

## **The Practice of Nation Character Building in Border Communities: A Case Study in Sebatik Island, North Kalimantan Province, Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

The Border Region of the State is the front porch that describes the existence of a country in the presence of another country. High dependence on neighboring countries can affect the loyalty of its citizens so that the Border Region is often associated with the nationalism of its weak citizens. This study aims to examine the practice of nationalism of the Indonesian-Malaysian border community on sebatik island, North Kalimantan province which is directly adjacent to Sabah, Malaysia. Easy accessibility leads to high intensity of social interaction between people in two different countries of nationality. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method using Nationalism theory and Border theory. The results showed that Nation Character Building in sebatik island border communities is realized through the practice of daily life oriented to the interests of the nation and the State in various aspects, namely economic, Political, Educational, and Social. In economic aspects, the practice of nationalism is realized through the role of some local entrepreneurs in Sebatik in presenting Indonesian Shops to compensate for the Hegemony of Foreign Products and the use of Foreign Currencies (Malaysia), Political Aspects are realized by the political participation of sebatik people in the general election as a form of loyalty to the State, The education aspect is realized by the role of Education activists in presenting Tapal Batas School as a special Nationalism Education school for Indonesian Labor children in Malaysia located in Sebatik, Social Aspects are realized by the Existence of BERJOKO Youth in building harmonious social relations between communities with different ethnicities and religions in Sebatik as a barometer of national strength. The practice of Sebatik Community Nationalism can strengthen the Sovereignty of the State at the Border.

**Keywords:** border, Nationalism, Sebatik island

### **Introduction**

The Border Region of the State is the front porch of a Country. The region describes the existence of a country in the presence of another country. The border becomes an area built by the central government to show existence as a sovereign state (Durand & Perrin, 2018). Borders become markers of state sovereignty and national identity that serve to meet each other's needs and cross-border dependence. (Durand & Perrin, 2018). In general, cross-border cooperation in various parts of the world is currently increasing in various fields of politics, economics, sociology, and culture (Misra, 2013). It becomes part of transnationalism with the process of movement across borders in building cooperation in the social, political, and economic fields (Thaklong et al., 2019).

The different identities between the two nationals in the Borders raise differences (Breitung, 2009). The border as the veranda of a country has a strategic position but is rarely known to exist

(Herdiansyah et al., 2014). The further an area is from the center, the less intensity of development. So marginal areas and border areas have always been one of the undeveloped regions in a Country (Zanganeh & Andisheh, 2015). The Border Area is generally often associated with the Nationalism of its People.

Nation Character Building in its concept puts the interests of the state above the interests of the Personal. The concept of Nationalism extends to the modern political ideas of People's lives. Nationalism encourages the whole country to adopt nationalism as a view (Kettunen, 2018). Nationalism becomes an integral ingredient of every sense of nationality. In everyday public terms, nationalism becomes a term of disapproval of anti-nationalism movements such as separatists and radical right-wingers (Kettunen, 2018). However, in many studies, nationalism is a reaction to globalization (Kettunen, 2018).

Boyd Shafer (1955) states that nationalism has multi-meaning, it depends on the objective and subjective conditions of each nation. Nationalism can be meaningful as a love for the same homeland, race, language, or culture. So in this case nationalism is the same as patriotism. Hans Kohn (1971) underlined that the essence of nationalism is the same, namely the mental attitude in which the highest loyalty is handed over to the state and the nation. Nationalism in the practice of daily life will strengthen the sovereignty of a country, especially in the border areas. The values of nationalism are realized in the form of togetherness, pride, and personal identity (Murstedt et al., 2015). The practice of nationalism can also be demonstrated by the symbols of the state although in understanding nationalism tends to be passive. When the symbols of the state as a national identity are abused, there will be resistance in reaction. It was banal nationalism "Hot Nationalism" first theorized by Michael Billig (Hummel, 2017).

However, the Borders area is an area that has the potential to experience a weakening of nationalism (Prasetyo, 2021). Intensive social interaction between two citizens, on the one hand, is interpreted as part of globalization, but on the other hand is seen as an attempt to weaken nationalism because it can interfere with national identity (Matthews et al., 2018). The cross-border relationship has implications for economic conditions on the border that are considered a geo-economic threat (Misra, 2013). Also, borders are synonymous with various issues of illegal activities such as migration, smuggling, human trafficking, and other organized crime (Misra, 2013). The Border Area is seen as bad because it always places itself as an object that always wants to get the attention of the central government (Parham, 2016). Also, dual citizenship does not affect the sense of belonging due to social interaction, but rather on economic needs (Ramos et al., 2018).

This research is important to look at the practices of nationalism of the people of the Indonesia-Malaysia border region that can be a model for other border areas in the world. Sebatik Island as the location of this research is divided into two parts, the north is the Malaysian region, while the southern part is the Indonesian Territory. Meanwhile, across Sebatik Island there is Tawau City, Sabah Malaysia which can be reached only about 15 minutes from Sebatik Island. This causes the products of daily needs in Sebatik to originate from Tawau city. The mention of Sebatik in this study represents the territory of Indonesia, while the city of Tawau represents the Territory of Malaysia.

This study aims to analyze the practices of nationalism in sebatik border areas. The researchers conducted a study of the practice of nationalism to be a model in strengthening nationalism attitudes for citizens in the Border region. Border Area of the State as a region that has the potential to weaken nationalism including the use of foreign currency, the circulation of foreign goods, and the use of foreign nationality identity in the territory of a sovereign state is a threat to the sovereignty of the State. The practice of nationalism in a border area can be a reference for other border areas.

Therefore, it is interesting to research. Some of the problems that have been explained and answered in this study are, "What are the Forms of Nationalism Practices of the Indonesian-Malaysian Border Community in Sebatik Island, Nunukan Regency, North Kalimantan Province?"

### Materials and Methods

The research was conducted in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area, in Sebatik Island, North Kalimantan Province which is directly adjacent to the City of Malaysia. The design of this study uses a qualitative approach with a Case Study Method by exploring and understanding the meaning of several individuals or groups of people who are considered to be from social or human problems (Bennett, 2015). In data collection, researchers used primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are obtained by conducting direct observations in the field by conducting live interviews with local governments, community leaders, and local youth leaders. The secondary data source through various literature in the form of books, journals, and electronic media. Data analysis is done by collecting raw data obtained in the field by transcription of interviews, typing, and then sorting and arranging data according to the type of information. Then code the data and apply the coding process to connect themes or descriptions. Previously analyzed themes are then presented in the form of narrations or reports. The results are interpreted and then interpreted, to produce ideas or conclusions from research (Afrizal, 2014). This study used the theory of Nationalism and Border Theory.

### Results

The results showed that the practice of Nation Character Building is as given in Table 1.

**Table 1. The practice of Nation Character Building.**

Aspects of Nationalism	Practices of Nation Character Building
1. Economy	In economic aspects, the practice of nationalism is realized through the role of some local entrepreneurs in Sebatik in presenting Indonesian Shops (Shopping Centers) that sell Indonesian Products to compensate for the hegemony of foreign products and the use of foreign currencies (Malaysia).
2. Politics	Political aspects are realized by the high level of political participation of sebatik people in the general election as a form of their loyalty to the State. The majority of Sebatik people will exercise their voting rights in full in every general election both Legislative and executive.
3. Education	The education aspect is realized by the existence of Education activists in presenting The Tapal Batas School in Sebatik as a special Nationalism Education school for Indonesian Labor children working in Malaysia as workers in Palm Oil Plantation.
4. Social	Social Aspects are realized by the Existence of BERJOKO Youth in building harmonious social relations between communities with different ethnicities and religions in Sebatik as a barometer of national strength.

## Discussion

Sebatik Island is an island owned by two Countries. The island is divided into two territories of State Sovereignty. The northern part of the island is in Malaysia, while the southern part is in Indonesia. Indonesian citizens in Sebatik Island Indonesia have a high dependence on Tawau City, Sabah Malaysia in meeting basic daily needs due to its close and easy accessibility, so sebatik people are often labeled as a society that is not nationalist. However, in daily life, Indonesian citizens in Sebatik can show good nationalism practices in various aspects including Economic, Political, Educational, and Social aspects. Borders are areas developed by the central government to demonstrate State Sovereignty in the region (Durand & Perrin, 2018). Current international conditions affect the increase of social interaction on the borders of the Country, thus impacting various sectors including the economic, political, sociological, and educational sectors (Misra, 2013).

First, in the economic aspect, the practice of nationalism is realized through the role of some local entrepreneurs in Sebatik in presenting Indonesian Shops (Shopping Centers) that sell Indonesian Products to offset the hegemony of foreign products and the use of foreign currencies (Malaysia). They sell daily necessities products imported from the city of Surabaya, East Java through expedition ships so that the selling price of Indonesian products in Sebatik is higher. But that does not make them losers. Some people have started a movement to love Indonesian products as a form of product patriotism. Product patriotism is a manifestation of a citizen's love for domestic products that gives rise to national pride (Spielmann et al., 2020).

Then, the Political Aspect is realized through the political participation of sebatik people in the general election as a form of their loyalty to the State. The majority of Sebatik people will exercise their voting rights in full in every general election both Legislative and executive. Besides, Sebatik Youth is also active in political discussions, especially related to regional progress. They will engage in protest rallies over government policies that do not favor the interests of the Community. Young people should develop a critical attitude towards their role as a youth (Keegan, 2020). Their involvement demonstrates their loyal attitude towards the interests of the State by participating in elections, volunteering, and engaging in organizations (Li, 2020).

Furthermore, the aspect of Education is realized by the existence of Education activists in presenting The Tapal Batas School in Sebatik as a special Nationalism Education school for Indonesian Labor children working in Malaysia as workers in Palm Oil Plantation. The children went to school in Sebatik, while their parents worked in Malaysia. Once a week they meet their parents at a plantation camp that is accessible by Road trip. In general, these children grew up in the Malaysian Palm Oil Plantation, so the existence of this school in Sebatik makes it easier for them to study in Indonesia and build their nationalism. Strengthening the values of Nationalism through schools can be obtained from the materials of Citizenship Education (Nogueira & Moreira, 2012). Tapal Batas School in Sebatik right on the Indonesia-Malaysia Border became a school of Nationalism Education.

Lastly, the Social Aspect is realized by the Existence of YOUTH BERJOKO in building a harmonious social relationship between people with different ethnicities and religions in Sebatik as a barometer of national strength. BERJOKO Youth is a group of mosque youths and church youths who unite in the BERJOKO Youth community in Sebatik Tengah Subdistrict which is directly adjacent to Malaysia. In its activities, BERJOKO youth become the drivers of community activities between two different ethnic and religious communities. In general, youth who are Muslims are Bugis, while Catholic youth are Timorese, but they can be united in an organization. They will help each other in religious and tribal activities. Cooperation and tolerance become the spirit in every move-

ment they make. The Youth are actively engaged in social activities and serve the community aimed at creating social change. (Ballard et al., 2019).

The Practices of Nationalism of Sebatik Society were able to strengthen the Sovereignty of the State at the Border. Boyd Shafer (1955) stated that nationalism has multi-meaning, it depends on the objective and subjective conditions of each nation. Nationalism can be meaningful as a love for the same homeland, race, language, or culture. So in this case nationalism is the same as patriotism. Hans Kohn (1971) underlined that the essence of nationalism is the same, namely the mental attitude in which the highest loyalty is handed over to the state and the nation. Nationalism in the practice of daily life will strengthen the sovereignty of a country, especially in the border areas. The values of nationalism are realized in the form of togetherness, pride, and personal identity (Murstedt et al., 2015).

### Conclusion

The results showed that Practice of Nation Character Building in sebatik island border communities is realized through the practice of daily life oriented to the interests of the nation and the State in various aspects, namely economic, Political, Educational, and Social. In economic aspects, the practice of nationalism is realized through the role of some local entrepreneurs in Sebatik in presenting Indonesian Stores that sell Products from Indonesia to offset the Hegemony of Foreign Products and the use of Foreign Currencies (Malaysia). The Political Aspect is realized by the political participation of Sebatik People in the General Election as a form of loyalty to the State. The education aspect is realized by the role of Education activists in presenting Tapal Batas School as a special Nationalism Education school for Indonesian Labor children in Malaysia located in Sebatik, Social Aspects are realized by the Existence of BERJOKO Youth in building harmonious social relations between communities with different ethnicities and religions in Sebatik as a barometer of national strength. The practice of Sebatik Community Nationalism can strengthen the Sovereignty of the State at the Border.

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