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INTRODUCTION

The term “special relationship” has been used by many states to characterize a specific set of their bilateral ties with other states: for example, the ties between the United States and the United Kingdom; the United States and Canada; the United States and Israel; France and the Sub-Saharan African states; and Spain and the Latin American states. The meaning of a special relationship is centred on the term “special”. It usually means a quality that is exceptional in a positive sense. Consequently, a special relationship between two states is generally being understood as a close friendship.

The concept of a special relationship remains under-defined and under-conceptualized. A large part of the meaning of this concept has been introduced by politicians, which often entails sentimental expressions. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher reiterated her understanding of the Anglo-American special relationship during her speech in Washington in 1985: “[i]t is Special. It just is. And that’s that!”¹ she asserted. Margaret Thatcher’s assertion reflects politicians’ instinctive

¹ Margaret Thatcher’s Speech at British Embassy, Washington, 20 February 1985, available at <<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105971>> (accessed 15 March 2011).

understanding of the concept of a special relationship. Such instinctive tendency contributes to the opacity of the concept. Feldman has pointed out that an obvious reason for the absence of a definition of a special relationship is “the brevity with which journalists are forced to write or with which politicians and government are obliged to speak”.² Systematic disentangling of what has been said about a special relationship, therefore, is necessary in order to establish an understanding of the concept which best reflects its real meaning.

The essence of a special relationship is reflected by its association with close friendship. As Aristotle had noted, “no one can have complete friendship with many people”.³ A friendship fundamentally means a relationship that is different from other relations. Friendships are commonly understood as “a relationship satisfying cognitive and emotional needs and characterized by reciprocity, trust, openness, honesty, acceptance, and loyalty”.⁴ In other words, a friendship is an intimate relationship that is “necessarily exclusive”.⁵

The intimate nature of a friendship means that friends depend on each other for creating “a stable sense of Self”, in which they constantly confirm and adapt their ideas of order.⁶ Berenskoetter has pointed out that throughout history, “friendships have been identified as being capable of both strengthening and undermining order”.⁷ For example, the United States and the United Kingdom had jointly created and are leading the

² Lily Gardner Feldman, *The Special Relationship Between West Germany and Israel* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 4.

³ Aristotle, NE, Book VIII, 6 and Book IX, 10, quoted in Felix Berenskoetter, “Friends, There Are No Friends? An Intimate Reframing of the International”, *Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2007): 668.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 649.

⁵ Laurence Thomas, “Friendship and Other Loves”, in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, edited by Neera Kapur Badhwar (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 48–64. Marilyn Friedman, *What Are Friends For?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), quoted in Berenskoetter, “Friends, There Are No Friends? An Intimate Reframing of the International”, p. 649.

⁶ Berenskoetter, “Friends, There Are No Friends? An Intimate Reframing of the International”, pp. 672–73.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Western World; likewise, France and Germany have been working together to forge European integration. The dynamics of friendships indicate that a special relationship — which is a friendship between two states — is a force that has a tendency to fashion order.

However, conflicts are discernible in a special relationship. As Kissinger has noted, the close Anglo-American special relationship at times experiences “mutual exasperation”.⁸ Reynolds, meanwhile, argues that the unique feature of U.S.–UK special ties is that both cooperation and competition have equal weight in the relationship.⁹ He observes that Anglo-American relations are woven with “complex strands of interest, ideology and emotion”, and describes it as “a relationship of competitive cooperation”.¹⁰

The tendency of two states sharing a special relationship to establish their common vision of the world, coupled with the conspicuous presence of conflicts in such a relationship, implies that the relationship might generate impacts on international politics. Viewed in this light, the concept of a special relationship deserves a detailed study.

The association of a special relationship with close friendship means that the relationship is intertwined with peaceful qualities. A relationship between two states is close only when there is a desire for peace between them. For example, the mutual wish for friendly ties between the United States and the United Kingdom since the 1890s had given rise to a special relationship between the two states in the 1910s. Similarly, the desire for rapprochement between France and Germany since the end of the Second World War had led to the close ties between all levels of societies of the two states under the framework of the Franco–German Friendship Treaty.¹¹

⁸ Henry A. Kissinger, “Reflections on a Partnership: British and American Attitudes to Postwar Foreign Policy”, *International Affairs* 58, no. 4 (1982): 575.

⁹ David Reynolds, “Rethinking Anglo-American Relations”, *International Affairs* 65, no. 1 (1989): 98.

¹⁰ David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937–41: A Study in Competitive Co-operation* (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1981), pp. 293–94.

¹¹ Feldman, *The Special Relationship Between West Germany and Israel*, pp. 284–85.

The peaceful characters of a special relationship imply that it has the qualities of a pluralistic security community. A pluralistic security community is a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change. Dependable expectations of peaceful change means the ability of the actors concerned to know that neither of them would prepare or even consider to use violence as a means to resolve their disputes. The peaceful nature of a pluralistic security community coincides with the traits of peace in a special relationship. In this sense, there is an inseparable link between a special relationship and a pluralistic security community.

Yet, while a special relationship has the qualities of a pluralistic security community, it is not necessarily a pluralistic security community. The United States and Britain continued to engage in their rivalries for naval supremacy throughout the 1920s even though they had begun to share a special relationship since the 1910s. The United States and Canada each continued to develop war plans directed at each other well into the late 1930s despite the existence of special ties between them since the 1910s. The fact that a special relationship is not necessarily a pluralistic security community denotes that certain conditions need to be in place before the relationship can become such a community. This observation brings about the central question of this study: under what circumstances could a special relationship lead to the emergence of a pluralistic security community?

Through addressing the central question, this study aims to establish an understanding of a special relationship, its dynamics and its transformation into a pluralistic security community. A theoretical framework based on constructivist theory has been developed to address the central question. By reviewing the existing literature on special relationships and security communities, the framework establishes an appreciation of the essence of a special relationship as well as its links with a pluralistic security community. Various evidences in international relations, especially the histories of Anglo–American and U.S.–Canada relations from the 1850s to the 1960s, have been used by the framework to substantiate its arguments. The basic idea of the framework is as follows:

A state's survival essentially concerns its existence of self. The will to survive of a state hence is rooted in its awareness of self. States' understandings of self shape, and are shaped by, their identities and power, namely, material capacities, in the form of identifications with one another.

A state's understanding of self is the basis for its intersubjective understandings. Intersubjective understandings of states are a stable set of identities and interests which are founded on their understandings of self.¹² States apprehend the world through the lenses of their intersubjective understandings.¹³ Intersubjective understandings are essentially the cognitive collective knowledge of states, yet they are experienced as having an independent and real existence, hence confront the states as social reality.¹⁴

This study reveals that two states share a special relationship when two sources of closeness — that of the two states' common identities and common strategic interests — coexist between them. It argues that a special relationship produces substantial cooperation and substantial conflicts between the two states involved. In other words, a special relationship is distinguished by its double-edged effects. This study points out that a special relationship constitutes a security regime. Two states in a special relationship — a security regime — are bound by their shared commitment to avoid an armed conflict between them. Built on a special relationship's existing function as a security regime — this study argues — the relationship will transform into a pluralistic security community when power imbalance exists between the two states involved.

The theoretical framework of this study is being tested through the examination of Indonesia–Malaysia relations from 1957 to 2017. It is a common recognition that Indonesia and Malaysia share a special relationship since the two states are bound by their common cultural

¹² Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 397–99.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 396–97. Also see Jeffrey T. Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory", *World Politics* 50, no. 2 (1998): 326.

¹⁴ Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It", p. 399. Also see Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics", *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997b): 327.

identities. By developing a theoretical framework of a special relationship, this study aims at advancing better appreciation of Indonesia–Malaysia relations — which is to explain the bilateral ties through the lens of the interplay of power and common identities in the relationship. In particular, this study seeks to address a long-standing puzzle in Indonesia–Malaysia relations: why conflicts between Indonesia and Malaysia are rather obvious even though both allegedly are close to each other? That said, this study is not a comprehensive historical account of Indonesia–Malaysia relations. It is rather an attempt to better understand the bilateral ties by examining it using the theoretical framework of this study.

Indonesia–Malaysia relations, in the meantime, provide a strong test of this study’s theoretical framework. The notion of a special relationship is originated from the West. Also the most studied special relationships in international politics are those formed by Western and developed states, such as the Anglo–American and the U.S.–Canada special relationships. These are the reasons why this study has decided to incorporate the histories of Anglo–American and U.S.–Canada relations into its theoretical framework. The examination of Indonesia–Malaysia relations, therefore, will reveal whether this study’s hypothesis is able to predict the forming of a special relationship, its dynamics, and its transformation into a pluralistic security community, considering that Indonesia and Malaysia share common identities, yet they are neither Western nor developed states. In other words, if the theoretical arguments of this study apply to Indonesia–Malaysia relations, the arguments’ ability to predict will be significantly proven, hence could be generalized as a theory of a special relationship.

This book consists of two major parts: (1) Theoretical Framework of a Special Relationship and (2) History of Indonesia–Malaysia Relations, 1957–2017. Chapters 2 to 4 — the first part — constitutes the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 identifies the essence of a special relationship, the relationship’s expressions, and the circumstances in which such a relationship will emerge. It also confirms that a special relationship and a pluralistic security community are essentially interlinked, and that such a relationship can transform into a pluralistic security community. Chapter 3 based on the findings of the previous chapter discusses the key

conceptual components of a special relationship, followed by Chapter 4 which explains the dynamics of such a relationship and its transformation into a pluralistic security community.

The second part — Chapters 5 to 7 — tests the theoretical arguments of this study by examining Indonesia–Malaysia relations from 1957 to 2017. Chapter 5 argues that there was no special relationship between Indonesia and Malaya/Malaysia from 1957 to 1965. Chapter 6 — Indonesia–Malaysia relations from 1966 to 1984 — explains that the two states began to share a special relationship shortly after the fall of the Sukarno regime. Chapter 7 — Indonesia–Malaysia relations from 1985 to 2017 — reveals the double-edged effects of the Indonesia–Malaysia special relationship, and shows that the relationship is not a security community but remains as a security regime owing to the absence of power imbalance between Indonesia and Malaysia.

Chapter 8 — the conclusion — discusses the key findings of the study as well as the insights on Indonesia–Malaysia relations brought forth by this study.