Sovereignty and security

The territorialized nation-state, in modern state formation, comes hand in hand with the implementation of citizenship, state control over access to and use of national land and resources, and effort to control national space up to international borders (Sturgeon 2004:481).

This analytical statement made by Janet Sturgeon in her study of the ambivalent relationship between state and local village elites in claiming resource access in the Thai-China borderlands largely resembles many dynamics unfolding in the resource-rich border areas of West Kalimantan, especially the stretch of borderland discussed here.

In June 2005, a few months after the large-scale government crackdowns on illegal logging along the border, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyonn made a two-day visit to the province for a helicopter inspection tour along the international border with Sarawak, making the sudden crackdown on illegal logging seem more than a pure coincidence and part of a larger scheme. Returning to the provincial capital Pontianak, the president praised the enormous potential for development of the province, emphasizing oil palm plantations as a major development possibility along the lightly populated but heavily forested border with Malaysia (PKB 2005a, 2005c). This, he said, was in line with a newly introduced government development plan whose main goal was the creation of large-scale plantations that would run along the entire length of the Kalimantan-Malaysian border (Jakarta Post 2005b). In connection with the execution of this master plan, national media revealed how the government was planning the opening of a 2000 km border road and the establishment of several permanent military control posts to secure peace and order and protect the country against external threats (Jakarta Post 2005d; Kompas 2005a).
These presidential statements initiated a new era of central state involvement in the borderland. Through large-scale development plans and an increase in military authority, the Indonesian government once again underscored the perceived importance of strengthening state presence and sovereignty along its borders with Malaysia.¹ It was envisaged that the ‘lawless’ border region should once again be controlled by a strong army presence, and plantation ‘development’ should be the new security buffer zone facing an expanding neighbour (Jakarta Post 2005d). Among border communities, such initiatives were received with scepticism and widely understood to be part of the central government’s efforts to regain control of the border region, especially of the lucrative forestry sector, which it had partly lost with the official implementation of regional autonomy in 2001. More widely these new government proclamations seemed to feed into current government efforts to slow down or even re-centralize parts of the decentralization process, especially where local governments’ ability to control natural resources like forests were concerned.²

Large-scale development projects are elements of what James Scott has called ‘state simplification’, which is above all concerned with issues of legality and ultimately the enhancement of state control (Scott 1998). I do not here wish to present a picture of ‘the state’ as all seeing and all powerful; rather, I want to depict how such large state schemes along the border are based on simplistic analyses of the borderland and its population. Such schemes often do not work out as expected as they become part of an ongoing negotiation between higher- and lower-level players (Li 2005).

The borderland is a source of extreme anxiety for the modern Indonesian state that views the border population as unreliable and potentially subversive subjects. In the words of Abraham and Van Schendel,

Social groups that systematically contest and bypass state control do not simply flout the letter of the law; with repeated transgressions over time, they bring into question the legitimacy of the state itself by questioning the state’s ability to control its own territory (Abraham and Van Schendel 2005:14).

¹ President SBY is himself a retired general and former security minister.
² Warren 2005; Wollenberg et al. 2006; Yasmi et al. 2006.
As indicated in the previous chapter, the implementation of regional autonomy in the borderland led to drastic changes in the regulative powers concerned with forest resources. The result has been heightened tension between the central government and the districts. Before venturing into a discussion of how border communities and elites deal with recent intervention from the central state in regaining authority of the borderland, I will discuss a few examples of such top-down government interventions and how they fit into a broader state policy as it applies to the border, the adjacent borderland and its population. I will show how questions of ‘border development’ and ‘security’ have regained priority in the thinking of central and provincial legislators and how these processes run parallel with recent local border strategies already discussed in the previous chapters.

Another purpose of the chapter is to emphasize the oscillating character of the border; that is, how central state power waxes and wanes. At times, it appears weak, as during the previous period of community logging, while now state authority appears especially strong due to the increased military presence in the borderland. While this chapter recognizes the profound inequalities of power, uncertainty and risk that permeate life in the borderland, it does not portray state authority as absolute (Chalfin 2001). Rather, as thoroughly illustrated in previous chapters, the Indonesian state is far from the highly centralized state and unitary structure it claims to be, and the recent push to reassert state authority through large top-down government schemes and coercive military force was rapidly reshaped by the realities of everyday life and local-level politics in the borderland.

SECURITY THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

Underdevelopment and poor infrastructure along the border with Malaysia, together with the rise in illegal logging and smuggling, have long been seen by the central state as a national security problem. The central and provincial governments view development and national security as closely connected, and border development has long been named as a main priority by shifting governments. As discussed in chapter four, the focus on border development and security has been a continuous and dominant state discourse since the late 1960s when...
the forested borderland first became categorized as a green ‘safety belt’ (sabuk pengaman) to be solely managed and ‘developed’ by the army-owned foundation Yamaker. Development in most instances became an excuse for large-scale resource extraction. Decades later, in 1994, nearly half a century after independence, President Soeharto issued the first official presidential decree on development initiatives in the border areas of Kalimantan (Keppres 1994). According to the decree border development was imperative for national security, and the approach taken should therefore be generated through a system of defence and security (sistem pertahanan keamanan). The 1994 decree appointed a special ‘Agency for the Implementation and Control of Development in the Border Area, BP3WPK’. This agency involved various ministries but was mainly headed by the Ministry of Defence and Security (Departemen Pertahanan dan Keamanan, Dephankam) that also controlled the Yamaker Foundation.

On 30 July 1994, immediately after the agency’s creation, its chairman issued a decree on the formation of a technical team whose main purpose was to initiate joint security and development initiatives along the border. Although grand development plans for the border area were put forward; like opening up the area to transmigration settlements, mining, and plantations, any genuine commitment of the team to the noble cause quickly died away, and from 1996 onwards the team was largely inactive. The only ‘development’ processes taking place in the borderland were large-scale forest resource extraction. This is not surprising, considering that genuine development initiatives would have interfered with the timber business of Yamaker. It is widely believed among the border population today that any genuine development efforts were purposely neglected and ignored by powerful sections (military) within the New Order government in order to promote its own business arrangements. The lack of genuine commitment from powerful military players was also declared by border elites as the reason why they initially became engaged in the timber business. As often stated, it was better to cooperate and receive little than to get nothing and see all revenue from local forest resources ending up in the pockets of outsiders.

The 1994 presidential decree was very vague about actual initiatives

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5 Badan Pengendali Pelaksanaan Pembangunan Wilayah Perbatasan, BP3WPK.
5 Tim Teknis Pelaksanaan Pembangunan Wilayah Perbatasan.
and never resulted in any concrete development plan. It was consequently seen as a tool for legitimizing certain groups’ exploitation of the border’s natural resources. Despite highlighting the discourse of development, what characterised the approach behind this first presidential decree was that more weight was given to security and defence than development. However, one of the accomplishments of the team was to define the actual border zone and thereby the future development corridor along the border. The corridor was defined to be four kilometres wide and about 2000 km long. The border zone has since been defined very differently depending on which government department you ask; the width has been defined as anywhere from 4 to 100 km.

In Chapter 4, I mentioned that President Habibie closed down the Yamaker logging operations in the border area in 1999, a year after the fall of Soeharto. Another outcome of this change of government was the issuance of a new presidential decree revoking the previous decree (No. 44/1994) regarding border development issued by Soeharto (Keppres 1999). This step was part of a larger attempt by the Habibie government to downgrade the role of the military in national politics and other public matters as highlighted in the *dwifungsi* doctrine. The new decree stated that the BP3WPK team headed by Dephankam had been completely ineffective and had not achieved any development goals. Consequently, all of this agency’s authority was to be withdrawn and divided among a unspecified wider selection of government agencies. In 2001 under the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid, government plans for the management of the border areas were specified in yet another new presidential decree creating a special council\(^6\) for development of the eastern part of Indonesia, especially the border areas of Kalimantan (Keppres 2001).\(^7\)

In the following years, under President Megawati (2001-2004) and later President Yudhoyono, a series of draft plans, surveys and strategy reports appeared on the border issue that discussed development initiatives and spatial planning, although no real effort was made to implement these; logging was still big business along the border. The security and prosperity approach (*pendekatan keamanan dan kesejahteraan*) as initially introduced by Soeharto was still, post-Soeharto, playing a vital role in government border plans, and was repeatedly mentioned in various reports. However,

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\(^6\) Dewan Pengembangan Kawasan Timur Indonesia.

\(^7\) This council later became the Ministry for the Acceleration of Development in Eastern Indonesia, today known as Ministry for the Development of Disadvantaged Regions.
compared to the New Order regime the official rhetoric now seemed to be more focussed on prosperity and development than security and defence.

On 14 October 2003, a meeting was held in East Kalimantan between the Indonesian government and officials from the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak to discuss cross-border trade and development of a spatial plan for the border area between the two countries. A report prepared for the meeting stated that the main spatial policy was: ‘To boost the development of [the] border area as an Indonesian ‘front line’ to Malaysia.’ Attached to the report were several maps plotting all 25 subdistricts along the entire length of the border and specifying their development potentials, such as plantation, logging, forestry and mining activities (DJPR 2003). A month later, in November 2003, the National Development Planning Agency, Bappenas\(^8\) released the first official report on a strategy and model for developing the border areas of Kalimantan (Bappenas 2003). In this and several supplemental reports in 2004, 2005 and 2006 it was officially recognized that the border area for too long had been viewed as the ‘backyard’ (halaman belakang) of the country, stressing underdevelopment and lawlessness.\(^9\) Concurrently the Ministry of Forestry released its own decree sketching a strategic plan for forestry development in the border area, highlighting the problem of illegal logging and an urgent need for consistent law enforcement (Kepmenhut 2004).

According to the reports, a new paradigm was to be developed making the borderland into the ‘front yard’ (halaman depan) of the country, calling attention to its potential for prosperity and progress. Reports stated that the merely exploitative character of past development policies, with their emphasis on the need for security in the form of military presence, had resulted in low rate of infrastructure improvement in the border area and between the two neighbouring countries. In a 2007 interview on the Kapuas Hulu borderland, the head of the socio-cultural branch (social-budaya) of the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) supported this new view with the following statement:

Kapuas Hulu has for too long been left behind compared to other regions. For example if they [the border population] want to go Pontianak,

\(^8\) Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional.
it is too far because of non-existent infrastructure. Yes in this way we have pushed them closer to Sarawak (dekatkan dia dengan Serawak). We have raised the need for an overall presidential decree concerning the border with central government but no agreement has been made yet. Border development and planning is a federal or central issue. Districts may not make agreements on their own with Malaysia.¹⁰

Development initiatives needed to be balanced more evenly between a security approach and a prosperity approach. The ultimate mission, as quoted in a 2006 report on the key management plan of the countries’ borders, was to create a: ‘Secure, Orderly, and Advanced Territory’. According to the report ‘secure’ means creating security conditions that can be controlled and are conducive for business and free from illegal activities. ‘Orderly’ means that all economic, social and cultural activities at the border are based on law and regulation. And finally, ‘advanced’ refers to the better economic welfare of local communities (Bappenas 2006a:41).

Once again, border development was seen as closely related to the mission of national development and security. In the Middle-Term National Development Plan for 2004 to 2009 (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional, RPJM), border development was highlighted as one of the main priorities. This plan, among other things, emphasizes the eradication of cross-border smuggling as a means for securing and maintaining order in border areas of Indonesia. As stated in chapter six, page nine of the RPJM plan on ‘Enhancing Security and Order, and Overcoming Crime,’ the aim of the government is ‘to secure border areas of Indonesia by securing cross-border activities in the state border areas, and to take measures to secure the outermost islands of the nation’s borders’. Furthermore, chapter 26, paragraph 3 in ‘The Program of Development of Border Areas’ aims at

Maintaining the territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia, through the affirmation of the sovereignty of the NKRI (Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia)... enhance nationalism of the [border] communities; and to ensure the supremacy of law and legal regulations with regard to violations that are occurring in border areas (Perpres 2005b).

In an August 2005 speech at a plenary session of the Regional Representatives Council (DPD-RI) on the issue of regional development policy, President SBY stated that the government was now committed to improving the welfare of the border communities:

I have much sympathy towards the communities living in the area just in front of the nation’s borders. Their patriotism (rasa kecintaan) towards our beloved homeland (tanah air tercinta) is immense, and we therefore need to continue the development activities in the area (Ketpem 2005:9).

According to this presidential statement the only way to guarantee sovereignty (keutuhan), territorial integrity (kedaulatan wilayah) and national security (pertahanan nasional) was to improve the welfare of people in the border region. Border development was to change its orientation from the backyard of national development to ‘outward looking’ so the region could be used as a gateway for trade and economic activities with neighbouring countries. The main strategy for attaining this goal, as noted in several reports, was to create a large agricultural region or corridor along the border (kawasan agropolitan) (Bappenas 2003, 2004, 2006c)11 and thereby create local prosperity and minimize the border population’s economic dependency on neighbouring Malaysia as well as prevent separatism and illegal activities, especially illegal logging. As stated by the president during an official speech at the House of Representatives in August 2008 quoted in Tempo magazine, ‘Our border areas should be regarded as the front porch of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia, therefore we need to open up this back yard of the country’, here referring to the current underdevelopment along the border – a statement that has been repeated several times since (Agustiar 200812; Borneo Tribune 2009a).

The numerous reports on border development further defined the district of utmost concern within the two border provinces of East and West Kalimantan. The five Iban-dominated subdistricts within the

11 The concept of an Indonesian-Malaysian agricultural corridor had already been suggested as a suitable border strategy in a 2001 publication from the National Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology (Hamid et al. 2001). The concept of an agricultural corridor has since been promoted by various district governments along the border as a means of economic development (Thamrin et al. 2007).
12 Already during the 2004 presidential election campaign one of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s slogans was to make the border region into a shiny ‘front porch’ (beranda depan) of the nation by developing the neglected and under-developed border region.
Kapuas Hulu district were highlighted as first priority, in special need of development and increased national attachment. Additionally, in the spatial planning (tata ruang) of the Kalimantan-Sarawak-Sabah border region (KASABA) the central and provincial government selected five border entry points in West Kalimantan that would be developed into economic growth centres and agricultural regions; one of these was to be situated in the borderland at Nanga Badau (Bappenas 2006c:33; Equator News 2007a).

For much of the past half-century, the only official border-crossing point (Pos Pemeriksaan Lintas Batas, PPLB) where non-border residents could pass and international trade was allowed was at Entikong (West Kalimantan)-Tebedu (Sarawak), situated far away from the Kapuas Hulu borderland. The Nanga Badau crossing is not yet a designated PPLB although several attempts have been made to open it in the past decade. There are several reasons why this border point has not been officially opened yet, including the lack of funds and the issue of tax. As indicated in Chapters 5 and 6, the Badau border point was the main artery for smuggled logs into Sarawak during the logging boom and the unofficial status of this crossing made it possible for district officials and police to collect their own, unofficial taxes. As plainly stated by an Iban member of the district assembly (DPRD II):

The reason why the Badau gateway is not opened yet is that now every cross-border transaction can continue to be declared illegal, and when illegal it in the end becomes the game of government institutions for collecting unofficial taxes (mainan aparat pemerintah untuk sopoi). Even the security apparatus (aparat keamanan) is involved. If the border gates become official, there will be no more unofficial tax (cukai-cukai dibelakang). I visited Badau two weeks ago where I was told that every person who went ‘shopping’ in Sarawak was asked to pay 50 Malaysian Ringgit to various officials [military and police] when they returned. I got very disappointed (kecewa) and must say that if this gate is not opened soon it means that central government wishes the border area to remain unlawful.
As part of the central government plan for ‘legalizing border trade’, initial steps to open this border point have been taken; customs and immigration buildings have been constructed and a gate erected (Equator News 2006b). Ironically, during a 2007 visit to Badau I found that this ‘official’ gate was still locked and all movement of people and goods across the border still followed a small, unofficial dirt road into Sarawak that had initially been built for smuggling logs during the years of illegal logging. Likewise, Malaysian authorities have been hesitant to develop infrastructure for a similar official border crossing point on their side because of the bad road conditions on the Indonesian side and the huge influx of labour migrants that might result (Borneo Tribune 2009b; Pontianak Post 2007a). Nevertheless, in anticipation of an impending opening and the new economic boom that might follow, several highly placed officials in Putussibau bought up all the land close to the border gate for erecting shops.

Despite these initiatives and wider attempts to develop a master plan for the border region, the various government bodies involved in this process has been largely crippled as there still is no official law or decree that specifies what exactly makes up the borderland and what the division of labour is between the different levels of government (Jakarta Post 2009). In need of a legal umbrella (payung hukum), the Indonesian parliament has since the presidency of Megawati Sukarnoputri discussed the content of a coming border law draft (Rancangan Undang-undang Perbatasan, RUU) to determine the levels of government and departments that will be responsible for the future management of Indonesia’s border regions. Both the governments of Megawati Sukarnoputri and SBY have previously had draft laws made up on the spatial planning of the Kalimantan border area that stipulated the main priorities for the border. However, these drafts have never been signed by the president and therefore have not taken effect as formal laws (Keppres 2003; Perpres 2005c). Local speculation in the border districts interprets this slow progress of legalizing border activities as a central government excuse for strengthening its authority over the ‘lawless’ border through re-militarization of the borderland.

In order to speed up the process of creating border legislation, the previous governor H. Usman Ja’far (2003-2007) put together a special
Sovereignty and security | provincially headed ‘Agency for the Preparation of Special Border Area Development’ (Badan Persiapan Pengembangan Kawasan Khusus Perbatasan, BP2KKP) (Pergub 2005). The BP2KKP works under the Regional Development Planning agency in Pontianak, and its main objective is to survey and collect socio-economic data on the border that later is to feed into the overall presidential master plan. Head of the BP2KKP, Nyoman Sudana, stated in a 2005 interview that the most urgent problem in the border area is related to national sovereignty, and he was worried that the relative poverty of the border people would cause a decrease in nationalism:

Until now there is no clear agreement on the borderline between the two countries and many border poles are damaged or removed. The border area has not yet been properly socialized into the nation. The dominant merchant trading is carried in foreign currency (mata uang asing) and moreover, our citizens at the border are more familiar with the leaders of our neighbours (mengenal pemimpin di Negara tetangga) compared to those of their own country (dibandingkan dengan negara sendiri) (Equator News 2005c).

On the provincial level, border development was seen as a major future economic asset, which could enhance the lucrative cross-border trade with Malaysia. The slow pace of the centre caused several provincial and district level commentators to accuse the central government of being inconsistent and uncommitted in its effort to develop the border area, as it repeatedly has postponed the implementation of official legislation. Provincial and district assembly representatives express an increasing bewilderment about central government’s main goals. The demand for immediate action has become increasingly pronounced and made headlines in provincial newspapers.\(^{18}\) This general perplexity over the unclear signals from Jakarta was clearly expressed in an interview with provincial assembly (DPRD I) members in 2007:

Our main problem is that every decision concerning the border has to be taken by central government; everything must go to Jakarta first. This means that compared to our neighbour Sarawak who does not have to wait for central Malaysian decisions we are much slower in making deci-

sions, and are lagging behind. Therefore, we ask the president to promptly create an official border law. We have asked the president for special treatment (perlakuan khusus) that could enable us to improve the social economic development in the border area. However, our pleas have not yet been answered by the central government, a sign especially for us as the people’s representative here that the central government is indifferent (setengah hati) about giving special treatment on particular issues that have been requested by West Kalimantan. We fear (pesimislah) that we will have to wait another 20 years for the planning of central government and again are going to be left behind (tertinggal). When our president visited the border post at Entikong [SBY’s visit to the province in June 2005], he said that the border should become the front window (jadikan jendela depan) of West Kalimantan. But how is this to be realized? For now it is only rhetoric (retorika saja). I am worried that if we get a new president; this law is not going to be created. The point is that now there is a rising willingness (keinginan) from the border districts to take action, but they have only limited capacity, financially and legally, to take care of these matters.19

The head of the provincial assembly was even quoted as saying that the whole border area was like a ‘time bomb’ just waiting to explode if central government did not soon create a clear set of guidelines and subsequent legislation for developing the area (Sinar Harapan 2007).

GRAND SCHEMES

Following the numerous and vaguely defined border plans previously outlined by central government, and despite the lack of an overall legal framework, Minister of Agriculture Anton Apriantono publically announced in May 2005 the formation of a plantation corridor to span the entire length of the border with Malaysia (about 2000 km). The initial goal of this grand plan was the creation of the world’s largest oil palm plantation (1.8 million hectares) (Pontianak Post 2005a). Quoted in the Jakarta Post, the Minister claimed that the plantation would create more than half-a million jobs and attract foreign exchange to the country. Besides creating jobs for local populations the government ex-

pected to move unemployed workers from densely populated provinces of Indonesia into the sparsely populated border area as part of a large transmigration project. The main investors in the plantation were to be the Chinese government and Malaysian companies, with Rp 5.5 trillion (US$567 million) in projected initial capital over the next five years. The minister stated, ‘The project is aimed at strengthening our border against our neighbour Malaysia, as well as reducing the prosperity gap between our people living along the border and those in Malaysia’ (Jakarta Post 2005b). These statements on border security concerning Malaysia sounded rather hollow considering that some of the main investors were to be Malaysian companies.

In a public speech to the provincial government in Pontianak during his visit in June 2005, President SBY supported the plan announced by his Agricultural Minister and said that plantation development was crucial for the overall development of the border area. President SBY expected that jobs created through plantation development would help the local border population become less dependent on wage labour in Malaysia and more attached to their own country. Furthermore, the development of infrastructure such as roads along the border would strengthen the country’s border against so-called illegal practices like cross-border timber smuggling and undocumented labour migration. President SBY stated:

> In order for this [plantation plan] to develop, we also have to develop a road running parallel to the border. We must close down all the mouse roads (jalan-jalan tikus) that frequently are employed for the undertaking of illegal activities [smuggling of timber into Malaysia]. If this plantation plan goes well, tens or even hundreds of thousands of people could be employed in the border area (PKB 2005c).

The president further elaborated on this grand plan to Tempo:

> Our plan is to develop the areas alongside the border for palm oil plantations, forestry, and tourism centres. If we can develop this from the West to the East, security and stability will be better. Palm oil and agricultural cultivation will raise incomes, absorb the workforce, and increase regional taxes. Meanwhile, we will be able to keep on nurturing the sense of nationhood and being Indonesian (Tempo 2005a).
In July 2005 the government-owned plantation cooperative PT Perkebunan Pusantara (PTPN) informally released a rather hasty and not well thought out report showing that the proposed palm oil plantation scheme would run straight through and overlap with two large national parks, one of which was the Betung Kerihun National Park in the borderland (Persero 2005). That extensive planning proposal was quickly turned down by the central government when Minister of Forestry Malam S. Kaban said that his ministry would stop any new conversion of forest into plantations and instead use abandoned and deforested land in the border area for such developments (Jakarta Post 2005a). In August 2005, Kaban addressed a letter to the minister of agriculture concerning oil palm plantations in the border area and requested that the agricultural ministry remember that large parts of the border area were set aside for conservation purposes and forestry cultivation.\(^{20}\) The minister of agriculture later (October 2005) acknowledged that only 180,000 hectares rather than 1.8 million hectares along the border were actually suitable for oil palm plantations (Wakker 2006), and in December the Directorate General of Spatial Planning acknowledged the need to consider the environmental impact when developing spatial planning for the Kalimantan border (DJPR 2005).

At the time of writing, the status of the ‘world’s largest’ plantation is unclear. The overall plantation plan has received major attention from national and worldwide media.\(^{21}\) The plan drew strong criticism from various national and international NGOs for its immense effect on the natural and human environment (Down to Earth 2005; Lorens 2006; Wakker 2006). The World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) in particular lobbied intensively against the government plan, as it was afraid that the plan would destroy its ‘Heart of Borneo’ initiative, an initiative that sought to establish 225,000 km\(^2\) of conservation area along the Indonesia-Malaysia border. WWF, like many local communities, saw the plantation plan as an excuse to cut the remaining forest along the border, especially as there was more than enough ‘sleeping’ (fallow) land (lahan tidur) or ‘empty’ land (tanah kosong) that had been deforested and abandoned and could be developed into plantations.\(^{22}\) Furthermore,

\(^{20}\) Surat 476/Menhut-IV/2005 Tanggal 16 Agustus.
\(^{22}\) Jakarta Post 2005f; Lorens 2006; Media Indonesia 2005b; Susanto 2005.
large stretches of the border are unsuitable for oil palm production as the proposed land is very hilly and highly vulnerable to soil erosion (Lorens 2006).

In response to the widespread and mostly negative international attention, Indonesian authorities have begun downsizing and modifying the plan. Despite not being implemented in its original grand form, an Indonesian-Malaysian agricultural corridor along the border is still on the government agenda and could be readily implemented. The vast territory is now split up into smaller segments and being developed on a lower and less conspicuous level; for example, plantation (logging) companies are negotiating directly with local communities and district governments. (Departemen Pertanian 2009).

RE-MILITARIZING THE BORDER

As discussed in previous chapters, the military presence and authority in the border area has waxed and waned over time, from being extremely conspicuous during the Soeharto era to less noticeable in the nearly ten years of decentralization as a consequence of shifting reform government’s attempts to diminish military authority. The political role of the military was greatly reduced after the fall of Soeharto when the new reform governments initiated a restructuring of the institution. In 1999, the Habibie government banned any army participation in national elections and required the army to cut all ties with the Golkar party and remain neutral. Subsequently, military factions within the different levels of government and civil politics were steadily reduced. The Indonesian military changed its name from the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) to the Indonesian National Army (TNI) and was separated from the National Police (Polri). However, the military has always had a powerful role in shaping the borderland even at times it has been less obvious. Despite losing ground within civil politics, the military seems to have largely maintained their role within the business sector (Human Rights Watch 2006).

During the post-Soeharto ‘illegal’ logging boom in the borderland, the military, although less visible, was engaged in the timber business, mostly receiving benefits for keeping their eyes shut and providing protection to various companies (Kompas 2004h). The prosperity and
security approach reintroduced by recent central government border development plans have come as a highly welcomed and long awaited opportunity for the military to regain visibility along (and access to) the resource-rich border and to reclaim its past glory as protectors of territorial sovereignty and security. Some of the more cynical spectators among the border population even speculate that the discourse of national sovereignty and border security is manufactured in order to justify larger budgets for the military. It is locally argued that the military requires a good cause in order to prove the need for a strong military establishment in post-Soeharto Indonesia.

Immediately after the government presented the plan for a large-scale, mostly oil palm plantation corridor along the border, high-ranking military spokespersons were quick to express their strong support for the plan. Riding high on the central government rhetoric of security and a general public demand for stronger territorial defence against Malaysia, the establishment of several permanent military control posts was proposed in order to secure the border area and protect the country against external threats such as cross-border illegal logging and trade. The porous border and lawless borderland were further seen as an obvious entry point for foreign terrorists and therefore in dire need of military and police protection. Some even suggested that a unit of the police special anti-terror corps (Detasemen Khusus, Densus 88 Anti-Terror) should help patrol the border (Equator News 2005a).

In December 2005 Major General Erwin Sudjono from the Kalimantan regional command in Pontianak expressed the military’s views on large-scale plantations in a daily provincial newspaper under the title ‘The Army supports oil palm on the border,’ where he was quoted saying, ‘Why should we [the army] not open up the border area

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23 The focus on border militarization and national sovereignty has recently been sharpened by the latest controversy involving accusations made by Indonesian military that a Malaysian paramilitary force (Askar Wathaniyah) deployed to safeguard the Sarawak border has recruited members of the Indonesian border populations (Antara 2008). Another ongoing controversy is the issue of the border poles. Indonesian media and military spokespersons have occasionally accused Malaysian plantation companies of moving border poles several meters into Indonesian territory in order to gain access to more land and timber. The Indonesian military even claim that 50 poles have gone missing altogether (Equator News 2005c; Berita Sore 2009, Jakarta Globe 2009). For example in July 2009, the military command in Pontianak exterminated several Malaysian oil palm plots on the border that supposedly were ‘illegally’ encroaching on Indonesian territory (Sinar Harapan 2009).

24 Personal interviews, Badau, 21-3-2007.

25 Jakarta Post 2005c; Kompas 2005d; Pontianak Post 2005f; Sinar Harapan 2005c.

26 Panglima Komando Darea Militer, Pangdam VI/Tanjungpura,
The army controls this area. The border area is the sole property of the army (*milik TNI*) (*Pontianak Post* 2005c).

Later, in March 2006, on an inspection tour to the East Kalimantan part of the border, Commander-in-Chief of the National Armed Forces (TNI) Djoko Suyanto, accompanied by Major General Erwin Sudjono, announced that he was strongly in favour of plans to develop the border using agribusiness, especially oil palm plantations. He stated:

> We support the development of border areas in the aim to improve the welfare of the people (*kesejahteraan rakyat*); in addition to this there are strategic goals (*tujuan strategis*) related to aspects of security to be considered. This [development] program has actually been planned for tens of years… There is no reason to reject the development of the border because the main purpose is the welfare of the people in the area as well as the security aspects (*aspek keamanan*).… We will continue to build defence posts (*pos penjagaan*) along the border in the years 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 until the issue of [economic] disparity in the border area is completely solved (*Berita TNI* 2006).

Djoko Suyanto was further quoted as saying, ‘[T]he border between Kalimantan and Malaysia was a region in special need of being strictly guarded (*diwaspadai*) as the area was exposed to many illegal activities, like illegal logging, illegal mining and illegal fishing (*Suara Karya* 2006).

Concerning the environmental impact of the plantation corridor Major General Erwin Sudjono from the regional command denied that it would cause any major problems, as he himself had noticed during many helicopter inspection tours along the border that large tracts of the forest were already damaged due to illegal logging (*Berita TNI* 2006).

Besides introducing large-scale and top-down plantation development to replace the subversive economy of illegal logging, the wake of the anti-logging campaign discussed in the previous two chapters brought a large increase in military personnel stationed along the border (*Pontianak Post* 2006b). Starting in late 2006, several hundred soldiers were dispatched to the area, and control posts or camps were erected in the borderland with barbed wire and a shooting range. Each camp was manned by one heavily armed company locally known as the LIBAS border soldiers (Tentara Lintas Batas). Furthermore, just a few kilometres away from the district capital Putussibau a large military camp with
At the edges of states

room for one battalion (Battalion Infanteri 644 Walet Sakti) was erected and additionally a large military airbase planned (pangkalan udara or lanud) (Equator News 2008). The large military camp was supposedly constructed farther away from the immediate border area in order not to provoke the Malaysians to counter the move and begin reinforcing the army presence on their side of the border. In spite of this effort to avoid provoking the Malaysians, however, the Indonesians’ increased military presence was quickly countered across the border (The Sunday Post 2007).

This sudden show of force reminded many locals of the period of militarization in the 1960s and 1970s, although now the supposed enemy was not Chinese Malaysian communists but Chinese Malaysian capitalists (the tukei) and their local associates. Therefore, the army was welcomed to the borderland with mixed emotions and suspicion. The main objective of the LIBAS soldiers was to secure the area by patrolling the road between Putussibau and Badau and thereby prevent further attempts to smuggle logs across the border. Permanent camps were erected at strategic points along this stretch of border; Three camps were built in the borderland discussed: one at the Badau border, one in Puring Kencana and one along the Leboyan River in the vicinity of the community of Rumah Manah. Ironically, this camp was erected in the same location as a former Yamaker logging camp and previous army camps of the 1960s and 1970s, so it is not surprising that local communities felt that the past was repeating itself. Placed strategically beside the logging road leading up to Apheng’s now abandoned logging camps in the Ulu Leboyan, the LIBAS was able to monitor all traffic going in and out of this still heavily forested area along the border.

Signs of tension between local residents and LIBAS quickly emerged, usually triggered by LIBAS soldiers’ lack of sympathy towards local norms of conduct and general interference in local activities. LIBAS soldiers were generally very young and usually from outside the province, and they were only stationed for three months at a time in the camps before being replaced by fresh recruits. One outcome of this was that they felt little commitment towards local communities and little understanding of local grievances. Furthermore, meagre salaries and boredom resulted in many LIBAS soldiers becoming deeply involved in different forms of illegal trade and extortion. When they appeared in public they

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27 Antara 2007; Equator News 2007g; Pontianak Post 2007d.
were heavily armed and entered villages without local approval; this superior attitude was very provocative for local youths especially and did not fit well with the local sense of autonomy. The LIBAS stationed in the vicinity of Rumah Manah, for example, stripped Apheng’s large logging camp in the Ulu Leboyan of anything of value and sold the items for their own personal gain, an act that generated a fair amount of local disapproval and anger as these items were considered local property after the flight of Apheng.

During my fieldwork in 2007, several minor clashes between young soldiers and young Iban men occurred; one incident nearly led to a local uprising. On 30 May 2007, a quarrel broke out between a group of young Iban men and a group of LIBAS soldiers in a small roadside coffee shop in Lanjak. The fight had been ignited a few hours before during a cockfight in a nearby village. The betting on cocks involved large amounts of cash and the consumption of liquor; consequently emotions were running high when suddenly one of the attending soldiers grabbed one of the fighting cocks before the fight was declared finished, which was considered a major offence. The soldier supposedly grabbed the cock on which he was betting because it was mortally wounded and destined to lose. The soldiers immediately left the village, but Iban men remained and began discussing the many grievances they had experienced since the arrival of the LIBAS. Later, in Lanjak, the same soldiers ran into some of the Iban from the cockfight and a fight broke out. One of the soldiers pulled a knife and stabbed one of the Iban men several times. The surrounding Iban immediately struck down the offending soldier. The local police arrived and brought all involved parties to the station in order to find a solution. Compared to the LIBAS army patrols (on short term contracts) the local subdistrict police (Polsek) and small army commands (Koramil) are, due to their long-term presence in the area, deeply entrenched in local society, and the personnel are often locally married. These ties enabled them to mediate between the youth and LIBAS.

In accordance with local customary law, the Iban community demanded that the LIBAS pay a fine of Rp 30 million (US$3,300) if the victim died and Rp 15 million if not. The LIBAS refused to pay any compensation, and because it is out of the jurisdiction of the police to deal with matters involving the army the soldiers were released. The following day a large group of LIBAS soldiers arrived in Lanjak to avenge their friend who had been severely beaten during the incident.
They cruised the town threatening locals and ended up hitting two men with the barrels of their rifles. This disregard of local norms and rules provoked strict condemnations from local *patih* and *temenggong*, who demanded that just action be taken to punish these soldiers; they also threatened that if the military did not pursue this it would be dealt with locally. Immediately afterwards the head of the local military command reprimanded the soldiers, who quickly were assigned to another part of the border. The tension was partly settled by the LIBAS paying a symbolic fine of Rp 1 million. Although not pleased with the size of the fine, the symbolic token and the fact that the young Iban victim survived prevented the locals from taking more drastic actions. However a majority of the Iban mentioned that they still preferred that the LIBAS leave the area completely.

With state authority becoming more conspicuous in the borderland, border communities were once again forced to adjust to the changing power configurations. The border communities had enjoyed a fair amount of autonomy in the years of increased administrative decentralization. Hence the arrival of new ‘outside’ players exercising state authority inevitably increased tensions. Statements by high ranking military generals, as well as the military’s past and current business interests, indicate that there is more at stake for the military than security issues. Several commentators claim that the military build-up in the border area is more about reclaiming a share of the revenues from further timber harvesting and oil palm plantations than about dealing with illegal activities threatening national security (Wakker 2006; WALHI 2007). One local rumour goes that besides valuable timber resources the army is interested in the possibly large gold and coal reserves to be found in the hills along the border.

**CONTESTING LARGE-SCALE SCHEMES**

The border elite quickly linked concurrent attempts to stop illegal logging and timber smuggling along the border to central government’s large-scale development projects and subsequent attempts to strengthen border security through militarization. However, as noted by *temenggong* Jabak during a 2005 interview, rather than curbing the degradation of forest resources and opening plantations, these new government plans
are likely to mean that even more forest is cleared and more timber is provided for trade. This time, however, control will be back in the hands of central and provincial level players, as was the case in the Soeharto days. Such proclamations from border elite might sound rather hollow taking into account that segments of the border elite themselves colluded with powerful state players during Soeharto’s New Order. As further indicated by an Iban District Assembly member,

It is important to remember history. Nearly all previous attempts to promote top-down plantation development in the borderland like oil palm have failed as the centrally based companies usually left the area as soon as they had cut all valuable timber on the forest plots allocated for such plantations.28

This DPRD was referring particularly to an incident in the late 1990s when the company PT Plantana Razindo (partially military owned) attempted to cut down community forest in the Badau area under the pretence of clearing land for an oil palm plantation (see Chapter 5). A similar example was a plantation company headed by the Rokan Group Holding Company that in the early 1990s opened up community lands for oil palm production and Javanese transmigrants in the subdistricts of Badau and Empanang (150,000 ha). This company later abandoned its concessions, having logged the area and rendered it unproductive.29

Among other concerns, local communities fear that locally claimed land along the border is in danger of being forcefully converted into oil palm or rubber plantations (Media Indonesia 2005b). A presidential regulation dated 3 May 2005 stated that the government could force the release of land when this is in the public interest (Perpres 2005a). This regulation restates the Agrarian Land Law (Agrarische Wet) of the Dutch from 1870 which stipulated that all uncultivated land was state property that could be leased out to companies for plantation development on a long-term basis. After independence, this law, a kind of authority for eminent domain, was incorporated into the 1960s Indonesian legislation enabling the commandeering of land in the national interest. The justification of ‘public interest’ (national security and development) for the current development plan led to fears on the part of the local community that the

28 Personal interview, Putussibau, 14-6-2005.
29 Personal interview, Iban patih, Badau, 19-3-2007.
government would apply this regulation in order to revoke their newly gained authority over local forestlands (Suara Bekakak 2006). As noted earlier, in the heyday of decentralization reforms local communities experienced a degree of regional autonomy that created authority to deal with local forest resources without interference from the central government. But now, as power relations between the centre and the districts once again seem to be changing, locals are concerned about how those changes will affect the status of their land. Most border communities lack official certificates showing legal ownership of their land and therefore are vulnerable to encroachment from plantation companies backed by state power and regulations (Borneo Tribune 2008).

Centuries of engagement in kinship relations and labour migration across the border into Sarawak have made local communities aware of the way Iban in Sarawak have experienced a major loss of customary lands as a consequence of state-initiated oil palm development. Consequently, a majority of local communities along the border have a healthy suspicion of large-scale plantation projects. Border elites and communities were not opposed to plantations as such and many are quite favourably disposed towards small-scale plantations as long as the local people retain control of their land and engage in cooperation with outside investors, like Malaysian companies. The main fear is that government will forcibly allocate their land to plantation companies and provide these companies with legally binding licenses, meaning that local communities will have to work as common workers on their own land.

Although local plantation development within the borderland was seen as a way out of the economic depression and a possible road towards prosperity, the announcement of government controlled large-scale plantations was locally received with caution and suspicion. Several members of the border elite announced that they would not allow any outside companies to enter local forestlands without prior agreements with local communities. As stipulated by an Iban temenggong in a 2007 interview:

Many companies want to enter the area and open oil palm plantations, but we have not yet given our consent (belum terima). We will wait until we have gained official authority over the area.... For too many years,

30 The border communities have a long history of small-scale rubber cultivation while the cultivation of oil palm is unfamiliar to most.
we have been controlled and managed by others, and still our lives are the same as they were 50 years ago. Nothing has changed. We intend to manage our own region (ngurus daerah kita sendiri). We will only get the maximum benefits if we manage things ourselves. Government promises and programs never ‘touch the ground’ (tidak menyentuh), as they are all top-down.\(^\text{31}\)

The temenggong is here referring to the Iban’s long-time borderland aspiration of separating from the Kapuas Hulu district and creating their own administrative district along the border. A new district would help them gain control of their own natural resources and revenues derived from these. These and similar statements clearly reflect long-standing dissatisfaction with the central government’s past lack of commitment to integrating the borderland into the broader national economy beyond extracting its natural resources.

**TIGHTENING BORDER REGIMES**

Since the Habibie government downgraded the role of the military in politics and the economy in 1999, the military have been searching for alternative ways to make their services more necessary. The above chapter about the tightening border regimes indicates that the military are trying to conjure up an imminent need for military protection of national sovereignty along international borders. Moving from a role as protectors of internal unity by eradiating attempts of separatism during Soeharto, they now seek a lucrative role as protectors of national sovereignty against outside threats like Malaysian timber gangsters. The re-militarization of the borderland could thus indicate the beginning of another chapter in the waxing and waning of state power on the border. Through its ability to provide concrete acts of ‘development’, the central government anticipate a strengthening of the experience of inclusion in the state project among their border citizens and at the same time assertion of its sovereignty along the border.

The case of the world’s largest oil palm plantation and its consequent failure to materialize in its envisioned form shows how grand schemes

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\(^{31}\) Personal interview, Lanjak, 28-3-2007.
often are undermined by the numerous, and at times contradictory, agendas of various state agents and agencies. In the following chapter, I will demonstrate how these contradictory interests open up room for manoeuvring and negotiation by local-level actors through their various networks. I will specifically focus on how the rhetoric of development and security – which was proclaimed as the main reasons for implementing these large state schemes – is used by border elites to negotiate increased local autonomy.

Since the crackdown on logging activities in 2005, the borderland has been in a state of economic depression. The anger generated within local communities has been immense and appears to be both economic and cultural – based on the central government’s usurpation of ‘traditional rights’. The central and provincial government is perceived as the catalyst and direct cause of recent economic hardship. Although ordinary community members only received a small share of profit from the harvested forest during the logging boom taking place between 2000 and 2005, benefits to them had still been much larger than under the centralized political system of the New Order when the local economy had prospered greatly. The central government’s subsequent crackdown on what was perceived as ‘illegal’ logging severely angered local communities who had viewed the logging in the spirit of regional autonomy. By taking things into their own hands and circumventing the higher levels of government, the border population experienced the possibilities of greater autonomy. This feeds into a more general local disillusionment with the slow pace of genuine border development that seems to nurture a local sense of borderland solidarity and a drive for more autonomy (Kalimantan Review 2005).

In the wake of the above-mentioned events, the idea of a new autonomous border district emerged among the local elite. The same elite had gained authority and useful political networks through past and present engagement in the lucrative timber business. However, lessons learned from the subsequent state ban on logging accentuated the importance of accommodating state laws and regulations, and thus re-asserting

58 Personal interview, Badau, 20-3-2007.
themselves as good citizens of an imaginary unitary nation-state – for their efforts to succeed. These local struggles over forest and the shifting and overlapping spheres of authority between border elites and district and central governments form the basis for contemporary political manoeuvres designed to create a new autonomous border district in West Kalimantan.