

Malaysia- The Philippines Political Relations 1961-1965: Domestic and Systemic Factors

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Abstracts

This paper discusses and analyse the factors responsible to the political relationship between Malaysia and the Philippines during the period 1961-1965. The focus discussion is on the Sabah issue and the formation of Federation of Malaysia in September 1963 and its impact to the Malaysia-Philippines political relations. Why the relations and conflict between Malaysia and the Philippines was different as compared to the Malaysia-Indonesian relations during the same period? How was this political relationship related and responsible to the domestic, leadership, regional and systemic factors? The position of the Philippines and Malaysia in the international and regional bipolarity political structure is important in understanding the above issue. How significant was the roles played by the United States and the Great Britain in international politics during the Cold War period had influenced the regional political relations between Malaysia and the Philippines. The United States and Great Britain was the great player in the international bipolarity structure and the regional politics after the Second World War. The diplomatic relations of Britain with Malaysia and the Philippines with the United States influenced the type of the political relations. Why did the United States and the Great Britain gave strong support to the formation of Federation of Malaysia in 1963? What was the relationship with the communist containments in Southeast Asia and generally in the Asia Pacific region, the political relations of Indonesia with China and the Soviet Union. The above characteristic of relationship enables to explain why the relations of Malaysia-Indonesia and Malaysia-the Philippines were different during that period. Power configuration in the bipolarity structure is importance in analysing the political relations between Malaysia and the Philippines. It is also important to discuss the relationship between leadership, domestic, regional and systemic factors. All of the factors influenced the political relations between Malaysia and the Philippines during the period 1961-1965.

Keywords: Domestic factor, systemic factor, hegemonic power, Malaysia-Philippines relations, The United States, Great Britain, bipolarity structure.

Introduction

This paper discusses the factors responsible to the political relationship between Malaysia and the Philippines during the period 1961-1965. The paper focuses on the Sabah issue and the formation of Federation of Malaysia in September 1963 and its impact to the Malaysia- the Philippines political relations. Why the relations and conflict between Malaysia and the Philippines was different as compared to the Malaysia-Indonesian relations during the same period? How was this political relationship related and responsible to the domestic, leadership, regional and systemic factors? The position of the Philippines and Malaysia in the international and regional political structure is important in understanding the above issue. How significant was the roles played by the United States and the Great Britain in international politics during the Cold War period had influenced the political relations between Malaysia and the Philippines. The United States and Great Britain was the great player in the international and regional politics after the war. The relations of Britain with Malaysia and the Philippines with the United States influenced the political relations. Why the United States and Great Britain gave strong support to the formation of Federation of Malaysia in 1963? What was the relationship with the communist containments in Southeast Asia and generally in the Asia Pacific region, the political relations of Indonesia with China and Soviet Union. The above relationship would explain why the relations of Malaysia-Indonesia and Malaysia-the Philippines were different during that period. In analysing the political relation between Malaysia and Philippines, it is important to discuss the leadership, domestic, regional and systemic factors. Without understanding the global, regional and domestic situation, it is impossible to understand the political relations between Malaysia and the Philippines during the period 1961-1965.

Theory of Hegemonic Stability.

The key point in the Theory of Hegemonic Stability is that there must be a hegemonic, i.e. a single dominance power in the international system to ensure the international stability.¹ Only a hegemonic power can establish the international rules, create stability and should punish transgressor with predictable penalties.²

The role of hegemonic power is the leadership in the international system. He is a stabiliser and the strongest power among all states in the international structure of state system. A hegemonic power has the incentive to provide the 'public good' as it has the greatest power in perpetuating the existing international system that gives him the dominant status. Public good or a secure and stable condition can only be provided by a hegemonic power. A hegemonic power has the ability in providing the 'public good' because he is in the strongest position and ability of military, economy, financial and knowledge technology. In order to be a hegemonic power, it must have sufficient resources to sustain and enforce an international institutional that makes it superior, powerful and greater compared to other states. Without the support from the hegemonic power, any international or regional institution would not be effective or less effective.

Proposition:

Hegemonic power as a dominant power can create stability and instability in the international system, regional stability and the relations between states. The differences in a domestic politics in a state would influence the successful of the hegemonic power in creating stability in the international system, region and relations between states. A conflict between any pro-hegemonic states would be settled easily. It is different with any conflict between pro-hegemony and anti-hegemony state, where the settlement process would take longer and difficult way.

The North Borneo (Sabah) Claim, the formation of the Federation of Malaysia and Malaysia-Philippines Political Relations.

Before the end of 1961, the political relations between Malaysia and the Philippines was very good. Between the year 1959 and 1961, the exchange state visit between Tunku Abdul Rahman (Malayan Prime Minister) and President Garcia (The Philippines president) created the happy relations between both states. The situation became worse some time between late 1961 and mid-1962 when Malaysian Federation (a new federation including Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo) was proposed and the Philippines, under President Diosado Macapagal's claim over the North Borneo territories. The British rejected the Philippines claim and push ahead the formation of Malaysia.

The Philippines claim over Sabah and the formation of Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963 had great impact to the Philippines-Malaysia political relations in early 1960s. The conflict started when President Macapagal came to office in 1961. The claim however was resolved and diplomatic relations between The Philippines and Malaysia was normalised in early 1966 when Marcos replaced Macapagal as the new Philippines president.³

The main point in the dispute of Sabah issue was the proper interpretation of an agreement signed in 1878 between the Sultan of Sulu and Baron Von Overbeck and Alfred Dent to lease portions of North Borneo in return for 5,000 Malayan Dollar per year. The British Borneo Company acquired these holding later. On 10 July 1946, six day after the Philippines became independent, the British government incorporated North Borneo as a crown colony.

The area covered in the Agreement of 1878 was not covered whole part of Sabah (in 1960s). The North Borneo in 1960s include former Suluk Rivers together with all the West Coast Rivers ceded by Brunei between 1877 and 1902, and Labuan island incorporated in the colony in 1945. The Philippines claimed entire territory of North Borneo (Sabah) was different from what was stated in Agreement in 1878. The area of the 1878 agreement comprises East Coast only. Certain looseness in the Philippines claim over Sabah was obvious.⁴

¹ .Kindleberger, (1981), 'Dominance and Leadership in the International Economy: Exploitation, Public Goods, and Free Rides,' *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 25, June 1981, p. 247.

² .Koehane, Robert, O.,(1984), *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

³ .Butwell, Richard, (1966), 'The Philippines: Changing of The Guard,' *Asian Survey*, vol. vi. No. 1, January 1966, p.48.

⁴ . See Tregonning, K.G (1962), 'The Claim for North Borneo by The Philippines,' *The Australian Outlook*, vol. 16, no.2, pp. 285.

Some area mentioned in the 1878 Agreement was in the Kalimantan Indonesia. The Sibuco River mentioned in the Agreement 1878 is a part of Indonesia. If the Philippines claimed was based on the Suluk territory as in 1878 agreement, why the Philippines did not claim the Suluk River from Indonesia? No request had been made to Indonesia; rather Indonesia gave support to the Philippines over the Sabah claim in 1961.¹

In 1881 Dent (who had bought Overbeck) secured the qualified support of the British government. British Government passed an Act in Parliament that conferred a Royal Charter on Dent's British North Borneo Company. This charter permitted the Company to administer the territory it had acquired.

In 1888, a treaty with Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo established a British protectorate over those territories. They were left free to govern themselves internally but the British government took over all their foreign affairs. This protectorate The 1888 Agreement recognised the boundaries of North Borneo, Sarawak, Brunei and any other party never challenged the North Borneo. It was the basis of affairs until 1946 when the territory of the North Borneo British with Sarawak became British crown colony.

On the East Coast, the Chartered Company had never established a firm control over the Sibuco River. The company was challenged by the Dutch and it was settled with the parallel of latitude 4 degree accepted as the coastal boundary in 1891. The Dutch and British accepted the inland boundary of 4 degrees in 1915.²

In the Treaty of Paris 1898 whereby the Spanish surrendered their territory to the America, the boundary was stipulated (as it has been in the Manila Convention of 1885) to be nine miles off coast of North Borneo. The Manila Convention 1885 established the boundary of the Philippines nine miles out from the Borneo Coast. It is legally recognised and international accepted boundary, by the Spanish and American Government.³

The claim by the Philippines over North Borneo was based almost entirely upon one word (lease or cede) in the 1878 agreement was very weak. Overbeck agreement with Sultan Sulu in 1878 was not accepted by international community. This one word games makes widespread destruction with a number of unchallenged international agreements. The international agreement such as The Spanish Convention of 1895; The Treaty of Paris in 1898; The Washington Treaty of 1900; The Anglo-American Treaty of 1930; The Constitution of The Commonwealth of the Philippines in 1935; and the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines in 1947, define the boundaries of the Philippines Island.⁴

The proposal of the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in May 1961 and the victory of Diosdado Macapagal in November 1961 influenced the Philippines claim over Sabah. When Sabah became as part of Federation of Malaysia, it would be more difficult for the Philippines to raise this issue. Macapagal had been involved in the North Borneo affairs since 1947 when he was a chief division in the Department of Foreign Affairs. He was assigned a task of negotiating with Great Britain for the return to Philippine control of the Turtle Island, located near North Borneo. Turtle Island was returned to the Philippine control in 1948. Soon after that Macapagal entered politics and won election to the House of Representatives of the Philippines Congress in 1949. On 30 December 1961, Macapagal was inaugurated as President of the Philippines. By mid-April 1962, the House of Representatives had adopted a resolution calling the recovery of North Borneo. Finally on 22 June 1962, President Macapagal revealed that the Philippines Government had informed Great Britain of its intent to formally claim North Borneo.⁵ The roles played by Macapagal and the proposal of the Federation of Malaysia

¹. Tregonning, K.G. (1962), 'The Claim for North Borneo by The Philippines,' p. 286. The Macapagal claimed over Sabah was not totally based on the Agreement between Sultan Mohamet Jamal Al Alam Bin Sri Paduka Al Marhom Sultan Mohamet Fathlon with Baaron de Overbeck and Alfred Dent in 1878, but more to the Macapagal interest and his political motive as the new president of the Philippines. President Sukarno support to the Philippines claim was not on the basis of the proper interpretation of Agreement of 1878, but more to the Indonesian political interest to destroyed Federation of Malaysia. Sibuco River (as mentioned in Agreement of 1878) in 1960s was in the Kalimantan Indonesia and the Sibuco clearly mentioned in Agreement in 1878. See the content of Agreement in Tregonning, K.G. (1962), p. 285.

². The British and Dutch political powers, their negotiation and agreement between both colonial hegemonic powers was more influential than the agreement between local ruler (sultan) with western party. The Agreement between local ruler and Western Party was a process to gain control over territory, but the agreement between great powers was the determinant. In the case of Agreement of 1878 between Sultan Sulu and Overbeck & Dent was a process to gain control over North Borneo, but the determinant of the boundary was the negotiation between the British and the Dutch. The proper power was in the hand of British because he was the hegemonic power at that time.

³. Tregonning, K.G. (1962), 'The Claim for North Borneo by The Philippines,' pp. 288-289.

⁴. The recognition of any agreement by the American hegemonic power and support from Great Britain was important in international political development after the end of the Second World War.

⁵. Meadows, Martin, (1962), 'The Philippines Claim to North Borneo,' *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. LXXVII, No. 3,

had influenced the Sabah claim and conflict with Malaysia. The leadership factor played significant role in Sabah claim in early 1960s.

The conflict over North Borneo was influenced by many related factors. The leadership of President Macapagal and political domestic factor in the Philippines was related to the crisis. President Sukarno's attitude over the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 and Indonesian domestic politics influenced the Macapagal foreign policy towards Malaysia. The chronology of event in the political relations between Malaysia and Philippines from 1961-1965 can be seen in the table below:

The Chronology of Events of Malaysia-Philippines (and Indonesia) Relations 1961-1965.

Date	Event
January 1959	Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman visits President Carlos P. Garcia. Both discussed the co-operation between two countries and the formation of ASA.
May 1961	Tunku Abdul Rahman made first public proposal for the formation of Federation of Malaysia including Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo (Sabah).
31 July 1961	Bangkok Declaration, Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand formed ASA.
November 1961	Diosdado Macapagal won the Philippines presidential election.
30 December 1961	Macapagal was inaugurated as the Philippines president.
Mid-1962	The Philippines House of Representative had adopted a resolution calling for the recovery of North Borneo; the legal affairs division of the Department of Foreign Affairs had urged that a formal claim be filed; and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs had begun hearings on the matter.
20 Jan 1963	Subandrio (Foreign Minister of Indonesia) announces a policy of confrontation against Malaysia.
28 Jan 1963	The Philippines-Great Britain talk opens in London. The Philippines calls for restoration of Sabah to the Philippines in the interests of the security in the region.
7-11 June 1963	Tripartite Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila in which accord is reached that Philippines and Indonesia will relinquish their opposition to Malaysia on the understanding that there would be a United Nations assessment of the Wishes of the Borneo people on Malaysia and positive steps will be taken towards settling the Sabah claim.
30 July-5 August 1963	The Manila Summit Conference convened. The Manila Declaration is signed in which MAPHILINDO is proposed a grouping of three nations bound together by 'historical ties of race and culture, co-operating in the pursuit of common interests in the economic, social and cultural field.
12 August 1963	The United Nations names nine-members mission to ascertain the wishes of the people of Sabah and Sarawak.
29 August 1963	Malaya announces that Malaysia will be formed on 16 September instead of 31 August as originally scheduled since the United Nations will not be completed until 14 September.
14 September 1963	The United Nations assessment finds that a large majority of the people of Sabah and Sarawak favoured to join Malaysia.
15 Sept 1963	Indonesian cabinet decided that Federation of Malaysia is illegal and cannot be recognised.
16 Sept 1963	The Philippines informed Malaya that it will defer recognition of Malaysia.
17 Sept 1963	The Federation of Malaysia was formed.
8-15 July 1964	Malaysia ceased diplomatic relations with Indonesia and the Philippines.
17 August 1964	Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London expressed sympathy and support for Federation of Malaysia.
26-29 Nov 1964	Indonesian unit of forty armed raiders landing on West Coast of Johore.
30 Dec 1964	Abdul Razak (Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Defence) won diplomatics recognition for Malaysia from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.
	United Nations general Assembly elected Malaysia to serve on Security

7 Jan 1965	Council. President Sukarno announced Indonesia's withdrawal from the United Nations.
15 April 1965	Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia (Tun Abdul Razak) informed that 95 % of the East and North Africa countries (Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Malagasy and Uganda) support Malaysia.
31 May-1 June 1965	Bangkok Peace Talk between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines leading to the Philippines recognition of Federation of Malaysia and rapprochement between Malaysia and Indonesia.
3 June 1965	Malaysia and the Philippines resume full diplomatic relations.

Source: Saravanamuttu, Johan, (1983), *The Dilemma of Independence: Two Decades of Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1957-1977*, Penang; Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, pp. 64-70; Meadows, Martin, (1962), 'The Philippine Claim to North Borneo,' *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. LXXVII, vol. 3, Sept 1962, pp.322-323; and Tilman, Robert, O., (1969), *Malaysian Foreign Policy*, McLean, Virginia: Research Analysis Corp., pp. 19-24.

Malaysia-the Philippines Political Relations: Why different with Malaysia-Indonesia Relations?

The different political relations between Malaysia - the Philippines and Malaysia-Indonesia during the period 1961-1965¹ could be analysed by referring to the domestic structure in Indonesia and the Philippines and the relations with hegemonic powers. The Philippines was pro-American hegemony, but Indonesia was an anti-American hegemony.

Three main themes will be discussed in turn; firstly, domestic politics in the Philippines and Indonesia. Secondly, we will look at the Indonesia and the Philippines relations with hegemonic powers. Thirdly, the position of Malaysia in bipolarity world will be discussed.

Domestic Politics in the Philippines and Indonesia:

The structure and political system in Indonesia and the Philippines in early 1960s were different. The Philippines was a democratic and followed the Western philosophy. She was anti-communist and pro-hegemonic state (pro-America). It was different in the case of Indonesia where she was anti-American hegemonic state under Sukarno regime. It was influenced by the communist-socialist ideology. Under Sukarno 'Guided Democracy' the position of Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was very strong. Communist leader (such as Aidit, Lukman and Nyoto) and 'Sukarnoist' (such as Subandrio) played important role in Indonesian politics and her foreign policy. The difference political structure and ideology of the Philippines and Indonesia had influenced and shaped their political relations with Malaysia.

Indonesia and the Philippines Relations with Hegemonic Powers:

The relations of the Philippines and Indonesia with hegemonic powers influenced the political relations with Malaysia over Sabah Issue and the formation of Malaysian Federation in 1963. Indonesia had close relations with China and Soviet Union.² The Philippines was closer to America and an anti-communist state. The Philippines good relations with American had influenced her political relations with Malaysia. The main objective of the formation of Malaysia in 1963 was to contain the communist movement in Southeast Asia. The Philippines as a SEATO member had influenced their policy towards Malaysian Federation. The situation was different with Indonesia where the PKI³ was very influential in Indonesian politics in early 1960s. Indonesian foreign policy was strongly supported by the China and also by the Soviet Union.⁴ They had a political plan to expand the communist ideology into Malayan Peninsular and Borneon States. The formation of Malaysia Federation would threaten the communist initial plan in the Southeast Asia. For the Philippines the formation of Malaysia would not threaten the political ideology, yet it would further strengthen her position in facing communism.

¹ . Sukarno launched attack over Malaysia especially southern part of Malayan peninsular, West Coast of peninsular and in the boarder of Sarawak. Malaysia was strongly supported and had military assistance from Great Britain (as agreed under AMDA) and from commonwealth countries (especially from Australia, New Zealand and Canada).

² . Sutter, John, O., (1966), 'Two Faces of 'Konfrontasi': 'Crush Malaysia and the 'Gestapu,' *Asian Survey*, vol. iv, no.10, October 1966, pp. 528-531.

³ PKI=Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party).

⁴ Derkach, Nadia, (1965), 'Soviet Policy towards Indonesia in the West Irian and the Malaysian Disputes,' *Asian Survey*, vol. 5, no. 11, November 1965, pp. 566-571.

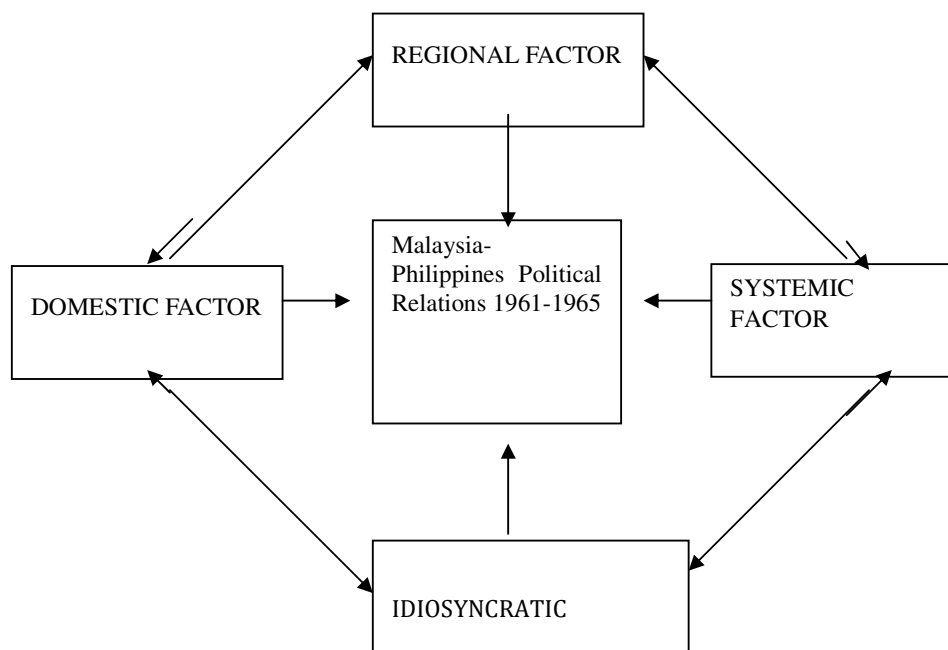
The position of Malaysia in Bipolarity World:

The position of Malaysia as a pro-British (and pro-American hegemony) and anti-communist Tunku Abdul Rahman's government had influenced the relations with Indonesia and the Philippines. The American hegemonic power played significant role in influencing the Philippines foreign policy towards Malaysia. President Kennedy and then Johnson recognition to the Federation of Malaysia was influenced by the position of Malaysia in bipolarity world and the main objective of the Malaysian Federation. The American strong support over the formation of Malaysia was an important factor in influencing the Philippines decision.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The political relations between Malaysia and the Philippines were influenced by the domestic, regional, systemic and leadership factor. They were inter-related with the above factors. The domestic factor and the relationship with the hegemonic factor played significant role in this aspect. The domestic and hegemonic factors were influenced by the regional and leadership factors. The relationship between the four factors also could explain why the relations between Malaysia-Philippines was different with the Malaysia-Indonesian relation during the period. (See the diagram below).

The Relationship between the Domestic factor, Regional, Systemic, Idiosyncratic Factor and the Malaysia-Philippines Political Relations.



The political relations between Malaysia and the Philippines during the period 1961-1965 were influenced by the idiosyncratic, domestic, regional and systemic factors. The domestic political structure and political ideology influence the relations with Malaysia. The regional security factor was also important in her decision on conflict over Malaysian issue. The regional security and communist factor played significant role in the Philippines foreign decision. The United States and Great Britain was the vital members in SEATO. The formation of Malaysia was strongly supported by the American hegemonic power and Great Britain for communist containment in Southeast Asian region. The systemic factor, i.e. the ideological political struggle between communist and capitalist influence the Philippines decision. Both state (Malaysia and the Philippines) were pro-American hegemonic. They have to co-operate in containing communist influence, i.e the American hegemonic greater strategy in the Asia Pacific region. The Philippines security treaty and diplomatic relations with American hegemonic power played significant role and shaping her foreign policy and political relations with Malaysia.

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