COMMUNICATION STRATEGY THROUGH MEDIA EDUCATION:
AN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE HARMONY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN INDONESIA-MALAYSIA RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that Indonesia - Malaysia relations is always changing and tend to lead to conflict situations. The role of media and media education is important as a communication strategy to implement the problem solving model in understanding the global situation and the public policies who are based theory of cultural conflict and acculturation. Media education is not just addressed to journalists and concerned, but also the kingdom, youth and the wider community.

Key words: communication strategy, media education, harmony and sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

This paper would not reveal the concept and communication strategy from general point of view, but only to discuss communication strategy through media education which focuses in harmonizing and sustainability the Indonesia-Malaysia relations. The relations between these two nations have always been fluctuating. From the context of international politics, the relations of these nations are very much depending on the role of media in global situation. Thereby, factors such as globalization, capitalism, and political state in both states tend to generate conflict rather than peaceful relations.

Media is capable to lessen the tension. Few media in Indonesia for instance, possess certain agenda that deliberately play an anti-Malaysia sentiment which poses great implications towards Indonesia-Malaysia good relations. Similarly, the Malaysian media can play a role in harmonization and sustainability of relations between these neighbouring nations.

In this regard, media education has becoming crucial. AH & DM (2003) stated that *"media education and training is not only critical to the future development of media and communication studies but is also in many ways crucial to higher education in our nations"*.

INTERNTIONAL RELATIONS AND GLOBAL CAPITALISM

International relations is a form of political interaction and not politics which are conducted by state actors and non-state actors as a whole. International relations exist within the state of *conflict* and *cooperation*. Conflicts can be *fundamental* or *accidental* in nature. *Fundamental* based conflicts are originated from basic structural differences and are naturally permanent in

each side. These conflicts can happen repeatedly. Meanwhile *accidental* conflicts, are originated from coincidence situation, thus, would less likely to occur again in the future.

Globalization: A Need for New Paradigm?

The term *globalization* has become the central theme in every discussion about development which initiated the term *"Global Village"*. These concept was introduced by Mac Luhan (1966), followed by *"Future Shock"* (Alvin Toffler, 1970), and John Naisbit & Patricia Aburdene (1990) through "Megatrends 2000". The definition of globalization was described as *"We're in the start of a new era. In front, lies an important decade in human civilization, one amazing period and technological innovation, new economic potentials, political reformations, and the rebirth from culture. The 1990s become very important; due to its culmination will reach the new millennium of 2000"*.

The era of globalization was driven mostly by rapid development of knowledge and technology as the fuels for industrialization and modernization. Lewis Mumford (1977) in *"The Myth of the Machine"* described the globalization age in a remarkable sentence *"Never before, since the age of the pyramid, vast physical transformation within such short time span. These transformations, in turns, will give changes in human life and surroundings. If these processes were to carry on without control and guidance, there would be many more radical transformations lies ahead."* Globalization runs like a magnet which possesses great power that speed up transformations, consequently forcing us to rebuild our understanding on the meaning and new paradigm, including development.

Global Capitalism: Influence Civilization ?

In global capitalism, the world and human civilization have operated and transformed dramatically, especially on economic, social, political, and cultural development. These transformations are very much influenced by globalization processes (Mayo, 1998). Capitalism that emphasizes liberal democracy, human rights, and free market economy, nowadays not only have invaded all of development approaches but also have become the universal vision of mankind (Suharto, 2001). In other words, only by capitalism that human welfare can be achieved. For example, when the monetary crisis infected some countries, almost all economical relief strategies are heading toward *capitalism paradigm*. Many nations are registered member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, two international bodies and the *symbols of the hegemony of global capitalism*.

In the context of international relations and global capitalism, both Indonesia and Malaysia are influenced by the interest of global capitalism, although these countries managed to create civilization by maintaining and nurturing good relations up to this day. Both of these states have multiracial people; consequently, the elements of national unity and harmony are crucial. Thus, both governments are highly committed in cultivating the spirit of unity among the people. Both governments realized that if unity within the multi-ethnic people in Indonesia and Malaysia can be promoted, the harmony between Malaysia and Indonesia would be continuously well-maintained. On top of that, all sorts of conflicts and arguments can still be resolved by the sense

of unity, humanity, and sovereignty to achieve wellbeing in economic, social, cultural, and political aspects.

Conflicts and Resolutions

One of the famous experts who studied the social interaction with process and micro structural approach is George Simmel. The social *erotic instincts, objective desires, religious aspirations, help, command*, etc. All of these according to Simmel, make people live with the other people, interact with other people, mingle with them and even against them (Johnson, 1986). According to Simmel, it is more important to focus on the consequences of conflict than consequences of social change. *Conflict is thus designed to resolve dualism; it is a way of achieving some kind of unity, even if it be through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties. This is roughly parallel to the fact that it is the most violent symptom of a disease which represents the effort of the organism to free itself of disturbances of damages caused by them (Simmel, 1956).*

Related to the social conflict, Simmel develops three frameworks; *proportions of conflict intensity, conflict function for the involved group,* and *conflict function for the whole system*. The higher emotional involvement of each conflicting group is the higher the tendency for the conflict to be more brutal. There is a positive correlation between the internal solidarity of conflicting groups to the emotional intensity of the groups. In international relation perspective, conflicts comprise of diplomatic actions, propagandas, trades, threats, and military sentences which are performed by a nation to other nations (Holsti, 1987). One of the strategies to resolve conflict is *Joint Problem Solving,* which offer possibility for control over the outcomes on which they would be achieved by involved parties. Each party is entitled the same rights to deliver arguments in order to achieve the outcome. There are three conflict resolution methods, such as: *problem solving process; communication*; and *internal cooperation.*

MEDIA EDUCATION: A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY ?

Development of Media Education

The growing interest on media education in some countries is started in the early 21st century. Media literacy was proposed as an educational tool to protect certain parties from the negative effects of media. In 1930, England was the first country to suggest this issue. During the 1960s, Canada initiated the first media literacy education and has made it mandatory in North America. Every region in said country was appointed to include media education in the curriculum. The launch of this subject was carried out due to ever-increasing influences of American` pop culture.

The concept of media literacy had become the first educational topic exist in Canada (1978). During that time, *Association of Media Literacy* (AML) was established as the organization that regulates everything that involves with education of media literacy. The US also realized the importance of media literacy education as negative implications originated from media (especially television) are suffered by American people. Frank Baker, an American media

education consultant, saw a number of modules which had been developed by Canada, England, and Australia as a good starting point, especially in supports and curriculums.

The term media literacy, according to James Potter (Media Literacy, 2001), is a perspective which actively utilized when certain individual is accessing media with the purpose of recognizing the message that is conveyed by the media. Allan Rubin proposed three definitions on media literacy: *first*, the ability to enter, analyse, evaluate, and communicate message from the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy (Baran and Davis, 2003). *Second* (Paul Messaris): knowledge on the function of media in society. *Third*, (mass communication researchers, Justin Lewis and Shut Jally), the understanding of cultural limits, economy, politics, and technology on creation, production, message transmissions. These definitions focus on specific knowledge, awareness, and rationale, which are cognitive process on information. The main focuses are critical evaluation of message.

Media literacy is a concept about the sources and communication technology, codes of practices, output messages, and selections, interpretations, and outcomes from the message itself. In many developed countries, media literacy education has become an important agenda, by including that within the education curriculum. England, Germany, Canada, France, and Australia are some of the examples of nations that carry out media literacy education in schools.

Media education in Malaysia or Indonesia is only developed in formal education system, as taught in universities and tertiary educational institutions. According to Azhar Bidin, "*Media education is not part of the syllabus and is considered to be an 'alien' subject not only for student, but the teaching community as well".* Zaharom Naim's publication; *Media Role in a K-Economy: Media Studies and Participation in the Transformation of Malaysian Society,* stated that media education is normally carried out in higher institutions, but, can also be done in a form of informal training through workshop and discussion forums. In this context, media has an important role, not only for learning process at higher institutions, but also for society education in a broader sense (Azizah Hamzah & Drew McDaniel, 2003).

Media Education as Communication Strategy

Media education concept/term and communication strategy are two interconnecting concepts. Communication is a process for the transfer of information, emotion, and thought of one individual to other individual or group. Effective communication strategy is designated for a large number of people who are heterogeneous, anonym, and spread out through mass media. To be able to determine the exact communication strategy, philosophy and ideology as the foundation of mind set through the realization of the role of media in education process are required. In Indonesia, television is an effective medium to transmit values and messages which can influence many audiences. Televisions are addictive. Nowadays, TV is the most effective and acceptable media. Interaction between people, especially children, and television are very high. TV has an enormous power to influence children. Besides less study time compared to watching time, lack of parents' supervision on children's viewing materials, can result in low level of content filtering on uneducated programmes. This situation poses the necessity for children to have *self-censorship awareness* on media. The faster this media develop, thus, children's awareness on its implications must be also developed. Currently, media literacy

education in Indonesia is still limited to unstructured moves. These moves are conducted only in small scale. Media literacy education is not sufficient if only delivered in seminars, campaigns, and a week-long *road show*. Consequently, efforts to struggle the media literacy education are still not widely exposed to society.

In media education and communication strategy, can utilize paradigm model which is based on philosophy for communication curriculum suggested by Ahmad Murad Merican *Religious model, National-social control model, Bureaucratic model, Market model, Humanistic model, Electronic information model,* and *spiritual model* (Azizah Hamzah & Drew Mc Daniel, 2003). However, these models can be implemented by selecting one or a combination of them.

To resolve conflict among nations, media education and training as one communication strategy can be applied using the technique of problem solving process, communication, and internal communication. However, *joint problem solving strategy* is considered as the most effective one since it identifies the problem and giving an impressive support and communication. This strategy will include the following steps, namely:
- *Identification of interests*
  Inability to interpret an inexpressible complaint into a concrete request is one of the main constraints in conflict resolution.
- *Weighting interests*
  After the identification process each party then put a weight on each other's' interest.
- *Third party assistance and support*
  Third party is essential in facilitating the interest of the conflicting parties, particularly related to making proposed procedure, translating complaint into a concrete request, helping the conflicting parties to define the relative interest of the problems, arranging agenda of the meeting, and making judgment on substantial matters. The third party should be neutral so the conflicting parties can accept the results of negotiation.
- *Effective communication*
  The conflicting parties are required to actively communicate one another in order to define common issues that need to be settled.
- *Trust that an adversary will keep agreement*
  Penalty and sanctions are crucial to guarantee the sustainability of the agreed decisions among the conflicting parties.

TOWARDS HARMONY: COOPERATIVE STRATEGY

Harmony and sustainability of Indonesia-Malaysia relations can be referred to the communication strategy and solving problems model. In this regard, Prof. Madya Mohamad Md Yusoff from Centre of Communication Studies of University of Sains Malaysia mentions some statements, which are:
- *Firstly,* Eminent Person Group (EPG) needs to employ media experts. These people are expected to actively and carefully disseminate information to public. Therefore, fact finding and analysis of the needs of the people is important in decision making process.
- *Secondly,* a good relations among media needs to be maintain consistently.

- *Thirdly,* necessary measures needs to be taken to prevent provocative actions in order to disrupt the good relations between Indonesia and Malaysia. People should receive the unbiased information to avoid misperception. Therefore, supervision to information circulated by media is significantly required. Concerning this, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono (SBY) needs to make a policy to ensure the neutrality of information by media.
- *Fourthly,* The Embassy of Malaysia in Jakarta should also be more proactive in maintaining good relations with media, intellectuals, students, and the people of Indonesia in Malaysia. This is essential to keep the good relations between the same rooted nations.

Professor Mohamad continues to argue that good relations between the Islamic countries will enable both countries to dismiss sabotage and provocation form the third party. However, a good communication strategy that understands the global situation and public decision that based on the conflict theory and cultural acculturation is crucially needed for the harmony and sustainability of Indonesia-Malaysia relations. Media education to public audience and journalist needs to be constantly conducted to increase the awareness of keeping the good relations with others.

The Role of Government

The government which is directly responsible in the relations between the two countries and in relations with media also needs to put some consideration in finding problem solving strategy. Media education among officials of both countries needs to be provided, especially those who are working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press Council, Ministry of Communication and Information. Moreover, media education should be aimed primarily to the middle and low classes, the ones that can be easily provoked by media. Both governments should also create regular activities that will involve every stakeholder of both countries, such as: history and cultural campaign program, maximizing the capability of community based institution, facilitating academics initiatives.

Journalist

Media education and training to journalist will involve a critical and actual analysis of reality, the use of less offensive terms. Historical knowledge of two countries will also be beneficial for a better writing in newspaper. Compliance to the Code of Ethic Journalism, particularly aimed to Indonesian journalist will help in boosting trust between the people of the two countries. And appreciation should be given to those who provide a good quality of writings and inspirational for the maintaining of amicable relations between Indonesia and Malaysia. Creating a regular inter-media dialogue will be one of the best options to build a strong-network among journalists of the two countries which eventually contribute to a balance and responsible writing.

Indonesian-Malaysian Youth

Vast development in digital industry brings a new challenge to the distribution of information worldwide with all the consequences. Minimum awareness of this development will only cause

the disuse of media technology into destructive activities, prominently done by youth. Therefore, systematic and practical learning to the youth is important to encourage good relations of both countries, especially among their youth. Critical and positive attitude towards the provocative news on websites is essentially needed to be taught to the youth. The youth of Indonesia and Malaysia need to embrace that truth is not only the ones written by media and that tolerance is the best way to deal with differences. Blog, as one of the media of expression by the youth, should not be a place to mock others. In addition, exchange program should always be a priority to increase mutual understanding among young generation of Indonesia and Malaysia.

Public

The following step need to be taken is providing guidance to the public so the public can be more critical and wise in dealing with any negative news. A critical community is a community who is able to differentiate the written and hidden message of writing. A wise community is the one who is not provoked by provocative and negative news. People of Indonesia and Malaysia should also be aware that each of them has had a significant contribution one to another. A good example can be seen through the help of Malaysian people in the disaster recovery of Indonesian people and through the existence of Indonesia migrant workers for the Malaysia's economic development.

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