NATIONALISM AND GLOBALIZATION: ISSUES ON THE SEA BORDER BETWEEN INDONESIA AND AUSTRALIA IN THE CONTEXT OF MARITIME SOVEREIGNTY

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Abstract

This paper analyzes transnationalism as the result of globalization in human mobility, which it has summoned new insecurities, especially when international migration as the excess of transnationalism leads to a burst of issues on the sea border, such as influx of migration, asylum seeker, refugees, and even transnational crimes. Thus, it is very important for Indonesia as a growing maritime state to put more attention to the matter, especially to the eastern part of the archipelago, where transnationalism brings different implication toward nationalism of its people. Through historical methodology and perspective, this article discusses relevant issues to be reflected into current situation and the future, in which it could lead to a more sustainable solution and a further observation toward what it means to be a part of Indonesia itself, to fulfill the need of rephrasing the means of our borders.

Keywords:
maritime state, eastern Indonesia sea border, transnationalism, human mobility, humanitarian concern.

Introduction

As one of the biggest maritime state in the world, Indonesia has just begun to realize the deep potential of becoming the pioneer of maritime sovereignty advocate. It is Indonesian historian, A.B. Lapian (2011), who sought an addition to the character by emphasizing that the sea also holds the intersection of history. In accordance to the rise of thoughts, Indonesia was trying her best to ignite the maritime spirit back with glorious past stories and further proposition to be the largest maritime state as the fuel, to eventually propose the Global Maritime Fulcrum. Indeed, it was caused by the epitome of globalization that has given certain leverage toward nationalism in the last century. In the term of transnationalism, as the
result of globalization in human mobility, globalization has summoned new insecurities, especially when international migration as the excess of transnationalism leads to a burst of issues on the sea border, such as influx of migration, asylum seeker, refugees, and even transnational crimes.

These issues, some are very notable and quite unforgettable, are making us realize that transnationalism is also the root of international migration in the context of human mobility. Afghan, Rohingyan, Syrian, and any other refugees in the world are categorized as subjects of spontaneous migration, since it has been carrying sporadic and unpredictable movements on, as well as causing problematic and dilemmatic situation among the receiving and transit countries, due to the fact that human rights are on the brink of a dead end. Not to mention, the cross-borders are among one of these problem.

However now, focus is being shifted to the eastern part of the archipelago, where we could see the reality of the sea borders on the south to the region. Southern border of Indonesia are surrounded by some countries with large, or at least enough, occupational rights of land. These countries should have given enough pressure for us to rethink about the condition of our border. It was generally prone to transnational threats and far from the capital’s concern, since there have been too much concerns to the north, making the region “a rim left behind for the thriving north”. So, what makes a country a nation? The answer is the interrelation amongst them, especially those along the border that is actually the “main gate” of our nation’s sovereignty.

There is this need of rephrasing of what we had understood about human mobility and its consequences in the 21st century. According to Riwanto Tirtosudarmo (2015:xi), these transnational activities were always seen politically and economically as the cause of the unequal development between eastern and western Indonesia. In this case, it is the outmost islands in the archipelago that has been struggling with growing interest in the Indian Ocean, thus generating social and political instability on the sea border between Indonesia and Australia. Instead, what we’re trying to offer in this research is the humanitarian concern as the approach to strengthen and protect the border area to counter illegal entries, encourage multilateral cooperation, and develop an interrelation among the outmost islands in the south. Such humanitarian concern could be practically adjusted as the solution.

However, we should also give more emphasize on the legal basis of this humanitarian conduct because it will always be two or more countries involved in the decision-making process, so it is important to identify the decision as constantly evaluated alternatives. With this framework, the combination of protection and empowerment could lead to sustainability, to eventually trigger the sense of interrelation among the people in the eastern region, leading to the comprehension of what would a nationalism means.

Hence, there is the Indian Ocean that binds the outmost region of Indonesia in the south. This geographical landmark thus became the foundation of a new regional cooperation, focusing on coastline and many coastal countries development and mutual cooperation, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). This association prioritizes six different aspects of partnership, such as maritime security, trading and investment opportunity, management of fisheries, disaster risk management, contribution in terms of academic development, science, and technological advancement, as well as cultural exchange for tourism and other promotions. From these points, we could see that the primary concern of the forum is to guarantee regional stability in the geopolitically changed world, that it is Indian Ocean that holds the future.
To give further consideration regarding the evolution of globalization and transnationalism, this research utilizes historical methodology and perspective to discuss relevant issues to be reflected into current situation and the future. History repeats itself (l’histoire se répète) doesn’t always mean that we have to read the same book twice, looking forward to see the exact same ending, but we manage to bring decent intention by making this study relevant to the core of our field. These past events could lead us to a more sustainable solution, which putting up the problem in the most basic thoughts of human being. Thus, we need to put nationalism in Indonesia in this era to further observation. Moreover, this awareness could once again amplify the concept of “Wawasan Nusantara” (the Archipelago Insight), so that such issues should be considered as encouragements to develop maritime sovereignty, along with the mutual cooperation in the region.

Transnationalism, Cross-border Activities, and Wawasan Nusantara

Transnationalism is a phenomenon that refers the flow of people, ideas, capital, culture, and goods (Pence and Zimmerman 2012) in economic, political, and cultural context that is transcending formal international boundary. This concept is also related to the diminishing control of land and sea border, movement of the people, and re-establishment of a new frontier. The effect of transnationalism is the increasing number of migration, or the intensity of human mobility in context of cross-border activities. It eventually results in the shift of territorial authority between one country to another, making the concept of nation state and nationalism goes irrelevant.

Globalization has pushed transnationalism forward to grow beyond nationalism through economic, political, and cultural intensification that carved open a wide-ranging network, or a free-form linkage in between people. Moreover, transnationalism is dichotomized into two different approaches it takes to affect us; first, transnationalism from above, which is related to the growing number of transnational corporation, cooperative agreements, and other network expansions. Second, transnationalism from below, which is more likely to be related to cultural and humanitarian concern in context of human mobilization. In this paper, however, we would like to discuss the second one, in correlation with the shift in the way we implement nationalism.

It is believed that transnationalism is, in fact, in the opposite of nationalism. Some commonly understood points regarding nationalism are the sense of belongings, concerning similarity, resemblance, or likeness in practiced language, shared history, cultural attachment, and common interest as the bond. Unlike nationalism, transnationalism has no such attachment as the contingent part of the concept of nation-state. Those concerns mentioned above have gone through transcendence, so that there would be a possibility of the occurrence of diaspora, exceeding the commonly accepted circumstances. Identity and nationality become something that is more dynamic, enabling human to engage better in an open community.

However, in such position, it is important for every nation-state in this world to be prepared for the transnational communities that is naturally generated by the endless effect of globalization. There is a certain need to redefine nationalism as a concept, what is citizenship and nationality in the context of transnationalism? What could possibly become the determining factor of today’s nationalism? To answer the questions given, it is important for
us to understand on how sovereignty is accepted as the ground basis for nationalism to flourish among the people.

Similar to the concept of transnationalism, the concept of sovereignty is also divided into two different direction, inward and outward sovereignty. Inward sovereignty marks the authority possessed by a nation that is practiced to bind the citizen altogether, while outward sovereignty is utilized as the country’s extension of power across its possession of land and sea, in order to put control across the country without exposing itself to the intervention of outside power or controlling interest. (Noveria and Noor in Noveria 2017:9-10).

Same thing goes to the concept of nationalism, nation-state, and borders. The existence of nation-state depends on the presence of nationalism, while the availability of land and sea borders could be the distinctive features. Thus, nationalism is a part of symbolic believes that encourage the sense of belonging of a single, specific community, which happens to be around the course of modern nation-state advancement (Giddens 1992:303). Nationalism grows into something that is belonged to national subjects with its country as the main internal authority, while externally maintaining their conduct as a part of the society in preserving sovereignty (Noveria and Noor in Noveria 2017:10).

Moreover, borders refer to the modern context, in which it emerged right after the appearance of modern state with the need of having their sovereignty recognized internationally. In fact, borders are actually imaginary dots connected by dashes that are acknowledged as indubitably legal. Discussions regarding the significance of border studies are often examining or criticizing the lack of defense and security on the so-called outmost region. Therefore, we would like to offer a different point of view, which is how borders are seen as a critical matter for other aspects of life, or how borders are no longer defined as the outmost part of our country, but the foremost frontline. We believe that an offensive approach in the border area is no longer needed, since we already have had a decent state of defense that is able to lead us to alternative defensive possibilities. But first, of course, there’s not much effort that has been done in the past as an “upgrade” to the well being of the people in the border area.

First, we need to be aware that there is a huge gap, a discrepancy, between the border area and any other areas closer to the capital, or at least thriving big cities. This is the common threat for nationalism. The feels of resentment starts or generated here by this main factor. Discrepancy creates subordination and dependency. An equal development could be the solution, but for a country as diverse as Indonesia with the authority above the wide-stretched land and sea, it is obviously difficult. Such solution could only be put to practice by changing our perspective, which we should start considering our border area as the “front yard” or the foremost platform of our country, so that it will be necessary for us to preserve, provide, and protect to emphasize the sense of belonging that has been always on the brink of falling down due to the constant desolated condition. Therefore, there’s a need of changing the approach used toward the border area, which is the social-economic one, instead of constantly thinking it as a mere security and defense concern. (Noveria and Noor in Noveria 2017:7). Nevertheless, the term “pulau terdepan” (foremost island) should be considered to be applied in the future in referencing border areas, as it was stated by Zuhdi (Kompas, 8 September 2006), realizing that this term could give a better explanation than the term “pulau terluar” (outmost island) for there are principal differences between the two. Referencing border areas as the outmost region is about the same with only conceiving it as mere borders; peripheral, on the edge, a separating entity, or an end of such zone of influence (Zuhdi
It has to be the beginning of multiple zones of influences, the main platform of sovereign entity.

Developing consciousness is next to the solution. The growing awareness of border areas is important if we would like to identify and intensify the means of our “front yard”, land and sea, as the archipelago state or maritime state as well. Such awareness were put to recognition for the first time during the Juanda’s Declaration (Deklarasi Djuanda) in December, 13th 1957 initiated by Juanda Kartasasmita, Indonesia’s Prime Minister at that time, claiming Indonesia’s right over the territorial sea and internal waters, which both are important as the integral factor of Indonesia’s sovereignty. The idea was presented in front of the international forum and proposed as a substantial element in the UNCLOS’ Conferences. This initial awareness was manifested in the concept of Wawasan Nusantara (Archipelagic Insight) (Nainggolan 2004:2).

However, it doesn’t take much time for the concept to be gradually forgotten. Border areas, especially sea border on the eastern and southern part of the country is somewhat neglected. There’s not much conscience on seeing it as the urgent matter for the country’s sovereignty, as these borders are seen as the furthest frontier, even though it had become a concern in ministerial level by introducing “Daerah 3T: Tertinggal, Terdepan, dan Terluar” as a reference to remote areas, including some of those in the borders. These areas then transforming as the initial birthplace for transnationalism to flourish, giving negative influence toward the sense of being Indonesian for the people living in the border areas, and making them believe that they’re not on the capital’s top priority.

From such threats, here comes the consequences or implications generated by the shifts in human behavior: human mobility or migration, intense discrepancy in economic, social, and cultural matter, the growing feels of resentment, and then finally, it generates the intention of utilizing the lenient fault in the border area, raising the bar of potential threats real high. Thus, transnational threats take part as one of the consequences. Trafficking, smuggling, and act of terrorism are the prime users of the game. With the increasing feels of resentment, added by the lack of attention from the central government, it is clear that transnationalism has put some new insecurity toward the people in the border areas to question the use of their nationalism.

Geopolitically, it is important for us to understand this matter. As we know, during the last few decades, there has been a significant advancement in Indonesia’s role in the international forum. Indonesia has set its own bargaining position, which is believed to be beneficial for future regional framework. Indonesia holds the important position, as well as one of the determining factors of reassuring regional stability, though we must admit too that we cannot classify or categorize Indonesia as the main actor in shaping global future according to Boyd and Pentland’s concept. Regional stability means a lot for the development of future partnership, especially economically and politically (Nainggolan 2004:8-9). To be a bit forward, the main threat of such stability is the dispute between neighboring countries in the region. As for Indonesia, the cross-border issues are the most contending problems in many parts of its borders. Many discussions explain of what had happened in the western border, but what about the eastern one?

The cross-borders is a term related to the activities or movement of people, both in person or in group, which has certain tendency of crossing formal or official border set by one country to another. However, this term is also related to the group of people who lives in an inherited or hereditary region, but exercising cross-border activities to other regions due to
economical, social, and cultural reason. These definitions are stated on the Act No. 23 of 2006 regarding Citizenship and Residential Administration.

Specifically, this paper will offer the other side of Indonesia’s eastern border that is barely discussed, but has a prominent potential of posing a significant threat; the Indonesia-Australia border. In fact after 1999 Referendum of East Timor, this border area also became a concern for East Timor. This border area is the main focus of this paper, especially on how the activities conducted in the southern border affecting nationalism.

The cross-border between Indonesia and Australia through Australia’s northern body of water is often considered as unauthorized and categorized as the Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Besides, they are also fall under the suspicion of Australian government as the part of the trafficking and smuggling chain across the borders of the two countries. Their traditional activities are suspected as a potential threat toward Australian border and sovereignty.

The cross-border activities have taken place since a very long time ago. It was one of many traditional sailing routes of Indonesia’s traditional fishermen as their right of traditional fishing is recognized internationally. According to P2P-LIPI, Australia has been their regular destination based on past maritime activities conducted by their respective ancestors (Lapian classified these traditional maritime activities into three categories: the admirals, sea men, and the pirates). However, recently there was a serious concern and allegation that their sails might be the “instant route” for the illegal immigrants from the conflicting Middle East, such as Afghanistan during the 2000s, to Australia, which the Australian government might address them as *queue jumpers*, or even any other kind of smugglings (Pudjiastuti 2006:123). In this case, Rotenese fishermen was suspected to have crossed the border to carry on something more than just their traditional and subsistent need, making it legal for Australian government to act repressively on them.

In the 1974, both countries had signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the revised terms and condition regarding the traditional activities of Rotenese and any other Indonesian fishermen from the eastern region of the archipelago. It is said that they are still eligible for the traditional rights over some specified areas in the northern body of water of Australia’s jurisdiction, such as Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island, only with some adjustment that will benefit both parties that it should not be an exploitative one (DEHCA 2002:40). However, it is hard to for the fishermen to carry on a 100% traditional activity in such modern sea faring. It is not that beneficial as they are bound to their *juragan* who provides their fishing equipment. Other than that, it is also difficult for them to find alternatives, aside from their too subsistent fishing activities. Then, plotting trafficking and smuggling scheme becomes their other options, generating an endless circle of smuggling that spreads quickly on some other remote borders.

Some cases are cover by both countries’ media. The numbers has been keep on fluctuating since the signing of MoU, up until today. It was considered as an incapability of both countries to solve the issue, that actually should have been settled years after the East Timor Referendum, especially since the border area has so many economic potential that could spark conflict between the bordering countries at any moments. A synchronized settlement between the bordering countries is necessary, even though the traditional fishing rights on the reefs are clear enough. It is stated that even though the both reefs, Ashmore and Cartier, are actually belonged to Indonesia’s body of water according to the UNCLOS decisions and are included in their fishermen traditional sailing routes, it is legally under
Australia’s jurisdiction. The claim over the reefs was based on the *uti possidetis juris* principle, which means that Australia could legally claim the property or possession of its previous colonizer, due to the fact that Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island were once under British government in the south (Arsana 2013:35).

Hence, it is also legal for Australia to put restriction and repressive action toward the traditional fishing rights that has been suspected as potential threat of transnational crime, as well as threatening biodiversity in such areas. Repatriation is the best chance that the Australian government could provide, but for some worse cases, it could be a serious apprehension and detention at Broome Penitentiary Facility at Broome, Western Australia (Stacey 2007:101).

Yuri Thamrin, Indonesian diplomat at that time, put no disapproval regarding the claim. Ashmore Reef, known by the traditional fishermen as Pulau Pasir is and never be a part of Indonesian territory, but only a part of Rotenese fishermen’s traditional rights as confirmed by the 1974’s MoU, but still there are some concession to be discussed (*Kompas*, 28 Mei 2005).

Thamrin also argued that the Australian government should consider that modern day border negotiated by both countries is not that conveniently understandable for those traditional fishermen, mentioning on how they see it (the sea borders) as mere virtual boundaries that could hardly be acknowledged. Some cases might show inadvertency, while some other cases present a very recognizable cliché. According to Balint (2005), this is where the problem gets even more complicated, since they got the motive of such practice mixed up, making the issue unsettled between the accidental trespassing and impulsive economic urge (*Kompas*, 27 November 2005).

As a “renewal” of the status of Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island as a nature reserve by Australian government, both countries agreed to have a discussion, which resulted in the Agreed Minutes of Meeting between Officials of Australia and Indonesia on Fisheries 1989 that took part as the revision of 1974’s MoU, in April 28th – 29th, 1989 (Agoes in Indrawasih 2010:62).

The agreement was signed after a negotiation between Ali Alatas dan Gareth Evans, each Foreign Minister of Indonesia and Australia, in March 2nd, 1989 (Fox in Cribb & Ford 2009:200). It is concluded from the agreement that the remaining right of Rotenese fishermen from Papela, Rote is the traditional harvesting for subsistency in the specified location in Ashmore Reef, without utilizing motorboat or any dangerous and exploitative equipment, according to Article No. 51 of UNCLOS 1982 (Yusuf 2010):

> “Negara kepulauan harus menghormati perjanjian yang ada dengan negara lain dan harus mengakui hak perikanan tradisional dan kegiatan lain yang dianggap sah oleh negara tetangga yang langsung berdampingan dalam daerah tertentu yang berada dalam perairan kepulauan. Syarat dan ketentuan bagi pelaksanaan hak dan kegiatan demikian, termasuk sifatnya, ruang lingkup, dan daerah di mana hak dan kegiatan demikian berlaku, atas permintaan salah satu negara yang bersangkutan harus diatur dengan perjanjian bilateral antara mereka.”
(translated)

“As an archipelagic state, (Indonesia) must recognize the agreement made with other countries regarding the issue of traditional fishing activities and any other complimentary activities related to the traditional rights in the specific body of water. Other terms and conditions regarding the practical conduct of the agreement, including the characteristic, scopes, and coverage of the rights should be managed and regulated in a bilateral framework between the two countries.”

This agreement also discusses about the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the Seabed Boundaries to re-assure both countries gain the same benefit without inflicting any loss to one another.

Reflecting the issues on recent situation, it is pretty clear that the joint agreement between Indonesia and Australia in the 1974’s MoU, or the 1989’s Agreement, is no longer coherent that it needs to be reviewed and observed for further updates, especially after the 1999’s East Timor Referendum. It means that there must be a renewal of agreement in the shape of tripartite forum that includes East Timor to discuss the more relevant and definitive border (Indrawasih 2009).

A recent study from LIPI highlighted the underlying facts regarding the phenomenon, mentioning on how the central government is neglecting the border area, without even realizing the importance and expediency of such areas. There are numerous case studies presented, and most of them are the same series of neglect and resentment, triggering the people on the border area toward separation. In this case, though, there is also an additional motive of economic advantage by facilitating the *queue jumpers* to sail toward Australia (Pudjiastuti 2006:124). Further question is, what to do now?

As the expert in international law of the sea, Hasjim Djalal regarded the 1982’s UNCLOS as the groundwork of integrated archipelagic system, meaning that the international recognition from UN is already sufficient for the country to set sail on developing nationalism that is based on maritime integrity. B.J. Habibie added his opinion towards Djalal’s statement, that Indonesia should focus more on becoming a maritime state, for it’s authority over large body of water with chunks of island scattered all across it. As an act of preservation over the land and the sea, Indonesia has to adopt an outward looking approach, which means that it has to possess certain maritime strategy. Australia as the only continent in the Asia-Pacific has developed Australia Maritime Expansion in 1979. Wouldn’t it be too peculiar for a maritime state for not having a maritime strategy? (Djalal 1997:1-2).

*Wawasan Nusantara* (Archipelagic Insight) is the first maritime strategy introduced as the platform of Indonesian government policy making, in reference to the articles in the 1982’s UNCLOS, which are Article No. 50 regarding the right of acquiring internal waters, and Article No. 51 regarding the traditional fishing rights and other legitimate activities related to Indonesian traditional fishermen (Kompas, 9-10 November 1987). The subsiding struggle of the establishment of Wawasan Nusantara in the next following years is making the concept of border sovereignty open for questions.
Rephrasing the Maritime Sovereignty

Earlier than 2007, the Australian government settled the issues related to the traditional fishing activities unilaterally by exercising repressive action against the cross-border activities. The Indonesian government was giving a rather passive reaction, instead of giving assistance or resolution. According to Indrawasih (2009:53), such absence had caused the repressive action to continue.

Department of Prime Industry and Energy (DPIE) of Australia made a conclusion regarding the possible solutions that could be considered as the framework of dispute settlements that could be initiated by both countries altogether, such as the enhancement of border surveillance in the sea border between Indonesia and Australia, investigation toward the underlying motives of the fishermen who conduct cross-border sails, organizing educative campaign about the traditional fishing practice and providing numerous alternative occupations, reinforcing law enforcement and its measurements, as well as setting a proper repatriation scheme up for the sake of humanitarian consideration. However, we should also consider that in fact the price of rare and distinct marine commodities, such as sea cucumber, oysters, and shark fin are increasing significantly, making it harder for such regulations to be applied.

R.P. Mounsey dan G.A. Baulch from DPIE’s Fisheries Division offered a very contrast assessment regarding the situation. Mounsey and Baulch proposed the initial hypothesis that the traditional fishing activities should be allowed for further development of joint management of the area. The traditional fishermen from Indonesia finds Australia’s shallow and muddy body of water way more interesting that Indonesia’s deep sea along their coastline, due to the fact that they are not practically used to the method and technology of deep sea harvesting. Moreover, the commodities of such shallow and muddy water are very unlikely to be consumed by or marketed to Australians who are used to consume deep-water fish, since it is a part of Asian gastronomic culture. The joint management between Indonesia and Australia could benefit both countries by “swapping the commodities provided by the sea”. Thus, in between the deep and shallow water, both countries could place a 50 miles sea “buffer zone”, where the only fishing activities allowed is the activity of Indonesian traditional fishermen and Australian deep-water harvesting. (Parliament of Australia 1993:121).

This idea was supported by Campbell and Wilson who was quick to recommend a renegotiation toward the 1974’s MoU that will highlight more on the original concept of traditional fishing right in the means of compiling a brand new regulation. Aside of that, in terms of conservation, Dr. C.L. Lee from Northern Territory University, Australia encouraged biologists and bio marine expert from numerous universities at Kupang and Ambon to seal a cooperation of starting an extensive oyster farming, and any other possible alternatives (Parliament of Australia 1993:125-126). It is also important to discuss these issues through humanitarian point of view, by considering the risk of human rights violation and the endangerment toward traditional rights, which is still very common to be found all across Asia (Mackie 2000:178).

Therefore, Indonesia also needs to give proper attention toward the border area, as well as its natural resource all over its maritime territory. The ideas of natural reserve or any other acts of conservation should be considered, due to the fact those natural resources are important. We could not take them for granted, not to mention that Indonesia acquires the
largest body of water that internationally recognized as internal water, so that should make us pretty wide-awake to take actions toward illegal activities, such as the IUU Fishing, trafficking, and smuggling, just like Australia has been very alerted with its surroundings, especially the border to the north as they once assumed as a place where potential threat could be posed (Yusuf 2010:116).

Other than that, the most valuable and sustainable settlement for this matter is the amendment of previous agreements to make it more relevant to today’s situation. A lot of things have changed since 1974, thus we believe that a decent and modern MoU is needed to bring the settlement closer to contemporary context and measurement. It has to be communicated through an international forum with Indonesia, Australia, and East Timor as “stakeholders with multiple interest”, so that it would at least muffle down the possibility of future border disputes and generating mutual understanding on how to deal with transnational crime.

In the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a shift of power towards Indian Ocean. It has become a new regional establishment since there are many interest are building up in its surroundings, from shipping, trading, to military operation. Quoting Alfred Thayer Mahan’s thesis regarding the region, having a serious control over the extensive ocean in the south means owning the chance to have control over Asia, due to the fact that Indian Ocean links all oceans across the globe (Kementrian Luar Negeri RI 2014:1). Indian Ocean embraces a beneficial broader body of water and coastlines; Africa, India, Indonesia, Australia, and others (Zuhdi 2016:150-151).

As for Indonesia, the geopolitical shifts toward Indo-Pacific, and even now toward the Indian Ocean, marks the new beginning of maritime state principles implementation by intensifying the sovereignty over three maritime chokepoints, accessible through Alur Laut Kepulauan Indonesia (ALKI), or the passages to Indonesia’s internal water, which are open based on the rights of innocent passage for international shipping line (Suprayitno 2015:29). Therefore, it is necessary for the country to maintain the sovereignty in the future over non-conventional, non-traditional, asymmetrical, or proxy threats, such as illegal fishing, human trafficking, and terrorism, instead of the conventional ones.

Borders along the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) could be a much more vulnerable border according to the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies’ (RSIS) Policy Paper, stating that some threats are just too close to comfort; international conflicts and disputes, terrorism, piracy, IUU Fishing, smuggling, biodiversity extinction, and also regional climate change (Bateman, Chan, and Graham in Suprayitno 2015:29). One of the biggest concerns today may be the smuggling activity relating to the Middle Eastern asylum seekers that trespasses unguarded coastline along the IOR as the part of their “journey” to “the lucky country” Australia. Some of the cases attracts humanitarian critics for destination or transit countries like Indonesia and Australia for not being able to deal with their basic human right fulfillment. The Tampa Affair in the 2001 and Pelabuhan Ratu Incident in the 2013, for examples.

It might not be easy to settle the issues, considering on how the numbers of the illegal entry are unlikely to be subsided. Australian government is quick to respond to the issues by applying their toughest border measurement since the coalition of Liberal-National party has returned to their position as the government of the day at the parliament in 2013. Operation Sovereign Border was introduced to stop the influx of boat arrival to Australia, accidentally (or purposely) leading them to flush the problem out toward their neighboring countries.
Furthermore, there are also some reports regarding the effort by the Australian government to provide fundings for the temporary detention centers for the repatriated asylum seekers in some districts along Indonesia’s southern border. The implication of such measurements is problematic for Indonesia. The impulsive repatriations for the queue jumpers are generating endless buildup of tension in the border. They will have certain tendencies to be settled in the nearest shelter possible, which Indonesia is the closest one, because they just don’t have any other options. Moving back to their departing countries could be very dangerous and unimaginable. This is the point where sovereignty over land and sea border of Indonesia needs to be upgraded. As a matter of fact, Indonesia has two command centre for maritime fleet; Komando Armada Barat (Koarmabar) at Jakarta and Komando Armada Timur (Koarmatim) at Surabaya, while the naval bases are scattered on three different area, which are in Bandung, Malang, and Cilacap. The port of Cilacap could hold an important role in such future coordination in the region (the IOR), as it is on the coastline of the Indian Ocean. Cilacap today is perhaps “the farthest to the east”, making it possible to be considered as the “host” of the “front yard” to the southeastern border.

At the end, recognizing the importance of our sovereign border, as well as finding the proper settlement toward the cross-border activities in the term of transnationalism could lead us to the reconnection to the origin of nationalism. The definition of the outmost, or now we could acknowledge it as the foremost, part of the country doesn’t stop at referencing it as “borders” or “frontiers” that seals the edge of the whole territory. Instead, we could start defining it as the country’s “front yard” where nationalism could be traced back as the essence of the (re-)emerging maritime state.

Conclusion

This research observes transnationalism as a structural phenomenon, which could enable the re-occurrence of past events as a reflection and projection. According to the findings, transnationalism does affect nationalism, and also the means of sovereignty of a country. As in this case though, transnationalism poses certain threats to Indonesia’s maritime sovereignty. But, in the other side of the findings, we also discover that transnationalism could be the focal point of the emergence of the sense of belonging, which could lead us to find our way back into the means of being Indonesian.

Looking forward to the near future regional engagement, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) could be one of many examples of cooperating platform between Indonesia and its neighbor in particular, related to the issues around human mobility studied from humanitarian point of view. Besides, the neglecting attitude toward the southern border might be no longer relevant if we’d like to look forward to Mahan’s thesis about the concept of maritime state as it set to be acquired by the Indonesian government. Much awareness is required to relive the archipelagic insight, along with the spirit of becoming a re-emerging maritime state. Securing what’s inside the archipelago means securing what’s bordering it first.

However, the cooperation must be a transcendental one; it has to be more than just security and defense cooperation. Regionally, Indonesia was expected to have mutual agreement, partnership, as well as understanding in any other fields that could give certain leverage on the advancement of regional development. The shift of orientation to the Indian
Ocean obviously brings both positive and negative impacts, but there lies the opportunity to develop a regional strategy as the firm foundation of the (re-)emerging maritime, state without questions.

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