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THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY MALINDO IN STRENGTHENING RELATIONS INDONESIA-MALAYSIA TO ESTABLISH INTEGRATED ASEAN COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

International civil society is now becoming a global actor. Malindo, is one of civil society. It is has concern about regional issues. Malindo actually is a Socio-Economic Cooperation Agreement, it is an international agreement made by the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia in the form of cooperation in social and economic fields. It has a role to build relations between Indonesia and Malaysia. This civil society of Malindo is also very potential in the conflict resolution, for example to solve a cultural tension. The civil society within the framework, they are trying to put through synergy with the government. They make a symbiosis between society and state (Widjajanto, 2007). Transnationalism movement of civil society is possible to establish integrated ASEAN region. However, to face ASEAN Economic Community is not by a competition but collaboration (Jerry, 2013).

*Keywords: issue, role civil society, Malindo, integration.*

Theme: religion, civil society, states.

# INTRODUCTION

Indonesian and Malaysian people have often claimed that their countries are anchored by the same racial and culture. Indonesia and Malaysia share a similar language, culture and religion too. Historically both countries have on a common cultural heritage *(serumpun).* Yet it relations between two countries have been, and remain today holds the potential conflict. It sometimes overflows into the surface. In 2007, for example, there were heated anti Malaysia demonstrations in Indonesia after issue Malaysia claimed cultural heritage right of REYOG dance. Also in 2009, many Indonesian participated in demonstration for ‘Batik’. Conflicts and tensions are often caused by cultural issue, it is certainly very paradox with the historical side of the two countries that common in cultural heritage (*serumpun).*

Issue between Indonesia – Malaysia are in fact more in the realm of culture. Cultural issues often triggers tension in both states and it seemed never stop. As happened in June 2015 recently, when one of online newspaper in Indonesia, Detik News, launch about Indonesia citizen who choose *Cindai, a* song, to sing in a global festival in Australia. It gets a reaction from netizens.

On that news, Florean Ayeisha Augustia, is the representatives of Indonesia in International Festival of Language and Culture (IFLC), held by Sirius College Melbourne Australia. On that occasion, she perform *Cindai* that popularized by Siti Nurhaliza, a Malaysian singer.[[1]](#footnote-1) Detik News launchs it online on June 7, 2015. In the comment column, netizens give their comments that most of the responses are very reactionary, not reraly they use of rude and provocative words. Of course, it can lead tension between both group of netizens, Malaysian and Indonesian.

According to the author observation, the media, Detik News not use provocative language but then it met with hateful comments. It shows that the cultural issue could trigger tension between both two groups. If compared with other issues, both groups particularly netizens tended to be lured when media sharing the news about culture then sports, business and so on.

It is not the first time, both groups in the tensions caused by the issue of culture. In 2007 both of them experienced tensions caused by claim issue of REYOG dance. Until today, the current thinking in most people of Indonesian society is that “REYOG Ponorogo almost stolen by Malaysia”. Unfortunately this opinion continues and to be constructed by some media, so that people take it as the truth.

The debate between the two groups continues to occur, while the third group as the people of other countries question about what happen? Can someone tell me what going on in Indonesia? Why is there sudden hatred between Indonesian and Malaysians? And can we focus on issue that benefit all of us?

Of course, tensions between the two countries certainly have an impact on the vulnerability of relations between the two countries. Furthermore, the ideals of ASEAN as an integrated economic community would be difficult to achieve.

This paper is not to criticize the media that has a part in the conflict between the two countries. Of course, the conflict is not the only conflict on the issue of culture, but also in terms of the conflict in general. What an author described above is just an example. However, this paper gives an overview of the role of civil society as part of the solution. Furthermore, this paper will explain how the role of civil society (in this case is Malindo civil society) in strengthening relation between the two countries and realize the integration of ASEAN as one economic community.

# concept and definition

The concept of civil society was born and developed from historical communities in the societies. Cicero was the first use the word *civil society* in his political philosophy. Civil society concept was first conceived only in the state. Historically, the term civil society is rooted in the minds Montesque, JJ. Rousseau, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. These three men then began to organize a civil society is capable pull down the authoritarian power-absolute monarchy and church orthodoxy (Larry Diamond, 2003: 278)

Civil society is society that considered as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity.[[2]](#footnote-2) Civil society is a term that is increasingly popular with academics, diplomats, aid- workers, international agencies, teachers and a host of other professions. It is an idea that affects everyone in every nation.[[3]](#footnote-3) The World Bank has adopted a definition of civil society developed by a number of leading research center. The term civil society is to refer of non-governmental and non-profit organizations that have presence in public life. They expressing the interest and values of their members of others, based on ethical, cultural, political scientific, religious or philantropic considerations.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In international relations, in practice civil society is growing very rapidly. The number of NGOs has increased since the end of the second world wars.[[5]](#footnote-5) According to the Yearbook of International Organizations, the number of International non-government organizations (NGOs) was reported to have increased from 6000 in 1990 to more than 50.000 in 2006, and now to over 65.000.[[6]](#footnote-6) Since the foundation of the United Nations until today, the number of accredited NGOs has increased to over 3000 organizations.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Civil society also has a significant role. These non-state actors are demonstrating their values also be facilitators in the achievement of a goal from their concern. Members of civil society working positively to reduce societal harms and increase social benefit. The aim to improve social cohesion, increase levels of social development; reduce the burdens of poverty, ill health, and inequality; promote the interests of marginalized groups; extend the protection of social, civil and political right; protect the environment; and provide services such as health, education and other forms of community development.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In civil society, citizens organize activities and services for themselves and other people out of their own hopes and promises, Fundamentally, civil society has no requirements from the outside, as is the case with the private sector. The actors of civil society decide for themselves what kind of activities they engage in. People of civil are at the same time actors and objects of the actions. The members use decisions-making power in defining the domain of sivil society.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Civil society typically includes; NGOs, non-profit organizations, and civil society organizations (CSOs) that have an organized structure or activity, and are typically registered entities and groups. Social movement of collective action which can be online or physical. Faith communities, labor union, social entrepreneurs employing innovative approaches for social and environmental outcomes, grassroots association and activities at local level also include in civil society.[[10]](#footnote-10)

What question about civil society are their existence and their position that not legitimate by the nation-state. What is more controversial is civil society try to influence politics, economics, and social side on the actions of states. Some people said that they also lack of accountability and so on. The author argues that the weakness is its excellence. Civil societies move flexible. The status as non-government organizations make it move more freely in influencing and disseminating the values ​​in any line. It affects the target object, influencing state policies and civil society itself. They make a symbiosis between society and state (Widjajanto, 2007).

Civil society is succesfull in changing the state’s behavior. Civil society actors could be quite influential.[[11]](#footnote-11) Civil society has proven to be very succesfull not only on the issues like human rights and environmental degradation, but also in issue relevant to security. Furthermore, civil society have been influental in non-democratic and represive countries, a fact demonstrating that civil activism is not particular to Western political regulations.[[12]](#footnote-12) The point is civil society can thrive in any conditions.

Nowdays, civil society also has more significant influence. According to UN, civil societies have contributed to global development in numerous fields such as environmental protection, policy development and social change.[[13]](#footnote-13) According to World Bank, Civil Societies Organizations (CSOs) have also become significant players in global development assistance.[[14]](#footnote-14) The impact of civil society is evidence by international treaties and conversations were initiated or reversed though civil society.

# civil society malindo

Since 1983 Indonesia has signed cooperation in the field of social and economic development between two countries Indonesia-Malaysia. The form is called socio-economic Malindo. Their collaborative activities are annually evaluated by both countries with alternating meeting locations, In every meeting, ti is discussed various problems related to the border development.[[15]](#footnote-15)

To give a clearer direction of the Socio-Economic Cooperation in Malindo, it was agreed vision of Malindo Socio-Economic cooperations as; “Achieving harmony and sustainable socio economic development for the mutual benefit, especially in the border between both countries through socio-economic cooperation Malindo”. This Socio-Economic Cooperation Malindo vision can be realized through it mission as follow:[[16]](#footnote-16)

1. Improving the socio-economic development cooperations in the border the two countries to achieve prosperity and harmony among society at the border.
2. Increasing the development of border as a “front page/row before” state with respect to take about souveregnty of each country as well as considering aspects of prosperity or well being security/ safety and environment.
3. Realize the socio-economic and cultural opportunities that are conducive to the welfare of their respective communities in the border.
4. Enhance economic cooperation in a fair and mutually beneficial to both and to give priority to the maintenance environment/ nature.
5. Improving social and cultural cooperation in the effort to improve the quality of human resources as well as building on the two neighbouring countries
6. In order to realize the vision and mission of the Socio-Economic Cooperation Malindo, there are several strategies that can be done include:
7. Debureaucratizational licensing systems and procedures in the management
8. Provision of legal capacity, protection and law enforcement
9. Harmonization of legislation related to socio-economic activities and social culture in both neighbouring countries.
10. Excavation economic potential and investment on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation and fair.
11. Improving the quality and empowerment of human resources through cooperation through cooperation in education, health, science and technology and culture.
12. Improving the quality of the environment through cooperation programs to repair the damage and control the negative impacts of development.

Since the first meeting in 1986 until 1991 or five year socio-economic cooperation Malindo trip, cooperation forum is still seeking any form or format in the organization of cooperation between countries. Implementation activities are still focused on research related to border crossers, such as assesment of vehicle traffic procedures, immigration, customs and quarantine.[[17]](#footnote-17)

During the past 22 year running, social and economic trans-border cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia have experienced significant program between the two sides. In this context, at least two parameters of success that can be mentioned here. In addition, the two sides agreed to enhance cooperation to eradicate smuggling on land and sea through coordinated patrols, cooperation, cultural cooperation (historical and cultural values, protection antique/ cultural heritage, museums) as well as regional cooperation ecotourism.[[18]](#footnote-18) From the construction above, then there is a possibility of the occurrence of further developments.

# The role of civil society malindo

In 2015, Malindo as civil society has the potential to develop a role in the era of the ASEAN Economic Community. The author believes that civil society Malindo is effective to prevent and resolve tensions between the two countries, one of which is caused by cultural issues. A cooperation agreement involving the two countries has now expanded because of its potential in building relations between the two countries better. It need to develop Malindo, so that this group can face the problems that develop over time.

One way is to develop and empower people in this group as civil society by give them the following roles:

1. **Civil Society Malindo as opposition to the bad media.**

Civil society Malindo need to do this, opposition of bad media, because criticize bad media is not enough. Unfortunately, media often put themselves to become provocative parties because of the ‘demands of the market’. To be opposition of bad media or provocative media may be utilizing social media, such as facebook, twitter, or blog. Another thing that might to do is by create Malindo newsletters or newspaper. Action against bad media is should do. It because our society need a better reference than just a provocative media. At least, public will have a comparison and not just see a problem (relating to the two countries) only from one side.

 Indonesia-Malaysia have experienced in tensions because claim issue of some heritage culture. The government itself even also provoked when the issue is not yet clear. In 2012 the Education and Culture Deputy Minister gave a statement in media *The Jakarta Post* that Malaysian government has claimed seven of Indonesia’s cultural products as the former's national heritage in the past five years.[[19]](#footnote-19) In 2007, Education and Culture Deputy Minister , Windu Nuryati also said that Malaysia claimed the masked dance *Reog*, which from Ponorogo, East Java.[[20]](#footnote-20) In a following years, she added that Malaysia also claimed Rasa *Sayange* (folksong from Ambon Maluku)*, Angklung (*Sundanesetraditionalmusical instrument made form bamboo), *Adan Krayan* (rice from Nunukan, East Kalimantan), *Tortor* dance and the *Gordang Sambilan* percussion instrument from North Sumatra.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The statement comes after the she saw a promotional spot for a TV documentary series on Malaysia, which was aired on the Discovery Channel cable network, was shown featuring *Reyog, Pendet* Balinese dance, and so on. In fact, that Discovery Channel’s documentary is not associated with the government of Malaysia.[[22]](#footnote-22) The production company and Discovery Networks Asia-Pacific even apologies and explained it. But it was rejected by the goverenment of Indonesian.

Clarification also came from government of Malaysia that they never claimed Reyog as their culture. It launch by Metro TV, and we can waatch it on you tube about that news.[[23]](#footnote-23) What I regret is media cut the speech from Malaysian ambassador for Indonesia, Dato Zaina, when he tried to explain the problem that occurred. Show half or not complete of clarification as news by the media as this, of course can trigger misunderstanding. Here we need others, namely civil society to explain it to the public about what happened. Civil society need to be opposition of bad media.

1. **Civil Society Malindo become ambassadors to their respective countries in a purpose strengthen relations between Indonesia-Malaysia.**

Civil Society Malindo can organize some activities to achieve this mission. Examples, *first* by not only organize international conferences attended by academics but also open to people who also need this forum. It can invite activists and artists (that concern in cultural issue). So that, it will be a dialogue forum between the parties.

*Second,* by held exchange students between Indonesia-Malaysia. The authors suggest it because I believes that it will be very effective to strengthen two countries in the future. By involving youths and students in strengthening ties between the two countries will further bring the people of both countries towards a more solid.
Through youth exchange program, it will gives experience of understanding for students. They also will life in Malaysia, interact with Malaysian people and build strong friendships among them.

I have felt the impact of exchange students organized by Malindo. I got the opportunity to become student coordinator of Universitas Jember to visit Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and Universit Sains Malaysia (USM) in 2013. This experience gave me a clearly answer to my question regarding the cultural issue of the two countries that we face for a long time.

The program gave experience of interacting with Malaysian people. Beside that me and my friends also visited the Indonesian workers in Malaysia and we are welcome to stay for two days in their flat in the area Desa Aman Puri, Kepong, Kuala Lumpur. During the two-day stay with them I got a lot of knowledge about the life of Indonesian migrant workers who have worked more than 11 years in Malaysia. Many of them who live there also decided to continue their generations there.

In that environment, Indonesian workers build a new social/ community system. There are elders, there are monthly meetings, social gathering, praying together, even they organize art performances. Even they also build Reyog community, it also including complete musicians, dancers and costume stylist. They also have a regular schedule for the show. Interestingly they still use the name of this art community Reyog as common in Indonesia, such as Reyog Manggolo, Reyog Sardulo, etc.

It proves that the real problems and tensions that often occur between the two countries are just misunderstanding. Beside the fact that Indonesia and Malaysia is *serumpun*, the spread of the Indonesian population in Malaysia is very high, so making it possible for us to have the same cultural shows.

1. **Civil Society Malindo not only as a driver of bilateral relations, but initiates public to ‘think and act ASEAN’.**

Civil society Malindo need to encouraging people to think regionally as one ASEAN Economic Community. In fact, ASEAN as multilateral organization is ‘thinking multilaterally but acting bilaterally’.[[24]](#footnote-24) It can be seen from the various disputes that occur during this time in ASEAN. Examples such as the issue of Reyog claim already described above. Moreover also other countries have also experienced similar things. Among cases which indicated used bilateral negotiation rather than multilateral are Malaysia-Singapore (Pedra Branca), Malaysia-Indonesia (Sipadan-Ligitan), Malaysia-Filipina (Sulu Sea, Sabah) have been solved by bilateral negotiation and also through established bilateral institution.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The role of civil society in encouraging people to think and act ASEAN is very important and necessary. However, to face ASEAN Economic Community is not by a competition but collaboration (Jerry, 2013). The spirit of collaboration will erode the suspicious that usually trigger tensions and conflicts. Collaboration will strengthen the relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia. Collaboration has become a powerful force to achieve a change. Collaboration will be able to bring together the ASEAN countries in the ASEAN Economy Community. It also the role of civil society to encourage people for collaboration.

# conclusion

Malindo is one of civil society. Malindo actually is a Socio-Economic Cooperation Agreement, it is an international agreement made by the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia in the form of cooperation in social and economic fields. This civil society of Malindo is also very potential in the conflict resolution. Malindo is effective to prevent and resolve tensions between the two countries, one of which is caused by cultural issues. Nowdays, it has some role in a purpose build relations between Indonesia and Malaysia, and preparing ASEAN Economic Community. The roles of this civil society today are: *First*, be an opposition of bad media that trigger tensions in Indonesia-Malaysia. *Second*, initiate some ectivities in a purpose understanding of both countries, such as, exchange program for youth. *Third,* to encouraging people to think regionally as one ASEAN Economic Community and bring people in spirit of collaboration.

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