all, there have already been a few attempts to do just this. For instance, in 1997, the former deputy prime minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, called for a new policy of "constructive intervention".<sup>61</sup> This was followed by the recommendation by the then foreign minister of Thailand, Surin Pitsuwan, that ASEAN member states adopt a policy of 'flexible engagement'.<sup>62</sup> However, both of these suggestions were rejected in favour of 'enhanced interaction', which also in fact was not

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<sup>60</sup> Nathan, "Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation," p. 517.

<sup>61</sup> Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development and Prospects*, p. 167.

<sup>62</sup> Funston, "ASEAN and the Principle of Non-Intervention - Practices and Prospects," p. 18.



fully accepted by all member states.<sup>63</sup> Although it seems that member states tend to linger behind the principle of non-interference, the fact that discussion over this principle has taken place indicates that they are willing to address the principle and to modify it.<sup>64</sup> It is expected that once all of the arrangements that are aimed at integrating the members' economic activities, such as the aforementioned growth triangles, have been successful - which in turn will make them interdependent on each other - members of ASEAN would be very likely to be receptive to the idea of adopting a principle that allowed them to interfere in others' domestic affairs in order to protect each other's interests. Having said that, the principle of non-interference is not expected to be totally discarded by ASEAN, as this principle has played a very prominent role in ensuring the region remains peaceful, and free from any armed conflict among member states.

In the case of Aceh, with the signing of the Helsinki Peace Accord in 2005, the province held local elections in December 2006 in which GAM not only won 15 out of 19 districts but also the provincial governorship,<sup>65</sup> and Aceh has been relatively free from any violence conflict. Although at least a temporary peace has been achieved, the Malaysian government is expected to continue to offer assistance to the Acehnese/GAM. This assistance is expected to focus on developing the province. In addition, the Malaysian government is very likely to offer assistance to bolster Acehnese human resources, perhaps similar in intent and design to those offered to the Thai Malays. As for the conflict in the Moro region, although the peace talks mediated by Malaysia have not produced any positive results to date, Malaysia's commitment to ensure the societal security of the Malays' ethnic brethren in the Moro region is likely to

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<sup>63</sup> For detailed discussions on the issue of 'constructive intervention', 'flexible engagement' and enhanced intervention', see Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development and Prospects*, pp. 167-90.

<sup>64</sup> Funston, "ASEAN and the Principle of Non-Intervention - Practices and Prospects," p. 21.

<sup>65</sup> Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°61, "Indonesia: How GAM Won in Aceh," (Jakarta/Brussels: 22 March 2007).

remain strong. Malaysia will retain the role as a facilitator as long as both parties welcome its participation. In short, as long as Malaysia remains an ethnocratic state in which the government promotes the interests of the Malay ethnic group, it will continue to fulfil its perceived responsibility as an ethnic kin state to all the Malays in the conflict.

## **Appendix 1: List of Interviews**

Dr. Zaini Abdullah, Foreign Minister of the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka – GAM): 9 September 2006, Stockholm, Sweden.

Dato Shazryl Eskay Abdullah, Thailand's Honorary Consul at Langkawi, Royal Thailand Consulate: 6 March 2007, Selangor, Malaysia.

Secretary Silvestre Afable Jr., Chairman, The Philippine Government Peace Panel for Talks with the MILF and Presidential Communications Director: 22 February 2007, Manila, the Philippines.

Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Syed Jaafar Albar, Foreign Minister of Malaysia: 21 December 2006, London, United Kingdom.

Von Al Haq, Chairman, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Coordinating Committee on The Cessation of Hostilities: 26 February 2007, Cotabato City, the Philippines.

Prof. Shamsul A.B., Director, Institute of the Malay World & Civilization (ATMA) and Institute of Occidental Studies (IKON), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia: 8 April 2007, London, United Kingdom.

Dr. Rizal G. Buendia, Associate Professor, Political Science Department, De La Salle University-Manila: 24 February 2007, Manila, the Philippines.

Dr. Husaini Hassan, Parliament Speaker and the Revolution Guardianship of the Government of Independent Aceh Sumatra: 10 September 2006, Stockholm, Sweden.

Dr. Parouk S. Hussin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Moro Nationalist Liberation Front (MNLF) and Former Governor, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM): 22 February 2007, Manila, the Philippines.

Mohagher Iqbal, Secretary General, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF): 26 February 2007, Cotabato, the Philippines.

Ghazzali Jaafar, Vice Chairman for the Political Affairs, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF): 26 February 2007, Cotabato, the Philippines.

Syamsuddin Khan, Head of Executive Committee, Patani United Liberation organisation (PULO): 11 September 2006, Stockholm, Sweden.

Abhoud Syed M. Lingga, Director, Institute of Bangsamoro Studies: 1 March 2007, Cotabato City, the Philippines.

Dato' Muhkriz Mahathir, Executive Director, Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO): 13 March 2007, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Kasturi Mahkota, Chief of Foreign Affairs Department, Patani United Liberation organisation (PULO): 7 September 2006, Goteborg, Sweden.

Datu Michael Mastura, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Peace Panel Member in the GRP-MILF Peace Talks: 27 February 2007, Cotabato City, the Philippines

Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, Former Prime Minister of Malaysia (1982-2004): 14 March 2007, Putrajaya, Malaysia.

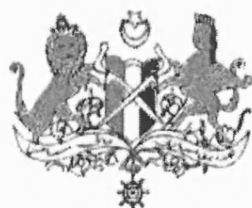
Dato' Muhammad Hatta Abdul Aziz, Director General, National Security Division, Prime Minister's Department: 12 March 2007, Putrajaya, Malaysia

Datuk Othman Razak, Advisor to the Malaysian Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Department: 20 February 2007, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Undersecretary Nabil A. Tan, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP): 22 February 2007, Manila, the Philippines.

Tengku Malik Tengku Mahmud, Prime Minister of the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka – GAM): 9 September 2006, Stockholm, Sweden.

## Appendix 2: Declaration of Independence of Aceh-Sumatra



Secretariat General

### THE GOVERNMENT OF INDEPENDENT ACHEH SUMATRA

Executive Office: P.O. Box 36634 Houston, TX 77236 USA, Legislative Office: P.O. Box 95, 129 22 Hegersten Sweden  
Secretariat General: P.O. Box 20041 World Square, Sydney NSW 2002 Australia Representative: P.O. Box 35034 Wellington 6009 New Zealand

#### DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF ACHEH-SUMATRA Aceh, Sumatra, December 4, 1976

To The peoples Of The World:

We, the people of Aceh, Sumatra, exercising our right of self-determination, and protecting our historic right of eminent domain to our fatherland, do hereby declare ourselves free and independent from all political control of the foreign regime of Jakarta and the alien people of the island of Java.

Our fatherland, Aceh, Sumatra, had always been a free and independent sovereign State since the world begun. Holland was the first foreign power to attempt to colonize us when it declared war against the sovereign State of Aceh, on March 26, 1873, and on the same day invaded our territory, aided by Javanese mercenaries. The aftermath of this invasion was duly recorded on the front pages of contemporary newspapers all over the world. The London, TIMES, on April 22, 1873, wrote: "A remarkable incident in modern colonial history is reported from East Indian Archipelago. A considerable force of Europeans has been defeated and held in check by the army of native state...the State of Aceh. The Acehnese have gained a decisive victory. Their enemy is not only defeated, but compelled to withdraw." THE NEW YORK TIMES, on May 6th, 1873, wrote: "A sanguinary battle has taken place in Aceh, a native Kingdom occupying the Northern portion of the island of Sumatra. The Dutch delivered a general assault and now we have details of the result. The attack was repulsed with great slaughter. The Dutch general was killed, and his army put to disastrous flight. It appears, indeed, to have been literally decimated." This event had attracted powerful world-wide attention. President Ulysses S. Grant of the United States issued his famous Proclamation of impartial Neutrality in this war between Holland and Aceh.

On Christmas day, 1873, the Dutch invaded Aceh for the second time, and thus begun what HARPER'S MAGAZINE had called "A Hundred Years War of Today", one of the bloodiest, and longest colonial war in human history, during which one-half of our people had laid down their lives defending our sovereign State. It was being fought right up to the beginning of world war II. Eight immediate forefathers of the signer of this Declaration died in the battlefields of that long war, defending our sovereign nation, all as successive rulers and supreme commanders of the forces of the sovereign and independent State of Aceh, Sumatra.

However, when, after World War II, the Dutch East Indies was supposed to have been liquidate, - an empire is not liquidated if its territorial integrity is preserved, - our fatherland, Aceh, Sumatra, was not returned to us. Instead, our fatherland was turned over by the Dutch to the Javanese - their mercenaries, - by hasty fiat of former colonial powers. The Javanese are alien and foreign people to us

Achehnese Sumatrans. We have no historic, political, cultural, economic or geographic relationship with them. When the fruits of Dutch conquests are preserved, intact, and then bequeathed, as it were, to the Javanese, the result is inevitable that a Javanese colonial empire would be established in place of that of the Dutch over our fatherland, Acheh, Sumatra. But, colonialism, either by white, Dutch, Europeans or by brown Javanese, Asians, is not acceptable to the people of Acheh, Sumatra.

This illegal transfer of sovereignty over our fatherland by the old, Dutch, colonialists to the new, Javanese colonialists, was done in the most appalling political fraud of the century: the Dutch colonialist was supposed to have turned over sovereignty over our fatherland to a "new nation" called "indonesia". But "indonesia" was a fraud: a cloak to cover up Javanese colonialism. Since the world begun, there never was a people, much less a nation, in our part of the world by that name. No such people existed in the Malay Archipelago by definition of ethnology, philology, cultural anthropology, sociology, or by any other scientific findings. "Indonesia" is merely a new label, in a totally foreign nomenclature, which has nothing to do with our own history, language, culture, or interests; it was a new label considered useful by the Dutch to replace the despicable "Dutch East Indies", in an attempt to unite administration of their ill-gotten, far-flung colonies; and the Javanese neo-colonialists knew its usefulness to gain fraudulent recognition from the unsuspecting world, ignorant of the history of the Malay Archipelago. If Dutch colonialism was wrong, then Javanese colonialism which was squarely based on it cannot be right. The most fundamental principle of international Law states: *Ex injuria jus non oritur*. Right cannot originate from wrong!

This illegal transfer of sovereignty over our fatherland by the old, Dutch, colonialists to the new, Javanese colonialists, was done in the most appalling political fraud of the century: the Dutch colonialist was supposed to have turned over sovereignty over our fatherland to a "new nation" called "indonesia". But "indonesia" was a fraud: a cloak to cover up Javanese colonialism. Since the world begun, there never was a people, much less a nation, in our part of the world by that name. No such people existed in the Malay Archipelago by definition of ethnology, philology, cultural anthropology, sociology, or by any other scientific findings. "Indonesia" is merely a new label, in a totally foreign nomenclature, which has nothing to do with our own history, language, culture, or interests; it was a new label considered useful by the Dutch to replace the despicable "Dutch East Indies", in an attempt to unite administration of their ill-gotten, far-flung colonies; and the Javanese neo-colonialists knew its usefulness to gain fraudulent recognition from the unsuspecting world, ignorant of the history of the Malay Archipelago. If Dutch colonialism was wrong, then Javanese colonialism which was squarely based on it cannot be right. The most fundamental principle of international Law states: *Ex injuria jus non oritur*. Right cannot originate from wrong!

We, the people of Acheh, Sumatra, would have no quarrel with the Javanese, if they had stayed in their own country, and if they had not tried to lord it over us. From now on, we intend to be the masters in our own house: the only way life is worth living; to make our own laws: as we see fit; to become the guarantor of our own freedom and independence: for which we are capable; to become equal with all the peoples of the world: as our forefathers had always been. In short, to become sovereign in our own fatherland!

Our cause is just! Our land is endowed by the Almighty with plenty and bounty. We covet no foreign territory. We intend to be a worthy contributor to human welfare the world over. We extend the hands of friendship to all peoples and to all governments from the four corners of the earth.

In the name of the sovereign people of Acheh, Sumatra.

Tengku Hasan M.di Tiro

Chairman, National Liberation Front of Acheh, Sumatra, and Head of State.

Acheh, Sumatra, December 4, 1976

## Appendix 3: Helsinki Accord 2005

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**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN  
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA  
AND  
THE FREE ACEH MOVEMENT**  
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The Government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) confirm their commitment to a peaceful, comprehensive and sustainable solution to the conflict in Aceh with dignity for all.

The parties commit themselves to creating conditions within which the government of the Acehese people can be manifested through a fair and democratic process within the unitary state and constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

The parties are deeply convinced that only the peaceful settlement of the conflict will enable the rebuilding of Aceh after the tsunami disaster on 26 December 2004 to progress and succeed.

The parties to the conflict commit themselves to building mutual confidence and trust.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) details the agreement and the principles that will guide the transformation process.

To this end the GoI and GAM have agreed on the following:

### **1 GOVERNING OF ACEH**

#### **1.1 Law on the Governing of Aceh**

1.1.1 A new Law on the Governing of Aceh will be promulgated and will enter into force as soon as possible and not later than 31 March 2006.

1.1.2 The new Law on the Governing of Aceh will be based on the following principles:

- a) Aceh will exercise authority within all sectors of public affairs, which will be administered in conjunction with its civil and judicial administration, except in the fields of foreign affairs, external defence, national security, monetary and fiscal matters, justice and freedom of religion, the policies of which belong to the Government of the Republic of Indonesia in conformity with the Constitution.
- b) International agreements entered into by the Government of Indonesia which relate to matters of special interest to Aceh will be entered into in consultation with and with the consent of the legislature of Aceh.
- c) Decisions with regard to Aceh by the legislature of the Republic of Indonesia will be taken in consultation with and with the consent of the legislature of Aceh.
- d) Administrative measures undertaken by the Government of Indonesia with regard to Aceh will be implemented in consultation with and with the consent of the head of the Aceh administration.

1.1.3 The name of Aceh and the titles of senior elected officials will be determined by the legislature of Aceh after the next elections.

- 1.1.4 The borders of Aceh correspond to the borders as of 1 July 1956.
- 1.1.5 Aceh has the right to use regional symbols including a flag, a crest and a hymn.
- 1.1.6 Kanun Aceh will be re-established for Aceh respecting the historical traditions and customs of the people of Aceh and reflecting contemporary legal requirements of Aceh.
- 1.1.7 The institution of Wali Nanggroe with all its ceremonial attributes and entitlements will be established.

## **1.2 Political participation**

- 1.2.1 As soon as possible and not later than one year from the signing of this MoU, GoI agrees to and will facilitate the establishment of Aceh-based political parties that meet national criteria. Understanding the aspirations of Acehnese people for local political parties, GoI will create, within one year or at the latest 18 months from the signing of this MoU, the political and legal conditions for the establishment of local political parties in Aceh in consultation with Parliament. The timely implementation of this MoU will contribute positively to this end.
- 1.2.2 Upon the signature of this MoU, the people of Aceh will have the right to nominate candidates for the positions of all elected officials to contest the elections in Aceh in April 2006 and thereafter.
- 1.2.3 Free and fair local elections will be organised under the new Law on the Governing of Aceh to elect the head of the Aceh administration and other elected officials in April 2006 as well as the legislature of Aceh in 2009.
- 1.2.4 Until 2009 the legislature of Aceh will not be entitled to enact any laws without the consent of the head of the Aceh administration.
- 1.2.5 All Acehnese residents will be issued new conventional identity cards prior to the elections of April 2006.
- 1.2.6 Full participation of all Acehnese people in local and national elections will be guaranteed in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.
- 1.2.7 Outside monitors will be invited to monitor the elections in Aceh. Local elections may be undertaken with outside technical assistance.
- 1.2.8 There will be full transparency in campaign funds.

## **1.3 Economy**

- 1.3.1 Aceh has the right to raise funds with external loans. Aceh has the right to set interest rates beyond that set by the Central Bank of the Republic of Indonesia.
- 1.3.2 Aceh has the right to set and raise taxes to fund official internal activities. Aceh has the right to conduct trade and business internally and internationally and to seek foreign direct investment and tourism to Aceh.
- 1.3.3 Aceh will have jurisdiction over living natural resources in the territorial sea surrounding Aceh.
- 1.3.4 Aceh is entitled to retain seventy (70) per cent of the revenues from all current and future hydrocarbon deposits and other natural resources in the territory of Aceh as well as in the territorial sea surrounding Aceh.



- 1.3.5 Aceh conducts the development and administration of all seaports and airports within the territory of Aceh.
- 1.3.6 Aceh will enjoy free trade with all other parts of the Republic of Indonesia unhindered by taxes, tariffs or other restrictions.
- 1.3.7 Aceh will enjoy direct and unhindered access to foreign countries, by sea and air.
- 1.3.8 GoI commits to the transparency of the collection and allocation of revenues between the Central Government and Aceh by agreeing to outside auditors to verify this activity and to communicate the results to the head of the Aceh administration.
- 1.3.9 GAM will nominate representatives to participate fully at all levels in the commission established to conduct the post-tsunami reconstruction (BRR).

#### **1.4 Rule of law**

- 1.4.1 The separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary will be recognised.
- 1.4.2 The legislature of Aceh will redraft the legal code for Aceh on the basis of the universal principles of human rights as provided for in the United Nations International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- 1.4.3 An independent and impartial court system, including a court of appeals, will be established for Aceh within the judicial system of the Republic of Indonesia.
- 1.4.4 The appointment of the Chief of the organic police forces and the prosecutors shall be approved by the head of the Aceh administration. The recruitment and training of organic police forces and prosecutors will take place in consultation with and with the consent of the head of the Aceh administration in compliance with the applicable national standards.
- 1.4.5 All civilian crimes committed by military personnel in Aceh will be tried in civil courts in Aceh.

## **2 HUMAN RIGHTS**

- 2.1 GoI will adhere to the United Nations International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- 2.2 A Human Rights Court will be established for Aceh.
- 2.3 A Commission for Truth and Reconciliation will be established for Aceh by the Indonesian Commission of Truth and Reconciliation with the task of formulating and determining reconciliation measures.

## **3 AMNESTY AND REINTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY**

### **3.1 Amnesty**

- 3.1.1 GoI will, in accordance with constitutional procedures, grant amnesty to all persons who have participated in GAM activities as soon as possible and not later than within 15 days of the signature of this MoU.
- 3.1.2 Political prisoners and detainees held due to the conflict will be released unconditionally as soon as possible and not later than within 15 days of the signature of this MoU.

3.1.3 The Head of the Monitoring Mission will decide on disputed cases based on advice from the legal advisor of the Monitoring Mission.

3.1.4 Use of weapons by GAM personnel after the signature of this MoU will be regarded as a violation of the MoU and will disqualify the person from amnesty.

## **3.2 Reintegration into society**

3.2.1 As citizens of the Republic of Indonesia, all persons having been granted amnesty or released from prison or detention will have all political, economic and social rights as well as the right to participate freely in the political process both in Aceh and on the national level.

3.2.2 Persons who during the conflict have renounced their citizenship of the Republic of Indonesia will have the right to regain it.

3.2.3 GoI and the authorities of Aceh will take measures to assist persons who have participated in GAM activities to facilitate their reintegration into the civil society. These measures include economic facilitation to former combatants, pardoned political prisoners and affected civilians. A Reintegration Fund under the administration of the authorities of Aceh will be established.

3.2.4 GoI will allocate funds for the rehabilitation of public and private property destroyed or damaged as a consequence of the conflict to be administered by the authorities of Aceh.

3.2.5 GoI will allocate suitable farming land as well as funds to the authorities of Aceh for the purpose of facilitating the reintegration to society of the former combatants and the compensation for political prisoners and affected civilians. The authorities of Aceh will use the land and funds as follows:

a) All former combatants will receive an allocation of suitable farming land, employment or, in the case of incapacity to work, adequate social security from the authorities of Aceh.

b) All pardoned political prisoners will receive an allocation of suitable farming land, employment or, in the case of incapacity to work, adequate social security from the authorities of Aceh.

c) All civilians who have suffered a demonstrable loss due to the conflict will receive an allocation of suitable farming land, employment or, in the case of incapacity to work, adequate social security from the authorities of Aceh.

3.2.6 The authorities of Aceh and GoI will establish a joint Claims Settlement Commission to deal with unmet claims.

3.2.7 GAM combatants will have the right to seek employment in the organic police and organic military forces in Aceh without discrimination and in conformity with national standards.

## **4 SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS**

4.1 All acts of violence between the parties will end latest at the time of the signing of this MoU.

4.2 GAM undertakes to demobilise all of its 3000 military troops. GAM members will not wear uniforms or display military insignia or symbols after the signing of this MoU.

4.3 GAM undertakes the decommissioning of all arms, ammunition and explosives held by the participants in GAM activities with the assistance of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM). GAM commits to hand over 840 arms.

- 4.4 The decommissioning of GAM armaments will begin on 15 September 2005 and will be executed in four stages and concluded by 31 December 2005.
- 4.5 GoI will withdraw all elements of non-organic military and non-organic police forces from Aceh.
- 4.6 The relocation of non-organic military and non-organic police forces will begin on 15 September 2005 and will be executed in four stages in parallel with the GAM decommissioning immediately after each stage has been verified by the AMM, and concluded by 31 December 2005.
- 4.7 The number of organic military forces to remain in Aceh after the relocation is 14700. The number of organic police forces to remain in Aceh after the relocation is 9100.
- 4.8 There will be no major movements of military forces after the signing of this MoU. All movements more than a platoon size will require prior notification to the Head of the Monitoring Mission.
- 4.9 GoI undertakes the decommissioning of all illegal arms, ammunition and explosives held by any possible illegal groups and parties.
- 4.10 Organic police forces will be responsible for upholding internal law and order in Aceh.
- 4.11 Military forces will be responsible for upholding external defence of Aceh. In normal peacetime circumstances, only organic military forces will be present in Aceh.
- 4.12 Members of the Aceh organic police force will receive special training in Aceh and overseas with emphasis on respect for human rights.

## **5 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ACEH MONITORING MISSION**

- 5.1 An Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) will be established by the European Union and ASEAN contributing countries with the mandate to monitor the implementation of the commitments taken by the parties in this Memorandum of Understanding.
- 5.2 The tasks of the AMM are to:
  - a) monitor the demobilisation of GAM and decommissioning of its armaments,
  - b) monitor the relocation of non-organic military forces and non-organic police troops,
  - c) monitor the reintegration of active GAM members,
  - d) monitor the human rights situation and provide assistance in this field,
  - e) monitor the process of legislation change,
  - f) rule on disputed amnesty cases,
  - g) investigate and rule on complaints and alleged violations of the MoU,
  - h) establish and maintain liaison and good cooperation with the parties.
- 5.3 A Status of Mission Agreement (SoMA) between GoI and the European Union will be signed after this MoU has been signed. The SoMA defines the status, privileges and immunities of the AMM and its members. ASEAN contributing countries which have been invited by GoI will confirm in writing their acceptance of and compliance with the SoMA.
- 5.4 GoI will give all its support for the carrying out of the mandate of the AMM. To this end, GoI will write a letter to the European Union and ASEAN contributing countries expressing its commitment and support to the AMM.
- 5.5 GAM will give all its support for the carrying out of the mandate of the AMM. To this end, GAM will write a letter to the European Union and ASEAN contributing countries expressing its commitment and support to the AMM.

- 5.6 The parties commit themselves to provide AMM with secure, safe and stable working conditions and pledge their full cooperation with the AMM.
- 5.7 Monitors will have unrestricted freedom of movement in Aceh. Only those tasks which are within the provisions of the MoU will be accepted by the AMM. Parties do not have a veto over the actions or control of the AMM operations.
- 5.8 GoI is responsible for the security of all AMM personnel in Indonesia. The mission personnel do not carry arms. The Head of Monitoring Mission may however decide on an exceptional basis that a patrol will not be escorted by GoI security forces. In that case, GoI will be informed and the GoI will not assume responsibility for the security of this patrol.
- 5.9 GoI will provide weapons collection points and support mobile weapons collection teams in collaboration with GAM.
- 5.10 Immediate destruction will be carried out after the collection of weapons and ammunitions. This process will be fully documented and publicised as appropriate.
- 5.11 AMM reports to the Head of Monitoring Mission who will provide regular reports to the parties and to others as required, as well as to a designated person or office in the European Union and ASEAN contributing countries.
- 5.12 Upon signature of this MoU each party will appoint a senior representative to deal with all matters related to the implementation of this MoU with the Head of Monitoring Mission.
- 5.13 The parties commit themselves to a notification responsibility procedure to the AMM, including military and reconstruction issues.
- 5.14 GoI will authorise appropriate measures regarding emergency medical service and hospitalisation for AMM personnel.
- 5.15 In order to facilitate transparency, GoI will allow full access for the representatives of national and international media to Aceh.

## **6 DISPUTE SETTLEMENT**

- 6.1 In the event of disputes regarding the implementation of this MoU, these will be resolved promptly as follows:
- a) As a rule, eventual disputes concerning the implementation of this MoU will be resolved by the Head of Monitoring Mission, in dialogue with the parties, with all parties providing required information immediately. The Head of Monitoring Mission will make a ruling which will be binding on the parties.
  - b) If the Head of Monitoring Mission concludes that a dispute cannot be resolved by the means described above, the dispute will be discussed together by the Head of Monitoring Mission with the senior representative of each party. Following this, the Head of Monitoring Mission will make a ruling which will be binding on the parties.
  - c) In cases where disputes cannot be resolved by either of the means described above, the Head of Monitoring Mission will report directly to the Coordinating Minister for Political, Law and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the political leadership of GAM and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Crisis Management Initiative, with the EU Political and Security Committee informed. After consultation with the parties, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Crisis Management Initiative will make a ruling which will be binding on the parties.

\*\*\*\*\*

GoI and GAM will not undertake any action inconsistent with the letter or spirit of this Memorandum of Understanding.

\*\*\*\*\*

Signed in triplicate in Helsinki, Finland on the 15 of August in the year 2005.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia,      On behalf of the Free Aceh Movement,

Hamid Awaludin  
*Minister of Law and Human Rights*

Malik Mahmud  
*Leadership*

As witnessed by

Martti Ahtisaari  
*Former President of Finland*  
*Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Crisis Management Initiative*  
*Facilitator of the negotiation process*

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