

The Roles of the Indonesian Diaspora Community In Malaysia For Peace

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Abstract

This article will explain the potential of the Indonesian diaspora as an agent of peace in Malaysia. The Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia is the largest. Sometimes, a huge diaspora community in a country can cause problems of prejudice and lead to security problems. Its size can also have the opportunity to be an integrative factor in giving birth to peace. Data on the dynamics of the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia were obtained from primary sources, as well as focus group discussions, interviews, and official data from the government. This article found that a large number of Indonesian diaspora and mutualistic relationships at the government and government levels, as well as at the community and its level over a long time, contributed to the high role of the Indonesian diaspora in building social cohesion and peace in Malaysia.

Keywords: Indonesian diaspora, Peace Building, Managing Diaspora

Abstrak

Artikel ini menjelaskan tentang potensi diaspora Indonesia sebagai agen perdamaian di Malaysia. Diaspora Indonesia di Malaysia, baik bagi Indonesia dan Malaysia, merupakan diaspora terbesar di Malaysia. Terkadang, banyaknya diaspora di suatu negara dapat menimbulkan problem prasangka, kekhawatiran yang berujung kepada timbulnya problem keamanan. Namun pada sisi yang lain, besarnya diaspora juga dapat berpeluang menjadi faktor integratif yang dapat melahirkan perdamaian. Data dinamika diaspora Indonesia di Malaysia diperoleh dari sumber primer, maupun focus group discussion, wawancara, maupun data resmi dari pemerintah. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa besarnya jumlah diaspora Indonesia dan terjalannya hubungan yang mutualistik di tingkat pemerintah dan pemerintah, maupun di tingkat masyarakat dan masyarakat dalam kurun waktu yang panjang, dan berkontribusi kepada tingginya peran diaspora Indonesia dalam membangun kohesivitas sosial dan perdamaian di Malaysia.

Keywords: Diaspora Indonesia, Peace Building, Pengelolaan Diaspora

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia and Malaysia, as cognate countries, grew as recognition of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural similarities over a long time (Sperfeldt, 2021). This diction suggests an attempt not to distance the cultural ties between Indonesia and Malaysia, which have been politically separated for post-colonial reasons, and growing ever since (Liow, 2018). Their relationship also has been going on since ancient times (Gomes, 2004). During the Majapahit and Srivijaya empires, Indonesia and Malaysia belonged to one kingdom. Since the Islamic Sultanates period, these two countries became separated jurisdictionally. It was during this time that large to small-scale conflicts often occurred. The Aceh Sultanate often clashed with the Sultanates of Johor and Malacca over political and trade issues (Oishi, 2016). The competition that ended in conflict was also repeated in the post-independence of the two cognate countries, where the family dynamics continued to play an important role in maintaining the relationship between the two sides, both at the government level and the community level.

Indonesia is becoming the fourth-largest population in the world. However, Indonesia's population growth is not always linear with the growth of job availability and good welfare. Meanwhile, Malaysia can better manage its welfare with a relatively moderate population of 30 million. This condition then became an attraction for the migration of Indonesians to Malaysia to get better job opportunities and livelihoods (Te et al., 2018). However, it is undeniable that the job opportunities provided by Malaysia and then filled by many Indonesian migrant workers are included in the 3D (dirty, dangerous, degraded) job structure, including domestic assistants,

manufacturing, and plantation (Hamzah et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia has many interesting clusters and an economic, cultural, and even political bargaining position. First, the Indonesian diaspora who have naturalized become Malaysian citizens; to some extent, the Indonesian diaspora has a high social position, either as successful businessmen or politicians. Second, the Indonesian diaspora works in the formal and strategic sectors such as the higher education sector and several strategic multinational companies in the mining, plantation and telecommunications sectors (Tulus Warsito, Surwandono, 2020).

The relationship of the Indonesian diaspora with the Malaysian government and society tends to experience ups and downs in many ways related to political factors, such as the dynamics of the border issue, which are still at the level of dispute at several points. When there is a conflict, the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia also experiences a significant dynamic, which then causes some diasporas to keep silent and avoid public discussions (Budiawan, 2017).

Meanwhile, economic factors are related to several unlawful acts from users of Indonesian diaspora services, from the neglect of workers' civil rights and not being given a salary to acts of torture. The dynamic emerged mainly in the Indonesian media, which then urged through social media by depicting the government and the population of Malaysia as a cognate side who did not give appreciation to the family. Many cases of social discrimination against several Indonesian diasporas in Malaysia were followed by the Indonesian government's policy of implementing a political moratorium (Tulus Warsito, Surwandono,

2020).

Meanwhile, social factors are related to the dynamics of cultural expression carried out by the Indonesian diaspora, who are already Malaysian citizens and perceive that several cultures have become an inseparable part of Malaysian culture. Moreover, the Malaysian government registered culture and arts such as *pendet* dance, *reog*, *keris*, and *batik* cloth as Malaysia's authentic heritage (Sunarti & Fadeli, 2021). This condition gives rise to quite a serious dilemma. Many Indonesian diasporas who have been settled for a long time and have Malaysian citizenship believe that the culture and art have been inherent in their lives, and they build awareness of ownership of the culture and art. It is legal if the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia claims the culture and art. It is different from the response of the people and the Indonesian government to this claim that the culture and art belong to authentic Indonesia. The Indonesian diaspora living in Malaysia does not have the right to unilaterally claim such ownership, even to register the culture with UNESCO (Maksum & Bustami, 2014).

In Johan Galtung's study, conflict dynamics are strongly influenced by three elements: attitude, behavior and contradiction, which became known as Galtung's ABC theory (Kaufman, 2015). The exploration of these 3 variables can generate an escalation of conflict when the ABC variables are mobilized for conflict expression in the form of making tendencies of conflicting attitudes and behaviors so that the space for contradiction becomes even greater. Similarly, the 3 variables can be mobilized for peace by increasing the element of closeness and interdependence to produce moderate behavioral choices that will eventually make the space of contradictions smaller and the space of

interconnectedness larger. This article would like to outline the potential of the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia as an integrative role either in the Indonesian diaspora's relationship with Malaysian society, or with the Malaysian government, and or even a larger integrative role in building a family between the community and the Indonesian government towards Malaysia as a whole.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHOD

Diaspora studies in peace and conflict studies show unique dynamics. First, diaspora is an important variable for social conflicts due to social access, competition, economy, and cultural miscommunication. Even in the study of terrorism, the diaspora is one of the important variables for the spread of acts of terrorism related to the role of the diaspora, which assists in effective ways of carrying out terror to the construction of international terrorist networks. Hall & Swan (2007) showed a strong relationship between the diaspora, either in presenting conflict or creating peace (Hall & Swain, 2007).

A review from Toivanen & Baser (2020) further confirmed that the diaspora has the potential to be an agent of conflict and an agent of peace (Martin, 2019). Toivanen & Baser (2020) also agreed that the diaspora works as both agents (Toivanen & Baser, 2020). The state in managing diaspora issues will give adequate meaning in managing the diaspora to be part of the peace actors (Inouye et al., 2020).

Second, the diaspora is an important variable for spreading social, economic and welfare values. This study emphasizes that the diaspora becomes an element of society to adapt to the new environment and becomes a competitive social actor to play a

role as a trendsetter agent for change in society. The perceived diaspora has a value of excellence that can communicate effectively (Elo et al., 2020), thus reducing the space of prejudice between cultures and formulating a new culture that is useful both for the country of origin of the diaspora and the country in which the diaspora lives (Горбунова & Максимов, 2019).

Dijkzeul & Fauser's studies (2020) showed that diaspora organizations are an important variable for the diaspora in bargaining with the sides in fighting for the interests of the diaspora or communicating with some countries with a relationship of origin to contribute to the welfare of their country. Many countries are interested in integrating with diaspora networks to bring them closer to their countries for the benefit of development (Dijkzeul & Fauser, 2020). Seraphin (et al.) showed that the diaspora greatly contributed to development through tourism activities. It is in the diaspora's interest to visit a country with which it is related by blood. This potential continues to grow and become an important part of tourism targets (Seraphin et al., 2020). For the diaspora to make an important contribution to development, the state must be further involved in the institutional structuring of the diaspora (Kranz, 2020).

This article will elaborate on the diaspora as the agents of peace and welfare by emphasizing the need for the state's role in both the origin country and the country where the diaspora lives, works or even settles. Structuring establishes the cohesiveness of the diaspora with the society and government where it lives and the cohesiveness with the society or country in which it belongs. State involvement will make the diaspora feel political, social and cultural attention, thus allowing social and political choices and actions to be more

measurable.

This article elaborates a qualitative approach by trying to observe the behavior of the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia to obtain the management of the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia, both through secondary data documents and primary data by conducting spaciousness studies in several regions such as Sabah, Selangor and Pulau Pinang, both meeting with diaspora groups who are members of the Indonesian Student Association (PPI), as well as the Indonesian Community Association (PERMAI). Also, this article looks at the behaviors of the diaspora in facing the dynamics of social, economic and political conflicts and the preference for establishing cohesiveness with the people and government of Malaysia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history of the conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia is long. If we look at history, the Aceh Sultanate has a ceaseless conflict with the Johor Sultanate and the Malacca Sultanate. Even in the modern era, the chaos of past conflicts is still felt, even accumulating more massively. Confrontations also occurred in 1962-1966 due to Indonesian protests over the Malaysian state that annexed Sabah and Sarawak. The confrontation, full of international intrigue, ended in Malaysia's victory. Indonesia feels so underestimated internationally that even today, the hatred still exists (Oishi, 2016).

The behavior of Malaysians on social media lines by calling Indonesian citizens "Indon" is quite irritating (Selo et al., 2015). Similarly, Indonesians responded to the haters by calling them "Malingsia," which broke out from 2000 to 2010. Social media lines, popular in the 2000-2010 decade, were created by groups with hateful narratives,

such as I hate Indonesia or Malaysia. In the Facebook group, an expletive from the people of the two countries expressed hatred, unwillingness, and even acute hostility (Rozi, 2010).

The Sipadan-Ligitan dispute had made the Indonesian and Malaysian war fleets bully each other. Malaysian businessmen made these islands as a resort which is traditionally located in Indonesia. Malaysia won, according to the International Court of Justice. Then, the two countries installed war fleets on both sides during the Ambalat block dispute. This cluster of small islands in the north of Borneo was a bona fide oil field. In addition, Indonesia confronted Malaysia by pranking the military there ("Dispute Resolution through Third Party Mediation: Malaysia and Indonesia," 2007).

The escalation of the conflict in such a way strengthened significantly. At the socioeconomic level, the Indonesian government officially implemented a moratorium on sending Indonesian workers to Malaysia until an undetermined time limit. This tough Indonesian policy is in response to the Malaysian government's policy that Indonesia perceives as not providing good protection for the civil rights of migrant workers. However, Malaysia still has a wide gap in obtaining supplies of Indonesian migrant labor needs through informal channels, even through illegal channels (Elias, 2013).

This condition for the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia has become challenging. Defacto, the Indonesian diaspora has settled and lived in Malaysia, either on the grounds of studying, working, or until they have been married and naturalized citizenship. Some diasporas who have had intensive social relations with Malaysian society and government and at the middle-class level tend to respond to the

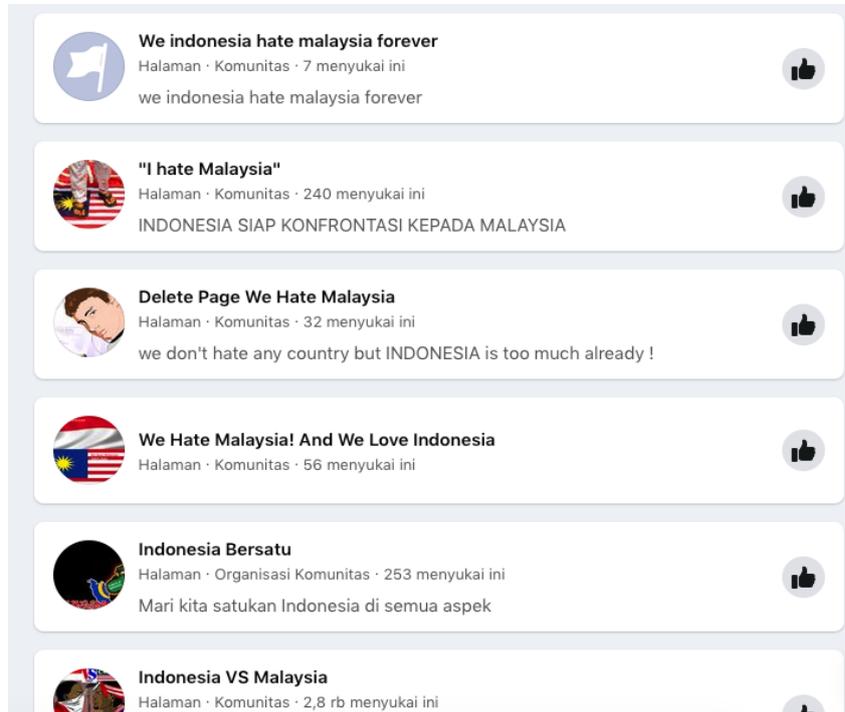
dynamics of conflict with a more moderate approach and are not too expressive so that they do not dissolve in the narrative of hostility that arises in the social media line. Several Indonesian diaspora informants encountered based on educated such as students and teaching staff at some universities in Malaysia in responding to the dynamics of conflict that often arise in several certain events with measurable responses and maintaining social relations with their partners in Malaysia, and not discussing conflictual relationships in social media lines expressively (Interviews with informants on Pulau Pinang).

Meanwhile, there are differences among some Indonesian diasporas who have limited social relations with the Malaysian community or government where they tend to live with fellow Indonesians. There is a tendency for this diaspora to be illegal migrants, so the choice of social distancing is part of its social security. The choice to live together with fellow Indonesians is assumed to be part of seeking social protection during a critical situation.

Two behavioral choices are reflected in this second group. First is the choice to increasingly maintain social distancing, be careful in interacting with the people and the Malaysian government, choose a political option and not think too much about the heat of the social media line or the news in the mass media. In the study of the political culture by Almond & Verba, they revealed that this choice represented the articulation of the political culture of the subject, the choice to prioritize private and individual relations over the choice of communal relations and bonds of solidarity. (Interview with Informants in Pulau Pinang and Sabah).

Second is the choice to engage in expressive behavior in conflict narratives on social media, for example, in providing

comments and hate posts on Facebook under a group named “Indonesia Hate Malaysia.”



Picture 1
Facebook group with Narration Indonesia Hate Malaysia

After tracking some active accounts, many members came from Indonesian accounts living in Indonesia instead of Indonesian accounts living in Malaysia. Even to some extent, many Indonesian diasporas in Malaysia joined the Facebook

account “Indonesia Love Malaysia,” where discussions and posts in this account tended to contain information about jobs available in Malaysia, as well as for advertising products selling certain products by Indonesians.



Picture 2
Facebook Group with Narasi Indonesia Love Malaysia

The dynamics of Twitter or Tiktok have not been widely explored. Tiktok does not allow shared accounts as groups like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram or Line, where the users can have private chats or conversations with other followers or members.

Managing the Indonesian Diaspora for Peace

The arrangement of the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia is an undoubted and urgent need to achieve Indonesia's national interests. The Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia, it is undeniable that Malaysia is becoming a popular country for the Indonesian population and is an attraction for Indonesians, both for social purposes such as education, the interest of working with a higher income or for entertainment and tourist reasons due to the relatively affordable costs and relative use of the same language. The Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia as the largest diaspora requires the Indonesian government to manage the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia as a priority.

As referred to in Galtung's ABC theory, the main variable in building peace lies in 3 major variables. Each variable represents an attitude. The attitude to be willing to make accommodations to choices in society and state with the values prevailing in Malaysia. The willingness of the Indonesian diaspora to get along, blend in with the people in Malaysia, and comply with the formal regulations in Malaysia needs to be arranged from the beginning by Indonesia.

Although this initial step did not get an adequate response from several Indonesian diasporas, this program has been released since 2017. However, the Indonesian diaspora is still few who are willing to register and get an Identification Card for the

Indonesian diaspora. Some diasporas argued that the data collection process is still administrative and not yet serious. What advantages do diasporas get if they register a diaspora card? Whether to get adequate facilities or only simple information does not significantly impact the diaspora (Abc.net.au, 2020).

Second, the B variable represents behavior. Culturally, Indonesia and Malaysia are countries that have high identity similarities, such as similarities in language, religion and customs. Due to the similarity of customs in the last 20 years, the Indonesian diaspora, which has deeply blended into Malaysian society and has even become Malaysian citizens, shows that intermingling has been running intensively. Many citizens of Indonesian descent in Malaysia have grown into traders, entrepreneurs, and farmers of large plantations, become professional managers (Republika.co.id, 2013) and even become successful politicians in Malaysia. Pride in Indonesian identity in Malaysia then gave birth to the organization PERMAI (Indonesian People's Union) in Malaysia.

During this time, PERMAI became an autonomous organization and was not affiliated with certain political, economic or idiosyncratic ties. Autonomists also keep their distance from anyone, including the Indonesian government. Even the chairman of PERMAI is an Indonesian diaspora who is already a Malaysian citizen. Along the way, PERMAI also has a dynamic of internal conflicts, so the tendency of PERMAI management who are affiliated with certain interests makes PERMAI's activities a vacuum.

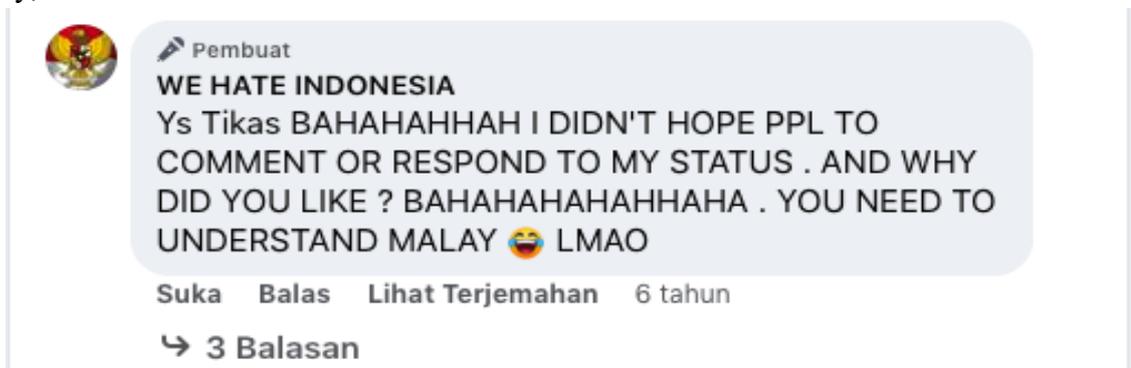
The Indonesian government then made many important efforts to get PERMAI back into activity and out of political and economic intrigue. The choice of the

Indonesian government is related to the role of PERMAI as a strategic partner to become an agent of peace to the people and government of Malaysia. PERMAI can be used as a catalyst for peace. This condition to some extent makes PERMAI's great potential as an agent of diaspora peace cannot be maximized in its role. So far, PERMAI has played more of a role in socializing social and educational values (Dewi, 2018). This condition requires the Indonesian government to more intensively build communication and exchange ideas and views to build the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia as an acceptable diaspora in Malaysian society and the government

Third, the C variable represents a contradiction. Indonesia and Malaysia are cognate countries, so the space for contradictions should be relatively minor. In reality, the contradiction between Indonesia

and Malaysia has developed in the space of unfair competition, sometimes even to the extent of harsh hostility. Once in the history of Indonesia, Malaysia was at its lowest point related to the Indonesian government's political choice to do politics "Ganyang Malaysia" (Nesadurai, 2013). The narrative of past conflicts is still often re-actualized in certain situations, such as border issues, discriminatory treatment of Indonesian citizens, illegal logging, to cultural issues such as songs, *batik*, *wayang*, *keris* and *reog*, so that the diction of "Ganyang Malaysia" is also still often used in social media (Budiawan, 2017).

Indonesia-Malaysia's contradictions on social issues were widely echoed on social media lines, causing a backlash from Malaysians, who also echoed Malaysia's hate Indonesia narrative.



Picture 3
Social Media Group With Indonesian Hate Narrative

In the social media revolution, hatred can spread quickly and easily. Small news can turn into large ones, leading to a meaningful escalation of conflict. In tracking the Facebook group, the narrative about hatred towards Indonesia perpetrated by the Malaysian public is minor. Only one group was found that expressed hatred towards Indonesia, with a small number of friends and members, and accompanied by many posts that were also not intense.

However, Indonesian social media groups contain relatively more hatred for Malaysia. If not managed properly by the Indonesian government through big data management, more Malaysians will attack Indonesian diasporas in Malaysia on the "I Hate Indonesia" Facebook page group.

CONCLUSION

The Indonesian diaspora has the potential to be an agent of peace in Malaysia

due to the large population and cultural, social, and economic factors that allow the establishment of a space of high cohesiveness and mutual trust. The ripples of conflict between the Indonesian diaspora and the Malaysians are more often triggered by structural policies related to the issue of border formalization and culture, which then mobilizes public spaces that express the diametral space of difference between the two in sarcastic cultural labeling expressions. This relationship pattern has been the same and has been neutralized by the Indonesian diaspora to a balance point that allows for the growth of the value of harmony between the two. The challenges of the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia are increasingly related to the increasing number of Indonesian diasporas based on illegal migrants and have not been accompanied by responsive and contributive big data management governance for the diaspora. The availability of good data management will allow the policies taken to the diaspora to be appropriate and productive policies. The next challenge is that Indonesia and Malaysia have not ratified the convention on the protection of refugees and migrant workers, which causes their migration policies to tend to be inward-looking, causing policy irregularities. This condition will eventually cause social and state friction and disrupt the family's identity that has been often voiced in public spaces.

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