

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE PERCEPTION OF NATIONALISM AMONG COMMUNITIES IN ESSZONE: A GEO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZONE) which is located in the east coast of Sabah is vulnerable to security threats especially from the Philippines. This can be evidenced during the attacks on Tandu, Lahad Datu in 2013 which not only showed the vulnerability of the Sabah borders, but the support and acceptance among some of the locals towards the invasion. This study demonstrates the application of spatial statistic methods in mapping of the spatial distribution of the communities' perception of nationalism towards Malaysia. Through this method, the significant areas taken into consideration were clearly identified on the map of ESSZONE. Questions such as 'where' and 'what' were answered effectively based on geographical attributes. The data from Sabah Security & Strategic Research Centre (SASSREC) was first integrated into the Geographic Information System (GIS) database. Then, the spatial statistic was conducted to identify the distribution pattern of the data. From the distribution pattern, the study was able to highlight the area that significantly clustered for each chosen perception. Therefore, this study provides an alternative approach to view nationalism and assists the relevant authorities to take necessary measures with reference to the affected areas. This information could effectively be used in communicating with, and educating the public on the importance of nationalism for the country.

Keywords: *Nationalism, Perception, Spatial Statistics, Spatial Pattern*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nationalism is often described as the feeling of belongingness by the people to whom they express their loyalty to the territory and passionately devote themselves towards its welfare and prosperity (Kausar, 2005). Agnew (2007) stated that most researchers attempted to explain the formation of nationalism, as well as describe and interpret historical and contemporary acts of nation-building and national resistance movements. However, this was opposed by Mavroudi (2010) who stated that nationalism is much more than a concept as it is an ideology capable of both mobilising a population for war and conflict, as well as uniting dispersed and victimised groups.

Therefore, this response seeks to uncover and critique the dominant approaches adopted by human geographers when researching nationalism. Specifically, this study attempts to quantify approaches to nationalism in terms of their disciplinary focus, such as by political, cultural, social and psychological approaches as stated by Delanty and Kumar (2006) within the context of specific territories; as in this case, the district boundary. It is important to understand the daily activities of the people that live in the area as it can determine their pride and patriotism for their own country (Donna and Wilson, 1998).

ESSZONE stands for *Eastern Sabah Security Zone* and it comprised of ten (10) areas of Kudat, Kota Marudu, Pitas, Beluran, Sandakan, Kinabatangan, Lahad Datu, Kunak, Semporna, and Tawau. Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZONE) was formed and declared a security zone as a result of the Lahad Datu's intrusion in 2013. Thus, this study will focus on the ESSZONE. Analysis was then conducted based on the perception of the people that live within the borders of the ESSZONE.

In order to examine effectively the distribution of nationalism perception among the people, spatial analysis was used as it is capable to measure both places and the distribution. Place and context are now considered as relational understandings of the settings in which people live their lives (Castree, 2004). Defining the boundary for capturing contextual effects such as neighbourhood levels of poverty, racial or ethnic composition, and political representation can influence results greatly as these varying spatial scales have qualities that can be measured and included in multi-level analysis. Most scholars accept that geographic differences can be important and consequently, use statistical methods that incorporate a "fixed effect" approach (Linke and O'Loughlin, 2016) in their studies.

2. STUDY AREA AND DATA

The data was based on the survey conducted by Sabah Security & Strategic Research Centre, (SASSREC) of Universiti Malaysia Sabah in early year 2016. About 1,750 respondents were interviewed using the same survey forms in 35 locations in ESSZONE.

Geographic Information System (GIS) is a ‘computer system for capturing, managing, integrating, manipulating, analysing and displaying data which is spatially referenced to the Earth’ (McDonnell and Kemp, 1995). For the GIS process, all the data collected were included in the parliamentary boundary in GIS .shp file format. The parliamentary area in ESSZONE consists of 10 areas namely Kota Marudu, Kudat, Beluran, Libaran, Sandakan, Batu Sapi, Kinabatangan, Kalabakan, Silam and Semporna as shown in Figure 1 below; also representing the boundary chosen to conduct this spatial analysis.

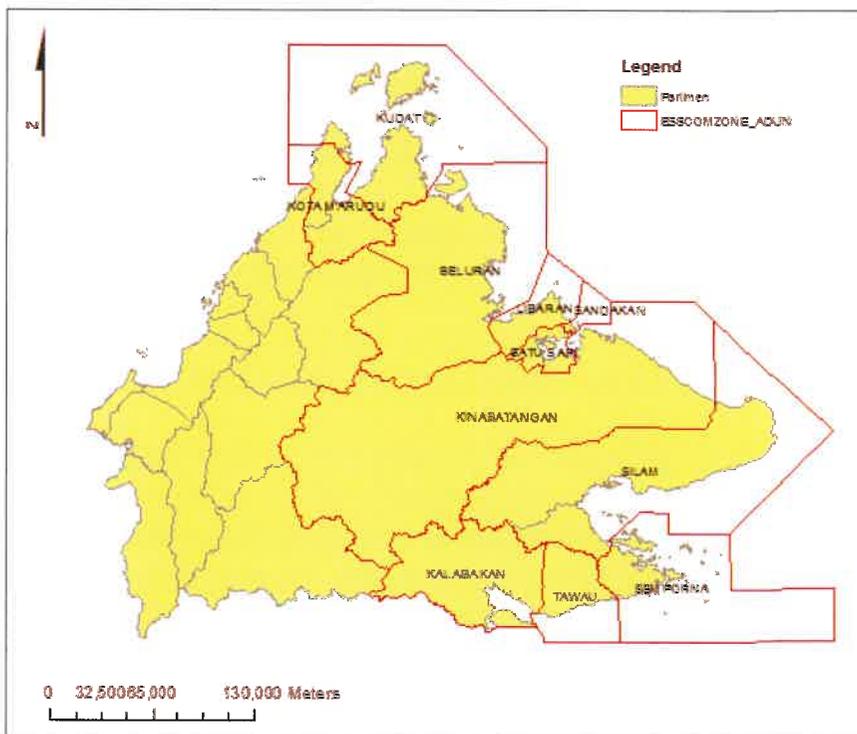


Figure 1: Map of Eastern Sabah Security Zone (in red colour boundary) in Sabah

Source : SASSREC (2016)

3. NATIONALISM IN ESSZONE

The Lahad Datu incident that occurred on 11 February 2013 caused by armed gunmen that were led by Sultan Jamalul Kiram III (Mullen, 2013) serves as a wake-up call to Malaysia which resulted in the formation of Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZONE) on 25 Mac 2013 by the Prime Minister of Malaysia. ESSZONE comprises of the ten (10) areas of Kudat, Kota Marudu, Pitas, Beluran, Sandakan, Kinabatangan, Lahad Datu, Kunak, Semporna and Tawau which are protected under the jurisdiction of Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM). ESSCOM which consists of both the police and military forces was restructured on 8 July 2014 with the setting up of two major components - security and defence management as well as enforcement and public action.

However, even the best security and defence management will be futile if the nation under its protection already lack patriotism. There are reports that some locals that work as police officers supported and assisted the intruders (Bernama, 2013). Other than that, abductions or kidnappings still occurred frequently even though curfew was imposed in some of ESSZONE area (Bernama, 2014). Some news reported that these kidnappings were assisted by some locals in which they gave info regarding when and where to strike the foreigners (Bernama, 2015).

Therefore, this study is important to identify the level of nationalism that have been instilled in the people that live within the borders of ESSZONE.

4. SPATIAL ANALYSIS USING LOCAL MORAN'S I

Spatial analysis for this study was conducted using local indicators of spatial association (or LISA; an acronym coined by Anselin (1995)) which assesses a null hypothesis of spatial randomness by comparing the values in each specific location with values in neighbouring locations. Several LISA statistics can be considered, but a local version of Moran's I is particularly useful as it allows for the decomposition of the pattern of spatial association into four categories (Anselin, 1996). Two of these categories imply positive spatial association; for example, when an above-average value in a location is surrounded by neighbours whose values are above average (high-high) or when a below-average value is surrounded by neighbours with below average values (low-low). In contrast, negative spatial association is implied for the other two categories when a high (above average) value is surrounded by low neighbours, and vice versa.

Both of these instances are labelled spatial outliers when the matching LISA statistics are significant. The equation for local Moran's I for area is as follows:-

$$I_i = z_i \sum_j^n w_{ij} z_j \quad \text{for } i \neq j \quad (1)$$

Where;

n is the number of regions; z_i and z_j are in standardized form of the attribute x_i of interest, and w_{ij} is the element of i th row and j th column of the row standardized weight matrix, W.

The standardized, z_i (orz_j), is given as:-

$$z_i = \frac{(x_i - \bar{x})}{s_x} \quad (2)$$

Where;

s_x is the sample standard deviation of x .

5. DISTRIBUTION OF THE DATA

Data was collected from SASSREC which conducted the survey around January and February 2016. 140 multiple choice questions that covered the 4 categories of profiles, nationalism, political identity and security survival were given to 50 respondents from each area involved in the study which totalled up to 1,750 respondents on the whole. This sample quantity taken for this analysis is appropriate as it consists of 30% of the total population of the relevant selected target.

Most of the multiple choice questions from the survey instrument was based on ordinal scale in which a number was used to represent the answer. For example, the highest number of 5 was used to represent "most agree" while number 1 was used to represent "most disagree". Local spatial autocorrelation or spatial clustering was used as the study analysis for this type of question. However, some of the multiple choice questions were set in nominal scale (e.g. yes and no) which are evaluated using descriptive or frequency analysis.

All the preliminary data collected was then included in the GIS data, and based on a parliamentary area provided by SASSREC, the average data for each area was calculated. Once the data has been checked and cleaned, analysis can then be conducted using ESRI's ArcGIS ver.10 software.

6. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

In the early stage, local Moran's I or clustering analysis was conducted for this study by using the data provided by SASSREC. However, this study only discussed the positive pattern of the analysis output as to highlight the highest average or lowest average of the people's perception towards nationalism based on the questions provided in the survey form. Study findings showed that there were five (5) significantly high and positive clustered pattern produced from the analysis.

In the first high positive item of "the immigrants would not create conflicts among the local culture", high acceptance level is apparent in the area around Kinabatangan (Figure 2). Secondly, it is also evident that the people especially in Sandakan provide high acceptability level for "culture sharing with the immigrants" as it will create harmony in Sabah.

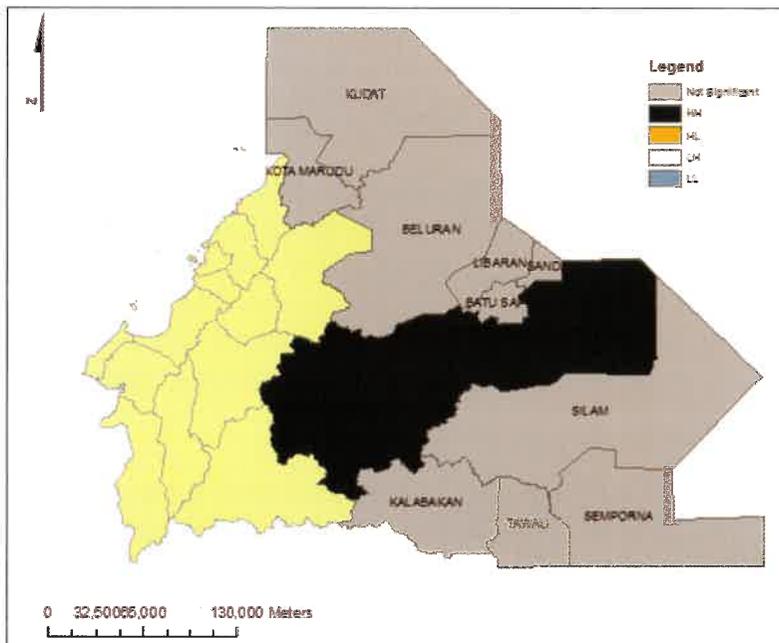


Figure 2: High acceptability value for “the immigrants would not create conflicts among the local culture” in Kinabatangan (Black coloured area)

Source : SASSREC (2016)

On the other hand, participants also agree that “the reason of large immigrant population in Sabah is caused by short proximity distance between Sabah and the Philippines” based on the high clusters obtained from Kudat and Kota Marudu. The locals also highly agreed that currently, the “regional integration are not in good condition” as evident in the Kinabatangan area. but the “Tanduo incident increase nation spirit” as it was highly clustered in Kalabakan.

In contrast, there were three (3) significantly low positive patterns obtained from the study. Low clustered of acceptance can be found in the Kinabatangan area regarding “immigrants steal the local job opportunity”. The people in Kinabatangan also do not agree that “regional integration create obstacle for Nation building in Malaysia” as indicated by low acceptance cluster in that area. Similar patterns were also obtained for the item of “worried as the increasing usage of weapons in neighbouring countries”; specifically in area of Libaran and Batu Sapi as they felt it did not affect them (Figure 3).

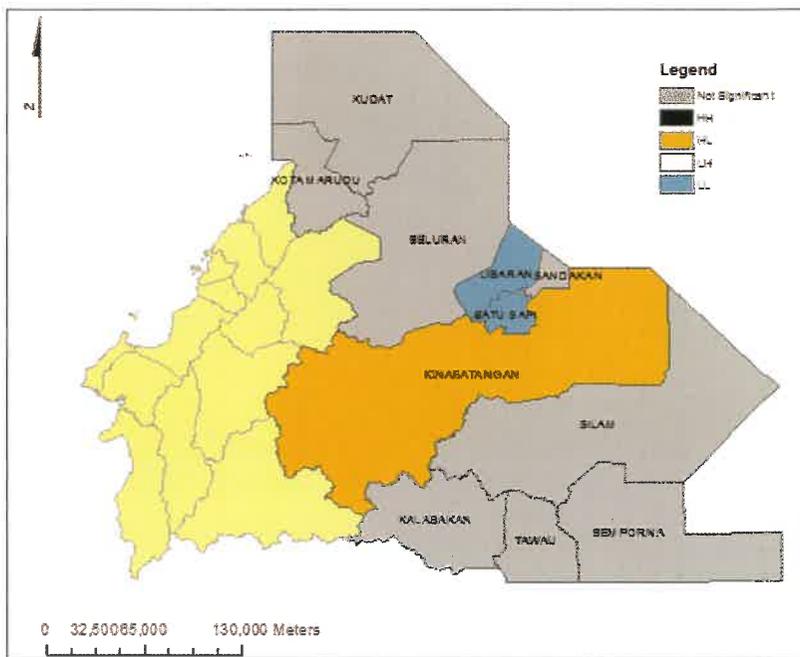


Figure 3: Low acceptability value for “worried as the increasing usage of weapons in neighbouring countries” in Sandakan (Blue coloured area)

Source : SASSREC (2016)

Based on the above analysis, it shows that most residents in the area supported the immigrant people and do not mind sharing culture with them as it does not negatively affect their economy. The locals also do not mind the conflicts that occur in the border country and its close distance with Malaysia.

In addition, this study also covers the participants' knowledge on patriotism (e.g. what is the date of Malaysia Independence Day?). Descriptive or frequency analysis was used in this study and it would be able to show which area produces the most incorrect answers in terms of patriotic knowledge. Figure 4 to Figure 6 below show that some areas in the study provide the most incorrect or unsure answers (> 50%). Figure 4 specifically highlights the area in Beluran which provided the most incorrect answers regarding the date of Malaysia's formation.

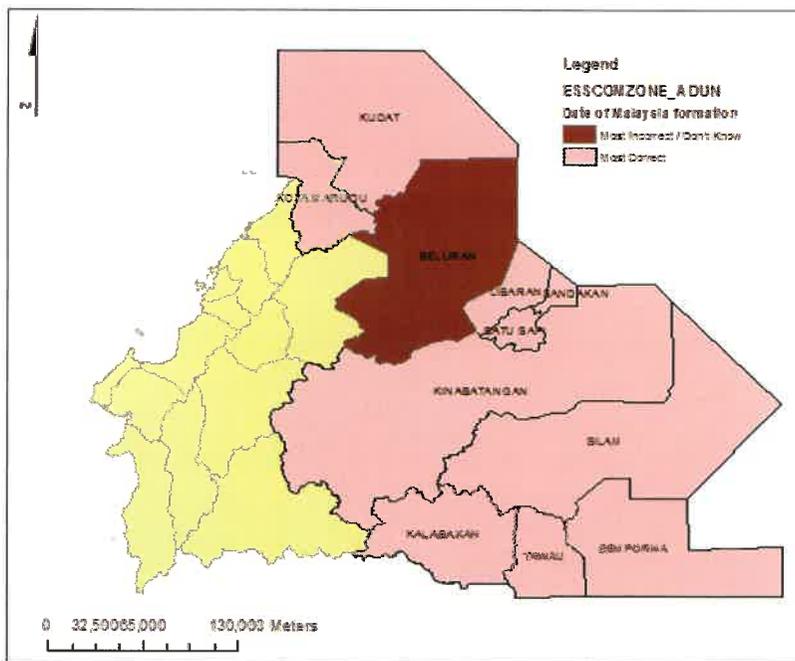


Figure 4: Feedbacks regarding Malaysia's date of formation

Source : SASSREC (2016)

Based on Figure 5, it shows that the respondents from Beluran, Libaran, Batu Sapi and Kinabatangan recorded highest inability in answering the exact date when Sabah achieved independence. Lastly, participants from Kota Marudu, Libaran, Sandakan, Batu Sapi and Kalabakan provided the most incorrect or unsure answers regarding "who is the first head of state of Sabah?".

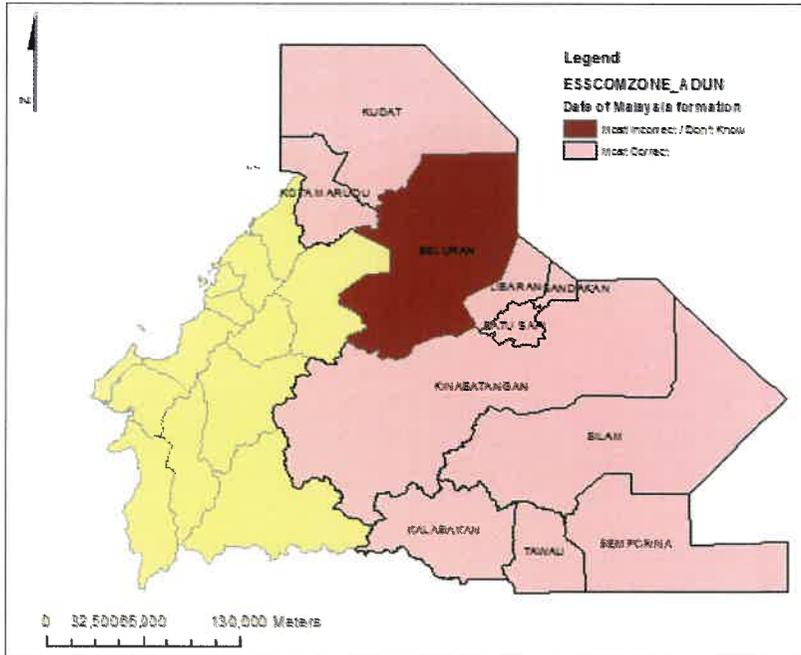


Figure 5: Feedbacks regarding Sabah’s date of Independence

Source : SASSREC (2016)

7. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This study concluded that most of the local people within the selected areas supported the people from the neighbouring country. Based on the feedback, they were not worried with the presence of the foreigners as they feel their culture is similar, and their interaction does not affect their economic activities. In contrast, when comparing their patriotism level as Malaysians, the study concluded that some locals in certain areas were unable to answer basic knowledge about Malaysia or its related historical events. This could be due to the locals having blood relatives of foreign nationalities.

However, findings from this study were generated from location-based study which might produce a different outcome for a non-location or non-spatial statistical analysis. This study also only focus on areas that provide positive clustered patterns of nationalism among the bordering people that contribute significantly high or low value.

Therefore, this study achieves its objective in providing alternative method in identifying nationalism perception through spatial statistics. The result clearly shows that the locals support the bordering people and this is in line with the hypothesis of this study. Further studies are required to identify the reason behind the locals' support for the people in bordering countries and the lack in nationalism knowledge for locals within the borders.

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