Managing Malaysia–Indonesia relations in the context of democratization: the emergence of non-state actors

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Abstract
This paper argues that Malaysia–Indonesia relations have become increasingly problematic and complex to manage in a post-Mahathir/Suharto era. The unequal pace of the democratization pattern in both countries has largely contributed to this state of affairs. The four key ‘transnational’ variables or determinants such as migrant labor, mass media, non-governmental organizations and the Anwar factor have significantly impacted on Malaysia’s ties with Indonesia against the backdrop of the unequal domestic political changes. These four variables have over the years become more prominent in bilateral relations—often in negative terms. More specifically, they represent the dynamics of the people-to-people dimension in bilateral ties. As such, the deterioration in people-to-people relations threatens to significantly reshape