

*Review Paper*

**Konfrontasi and Regional Stability in Southeast Asia (1963–1966): A Systematic Review of Political, Military, and Diplomatic Dimensions**

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**Abstract:** The Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation, which occurred from 1963 to 1966 and is also known as Konfrontasi, marked a pivotal moment in Southeast Asia's postcolonial development, shaped by ideological rivalry, regional insecurity, and Cold War geopolitics. Initiated by Indonesia's opposition to Malaysia's formation, the conflict unfolded through nationalist propaganda, cross-border military operations in Borneo, and strategic diplomatic maneuvering by both regional and international actors. While existing scholarship has examined Konfrontasi through various disciplinary lenses, comprehensive synthesis remains limited. This study undertakes a systematic literature review to integrate key academic perspectives on the political, military, and diplomatic dimensions of Konfrontasi, with particular emphasis on its impact on regional stability and state formation. We sourced relevant literature from 1960 to 2025 from JSTOR, SAGE Journals, Taylor and Francis, and Google Scholar, utilising the PRISMA methodology. Six methodologically robust studies were identified and appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). These works address interlinked themes including British counterinsurgency doctrine, Cold War alignments, Indonesian nationalist rhetoric, Australian military engagement via the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA), civilian-led resistance in the Sarawak and Sabah borderlands, and elite diplomacy culminating in the 1966 Bangkok Accord. The findings demonstrate that while Konfrontasi strained bilateral relations and destabilised the region, it paradoxically contributed to the emergence of institutional regionalism, most notably through the founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. The conflict's legacy endures in the diplomatic architecture of Southeast Asia, reinforcing principles of noninterference, regional consensus, and multilateral security cooperation.

**Keywords:** Konfrontasi; Cold War; regional stability; ASEAN, diplomacy

## Introduction

The Indonesia and Malaysia Confrontation (Konfrontasi), which spanned from 1963 to 1966, stands as a pivotal chapter in Southeast Asia's postcolonial history. It encapsulates the intersection of nationalist ideologies, Cold War power politics, and the fragile diplomacy of a region grappling with decolonization and state formation. Initiated by President Sukarno in opposition to the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, which was perceived as a neocolonial construct orchestrated by Britain, Konfrontasi unfolded as a multifaceted conflict. It involved not only military skirmishes and psychological operations but also an intense ideological contest that reverberated across the region (Mackie, 1974; Tuck, 2016). Far from a conventional war, Konfrontasi represented a conflict of low intensity and high symbolism that tested the political maturity and diplomatic agility of newly independent Southeast Asian states.

This conflict can be productively interpreted through an interdisciplinary theoretical lens. Realism offers insights into the power balancing dynamics and Indonesia's strategic imperative to resist external encroachment and assert regional hegemony. Postcolonial theory, on the other hand, frames Sukarno's rhetorical campaign, epitomized by the rallying cry "Ganyang Malaysia" (Crush Malaysia), as an effort to reject neoimperialist interventions and reinforce domestic legitimacy by invoking anticolonial solidarity (Sodhy, 1988). Regionalism theory contributes by illuminating how the conflict's resolution, prompted by leadership transition and diplomatic recalibration, laid the groundwork for institutional cooperation, culminating in the formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. D'Souza (2010) proposes that integrating realist and postcolonial perspectives through critical realism enriches our understanding of conflicts such as Konfrontasi by accounting for both material power struggles and the ideational structures that shape postcolonial identity and policy.

At the political level, Sukarno's confrontational posture was buttressed by an assertive foreign policy that aligned Indonesia with Beijing and Moscow, positioning the country as a vanguard of antiimperialist resistance. Domestically, this alignment also served to consolidate political control amidst internal fragmentation. Militarily, Indonesia employed a strategy of limited incursions and subversive operations, primarily targeting Malaysia's border regions in Sarawak and Sabah. This was met with robust countermeasures by British and Commonwealth forces, most notably through Operation Claret, a covert cross-border campaign aimed at disrupting Indonesian supply and infiltration routes (Tuck, 2017). Diplomatically, the confrontation drew the involvement of key international actors: the United Kingdom and the United States supported Malaysia, while the Philippines initially sided with Indonesia before moderating its stance in pursuit of regional stability (de Viana, 2017).

The turning point came with the decline of Sukarno and the rise of Suharto's New Order regime. Suharto's administration adopted a more pragmatic approach to foreign policy, reducing tensions and embracing diplomatic normalization. This transition facilitated the signing of the 1966 Bangkok Accord, which formally ended Konfrontasi, and laid the diplomatic foundations for the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1967 (Acharya, 2009; Yaakop, 2010). As such, Konfrontasi was not merely a bilateral conflict; it became a transformative episode that catalyzed regional institutionalism and codified principles of noninterference, consensus building, and peaceful dispute resolution in Southeast Asia.

To explore the legacy and implications of this formative conflict, this study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) approach guided by the PRISMA protocol. The review synthesizes historical accounts, archival data, and scholarly analyses drawn from Malaysian, Indonesian, and international academic sources. The aim is to address two interrelated research questions: (1) In what ways did political, military, and diplomatic strategies during Konfrontasi impact regional stability in Southeast Asia? and (2) What thematic patterns and theoretical insights can be drawn from the literature regarding the resolution and long-term aftermath of Konfrontasi?

By grounding the analysis in established theoretical frameworks and applying a structured methodological lens, this article contributes to a deeper and more integrated understanding of Konfrontasi as both a conflict and a catalyst for regional order. It not only revisits the events from 1963 to 1966 but also positions them within broader debates on postcolonial statecraft, regionalism, and conflict resolution in Southeast Asia.

## Literature Review

### 1. Konfrontasi

Konfrontasi is an Indonesian term meaning "confrontation," and in its historical context, it encapsulates Indonesia's multifaceted opposition political, military, and ideological to the formation of Malaysia between 1963 and 1966. Launched under President Sukarno, the policy was driven by a belief that the establishment of Malaysia was a neocolonial project engineered by British imperial interests. Sukarno's famous slogan "Ganyang Malaysia" ("Crush Malaysia") reflected a populist mobilization strategy that portrayed the conflict as part of a broader antiimperialist and anti-Western campaign (Mackie, 1974; Subritzky, 2000). The confrontation was deeply intertwined with Cold War geopolitics, as Indonesia aligned itself with the Eastern

Bloc, particularly China and the Soviet Union, while Malaysia received backing from Britain, the United States, and other Commonwealth nations. Scholars such as Abdul Halim and Mohd Nor (2020) note that this ideological polarization was not only a reaction to postcolonial restructuring in Southeast Asia but also a manifestation of how Cold War dynamics shaped the security architecture and political alignments in the region.

The Indonesia and Malaysia Confrontation, or *Konfrontasi*, lasted from 1963 to 1966 (Ministry of Internal Security Malaysia, 1964; Mackie, 1974; *Straits Times*, 1963, 1966). Unlike conventional wars, *Konfrontasi* unfolded as a conflict of low intensity marked by irregular warfare, sabotage, cross-border incursions, and psychological operations. Indonesian special forces and militia infiltrated Malaysian territories, primarily in Sarawak and Sabah, conducting sabotage and destabilization operations. These acts were countered by Malaysia's formal military supported by Commonwealth allies through covert and overt strategies. Notably, Britain's "Operation Claret" consisted of secret cross-border raids into Indonesian Kalimantan to pre-empt attacks and disrupt logistics. Mad Ali @ Abang (2023) highlights the strategic role played by Australian forces under the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA), emphasizing that Australia's artillery support, surveillance, and tactical coordination were crucial in ensuring Malaysia's border security and deterring Indonesian advancement. Their study underscores that international military assistance was not peripheral but central to Malaysia's ability to sustain the confrontation.

The escalation of the conflict was rooted in the broader regional realignment triggered by the proposed formation of Malaysia, first announced in May 1961. The plan involved merging the Federation of Malaya with Singapore, Sarawak, North Borneo (Sabah), and initially Brunei (Fortuna, 1994; Clutterbuck, 2019; Ricklefs, 2008; *Straits Times*, 1961). Indonesia's early response was relatively neutral. However, the Brunei Revolt of December 1962, led by the North Kalimantan National Army (TNKU), dramatically shifted this posture. Jakarta interpreted the uprising as evidence of regional dissatisfaction and an opportunity to assert its influence by opposing what it viewed as a British-manipulated federation. The revolt emboldened Sukarno's anticolonial narrative and served as a catalyst for full scale confrontation (Fortuna, 1994; Mackie, 1974). It also demonstrated how localized unrest could escalate into a regional crisis when embedded within competing nationalist ideologies and Cold War rivalries.

Overall, the literature suggests that *Konfrontasi* was not merely a bilateral territorial dispute but a complex, ideologically driven conflict shaped by global and regional forces. The role of propaganda, ideological polarization, military manoeuvring, and alliance building were central to both the escalation and resolution of the conflict. Scholars increasingly view the confrontation as a foundational moment for Southeast Asian regionalism, as the eventual diplomatic settlement, facilitated by shifting leadership in Indonesia and third party mediation, laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1967. In this sense, *Konfrontasi* not only shaped bilateral relations between Malaysia and Indonesia but also catalysed a new model of regional conflict management based on noninterference and collective security (Abdul Halim & Mohd Nor, 2020).

## Methodology

### 1. Systematic Literature Review Framework

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA 2020 protocol (Page et al., 2021). The review systematically gathered, appraised, and synthesised peer-reviewed literature concerning the Indonesia and Malaysia Confrontation (*Konfrontasi*), particularly focusing on its political, military, and diplomatic dimensions.

Systematic reviews offer greater rigour than traditional reviews through transparent inclusion criteria, repeatable search processes, and structured analysis (Tranfield et al., 2003; Paul & Barari, 2022). This study contributes to regional conflict and diplomacy studies by consolidating interdisciplinary insights and identifying thematic and theoretical gaps in existing literature.

## 2. PRISMA Framework

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) is an internationally recognised methodology for conducting systematic reviews. It ensures structured identification, screening, eligibility evaluation, and inclusion of relevant studies. In this review, the PRISMA flow diagram (see Figure 1) illustrates the step-by-step process and the number of articles at each phase.

## 3. Search Strategy

Boolean search strings were used to combine keywords related to Konfrontasi and regional diplomacy, such as “Indonesia Malaysia confrontation,” “Cold War,” “Operation Claret,” “Sarawak,” “postcolonial,” and “ASEAN.” Searches were conducted across four major databases and archives:

Table 1. Databases and boolean search strings.

Database / Repository	Search String Strategy	Boolean Operators	Total Articles
JSTOR	"Konfrontasi" AND "Cold War" AND "Malaysia" AND "Indonesia"	AND	28
Taylor and Francis	"Indonesia Malaysia confrontation" AND "Operation Claret" OR "ASEAN origins"	AND, OR	34
Google Scholar	"Konfrontasi Indonesia Malaysia" AND "Sarawak border" AND "Cold War"	AND	52
SAGE Journals	"Sukarno" AND "British military" AND "regionalism" OR "Southeast Asia diplomacy"	AND, OR	12
Total Records Identified	—		126

## 4. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles were assessed based on relevance, language, publication type, and empirical robustness. The following table summarises the criteria applied:

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English, Malay, Indonesian	Other languages
Time Frame	Publications from 1960 to 2025	Publications before 1960
Type of Source	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Opinion pieces, book reviews, editorials, conference abstracts
Empirical Quality	Archival data, theoretical rigour, or systematic analysis	Lacking empirical or archival basis
Thematic Relevance	Focused on political, military, or diplomatic dimensions of Konfrontasi	Articles with superficial or indirect mention of the conflict

## 5. Quality Appraisal

Two reviewers independently evaluated all full-text articles using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), version 2018 (Hong et al., 2018). Articles that scored at least 80 percent—fulfilling four out of five appraisal criteria—were retained for synthesis. The inter-rater reliability was high, with a Cohen’s  $\kappa$  value of 0.82, indicating substantial agreement between reviewers. Any discrepancies in scoring were resolved through discussion and consensus. The six articles included in the final synthesis met the MMAT quality threshold, demonstrated substantive engagement with the political, military, and diplomatic aspects of the Konfrontasi, and utilised primary sources or referenced archival materials from Sarawak, Sabah, or relevant diplomatic records.

## 6. Data Extraction and Synthesis

A structured literature matrix was employed to systematically extract metadata from the final set of articles, including author, year of publication, research objectives, theoretical framework, and principal findings. The data were analysed using a thematic synthesis approach as outlined by Thomas and Harden (2008), which enabled the identification of four dominant cross-cutting themes. First, the literature highlighted British counterinsurgency doctrine and military operations in Borneo as a central feature of the conflict. Second,

several studies examined Sukarno's ideological mobilisation and Indonesia's alignment with Eastern Bloc powers during the Cold War. Third, the research underscored the role of multilateral diplomatic interventions involving key actors such as the Philippines, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Finally, the emergence of regionalism and the institutional consolidation of cooperation through the formation of ASEAN in 1967 was a recurrent theme. These thematic insights provided the analytical framework for addressing the study's two central research questions regarding Konfrontasi's impact on regional stability and the evolution of Southeast Asian diplomacy.

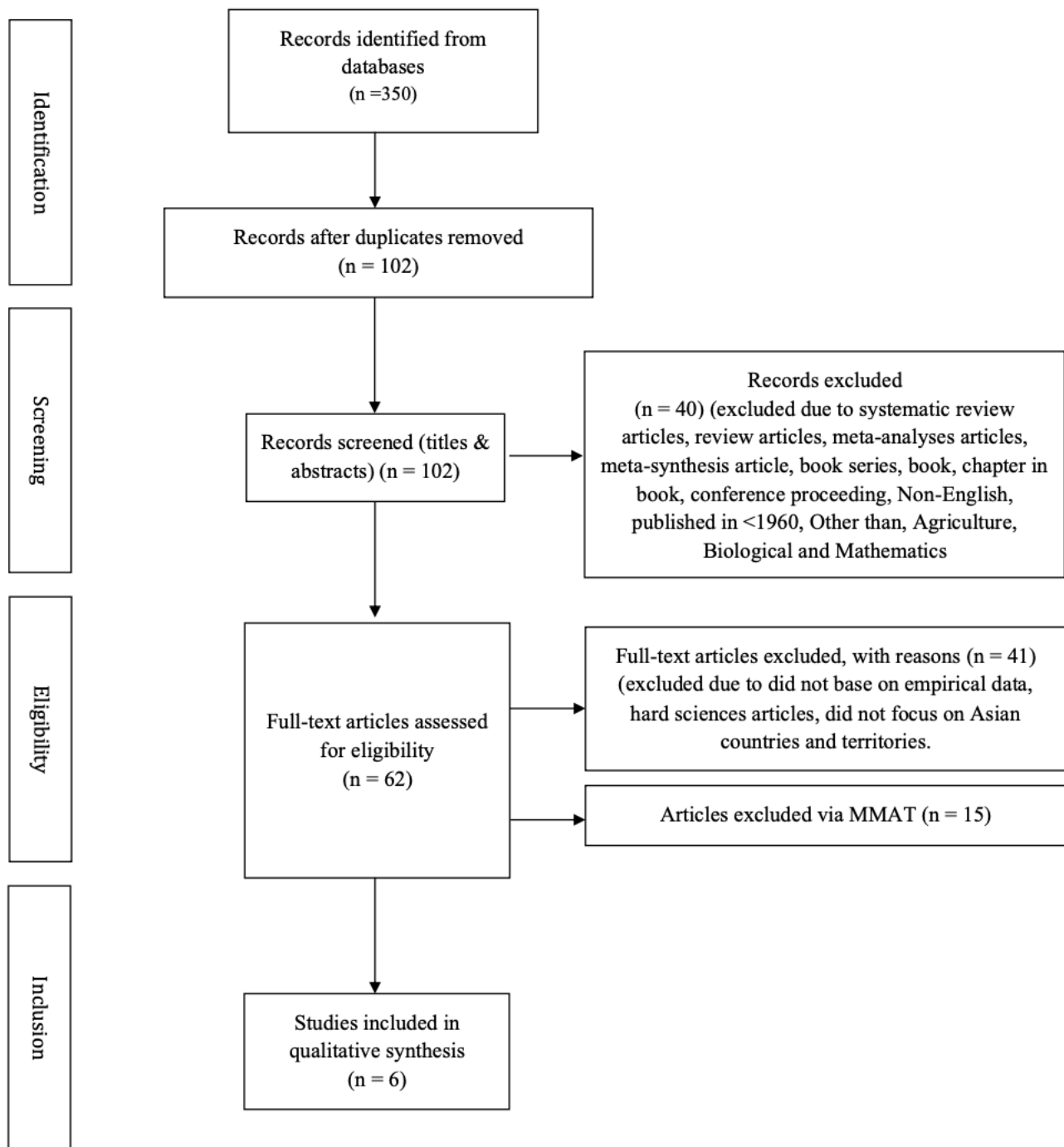


Figure 1. Flow chart representing the literature search

Table 3. Literature matrix Konfrontasi and Regional Stability in Southeast Asia.

Authors	Year	Aim	Objectives	Focus Region	Theme	Methodology	Findings	Conclusion
Mad Ali @ Abang	2024	To Present A Bottom-Up Historical Account Of Konfrontasi Focusing On Malaysia's Borneo Borders.	Explore Local Perspectives On Indonesian Incursions And Malaysia's Defense Responses.	Sarawak, Sabah (Malaysia), West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan (Indonesia)	Border Conflict, Local History, Military Provocation	Qualitative, Descriptive, Archival And Interview-Based Research	Highlighted Ground-Level Indonesian Provocations And Malaysian Border Defense.	The Reality Of Konfrontasi Was Complex And Shaped Significantly By Border Dynamics.
Budiawan	2012	To Explore How Konfrontasi Shaped National Identity And Cultural Tension Between Indonesia And Malaysia.	Investigate Media, Discourse, And Cultural Frames In Shaping Sibling Rivalry.	Indonesia, Malaysia	Cultural Identity, Propaganda, Nationalism	Discourse Analysis	Konfrontasi Shaped National Identity And Sibling-State Discourse.	Cultural Narratives Influenced National Identity During And After The Conflict.
Poulgrain	2014	To Assess Cold War Influences On Southeast Asia's Diplomacy During Konfrontasi.	Analyze How Regionalism And International Politics Influenced Malaysia-Indonesia Dynamics.	Southeast Asia	Cold War Geopolitics, Regionalism, Diplomacy	Historical Analysis (Book Review)	British Decolonization Policy And Cold War Strategy Provoked Indonesian Resistance.	Cold War Politics Framed Konfrontasi And Led To Long-Term Diplomatic Shifts In The Region.
Tuck	2004	To Analyze The Effectiveness Of British Counter-Insurgency Operations In Borneo During Konfrontasi.	Assess British COIN Strategy And Its Impact On The Termination Of Hostilities.	Sarawak, Sabah (Borneo), Malaysia, Indonesia, UK	Military Strategy, Counterinsurgency, War Termination	Qualitative Historical Analysis	British COIN Success But Strategic Disconnect.	Despite Tactical Success, The British Failed To Achieve A Strategically Decisive Outcome.
Tuck	2021	To Evaluate The Political And Strategic Implications Of British Military Withdrawal From East Malaysia.	Identify Challenges In Post-Conflict Strategic Planning And Force Withdrawal.	East Malaysia, UK	Military Withdrawal, Post-Conflict Strategy	Archival Research	Withdrawal Posed Strategic And Political Challenges.	Strategic Withdrawals Must Be Carefully Managed To Avoid Creating New Instability.
Mad Ali @ Abang	2023	To Explore The Nature And Significance Of Australian Military Aid During Konfrontasi.	Examine Australia's Involvement In Border Defense And Operation Claret In Borneo.	Sabah, Sarawak (Malaysia), Kalimantan (Indonesia)	Military Aid, International Alliances, Border Defense	Qualitative, Archival Research And Field Observation	Australia Provided Key Military Support Through AMDA Agreements And Joint Operations Like Operation Claret.	Australian Involvement Was Pivotal In Malaysia's Border Defense And Remains A Vital Part Of Its Military History.

## The Findings

This systematic literature review identifies six key scholarly contributions that illuminate the political, military, and diplomatic dimensions of the Indonesia–Malaysia Confrontation (1963–1966). Each study offers a distinct thematic focus—border conflict, national identity, Cold War regionalism, counterinsurgency, military withdrawal, international alliances, and diplomatic mediation. The findings reveal intersecting narratives shaped by geography, ideology, statecraft, and multilateral engagement, demonstrating that Konfrontasi cannot be reduced to a mere bilateral dispute.

### 1. Border Conflict and Localized Resistance

Mad Ali @ Abang (2024) presents a bottom-up historical account emphasizing local experiences in Sarawak and Sabah. His study highlights how border communities encountered cross-border incursions, internal political contestations, and fragmented loyalties. These micro-level experiences complicate state-centric narratives and position borderlands as active agents in the confrontation. Konfrontasi, therefore, was not solely defined by Jakarta or Kuala Lumpur but by contested spaces shaped by terrain, community, and resistance.

### 2. Cultural Identity and Propaganda

Budiawan (2012) provides an ideological lens through discourse analysis, focusing on how national identity and inter-state rivalry were constructed through propaganda. He portrays Konfrontasi as a symbolic "sibling conflict" in which nationalist rhetoric and media played pivotal roles. The conflict contributed to the formation of cultural narratives that persisted beyond the end of hostilities, framing how Malaysians and Indonesians understood their shared yet contested postcolonial trajectories.

### 3. Cold War Geopolitics and Regionalism

Poulgrain (2014) situates Konfrontasi within the wider Cold War framework, arguing that British decolonization efforts and American strategic interests transformed the conflict into a proxy contest. Rather than a bilateral confrontation, Konfrontasi reflected Cold War alignments in Southeast Asia, where the formation of Malaysia was interpreted as a bulwark against communism. This broader geopolitical context reshaped regional diplomacy and laid foundations for future institutional cooperation.

### 4. Military Counterinsurgency and Tactical Limitations

Tuck (2004) assesses the efficacy of British counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Borneo. While operationally effective in curbing Indonesian incursions, his analysis reveals a disconnect between tactical success and strategic resolution. British forces excelled in jungle warfare and logistical coordination, yet failed to secure a decisive political outcome. The study underscores the limits of military solutions in resolving ideologically driven and regionally entangled conflicts.

### 5. Strategic Withdrawal and Post-Conflict Challenges

In a subsequent work, Tuck (2021) explores the strategic consequences of British military withdrawal from East Malaysia. His findings show that troop drawdowns were fraught with symbolic and practical implications. Internal British archival documents reveal tensions with allies like Australia and the United States regarding the pace and optics of disengagement. Withdrawal was not simply administrative; it marked a strategic transition in regional security governance.

### 6. International Alliances and Australian Involvement

Mad Ali @ Abang (2023) analyzes Australia's military support under the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA), particularly during Operation Claret. He demonstrates that Australian engagement was not peripheral but pivotal, both militarily and diplomatically. Australia's covert and overt support reinforced Malaysia's border security and signaled Commonwealth solidarity against Indonesian aggression. The study also situates Australia as an early actor in shaping regional security norms.

## 7. Diplomatic Mediation and the Role of Thailand

Although often underexplored, diplomatic mediation played a crucial role in ending Konfrontasi. Suwannathat-Pian (2014) emphasizes Thailand's strategic neutrality and "quiet diplomacy" in facilitating the Bangkok Agreement of 1966. As a neutral mediator, Thailand enabled both Indonesia and Malaysia to reach a face-saving compromise, highlighting diplomacy's capacity to resolve military stalemates. This mediation also influenced ASEAN's foundational principle of non-interference and peaceful conflict resolution.

While the literature offers detailed accounts of military operations (Tuck 2004, 2021; Mad Ali @ Abang 2023), it is the ideological and diplomatic studies (Budiawan 2012; Poulgrain 2014; Suwannathat-Pian 2014) that deepen our understanding of Konfrontasi as a multidimensional conflict. This synthesis suggests that the confrontation's resolution did not rest solely on battlefield success but required multilevel strategies: cultural negotiation, military containment, postcolonial state-building, and third-party diplomacy. Together, these perspectives provide a nuanced framework for understanding regional conflict and peace-building in Southeast Asia, with broader implications for postcolonial interstate relations and regional institutional development.

## Discussion

### 1. Political, Military, and Diplomatic Strategies and Their Impact on Regional Stability

The Indonesia and Malaysia Konfrontasi (1963–1966) was not merely a bilateral territorial conflict; rather, it was a complex convergence of political agendas, military actions, and diplomatic engagements that significantly influenced Southeast Asia's regional stability. Politically, Indonesia's assertion of Malaysia as a neo-colonial construct reflected a broader post-colonial struggle for legitimacy and influence, particularly under President Sukarno's Guided Democracy (Budiawan, 2012). This anti-colonial rhetoric masked deeper insecurities within Indonesia's domestic landscape, marked by political fragmentation and economic hardship.

Militarily, the conflict unfolded through cross-border incursions, covert operations, and counterinsurgency campaigns. Tuck (2004) documented how British forces employed counterinsurgency (COIN) strategies in Borneo to neutralize Indonesian threats. These operations, though tactically effective, suffered from strategic limitations and did not alone produce decisive outcomes. Tuck (2021) later highlighted that the British military withdrawal posed new challenges, emphasizing that post-conflict disengagement must be carefully managed to preserve stability. Australia's involvement under the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA), as outlined by Mad Ali @ Abang (2023), provided essential military support through Operation Claret and reinforced the importance of Commonwealth alliances in safeguarding Malaysia's borders.

Diplomatically, the shift from confrontation to negotiation marked a pivotal change. Applying Zartman's (2000) theory of ripeness, the decline of Indonesia's incursions, coupled with internal political instability and the rise of Suharto, led to a mutually hurting stalemate. This set the conditions for peace, culminating in the Bangkok Accord of 1966. Suwannathat-Pian (2014) emphasized Thailand's role in facilitating this resolution through quiet diplomacy, allowing both sides to preserve national pride while reaching a peaceful agreement. These diplomatic efforts demonstrated that regional peace was ultimately brokered not through military superiority, but through third-party mediation, leadership change, and pragmatic negotiation.

In sum, the interplay of military containment, political repositioning, and diplomatic mediation during Konfrontasi served as a catalyst for broader regional security arrangements. The experience underscored the limits of unilateral aggression and affirmed the importance of cooperative security frameworks in maintaining long-term stability.

### 2. Thematic Patterns and Theoretical Insights on Resolution and Long-Term Aftermath

This review identifies six interrelated themes that emerged from the literature: border conflict, cultural identity, Cold War geopolitics, military strategy, post-conflict withdrawal, and regional alliances. These themes not only explain the nature of Konfrontasi but also provide theoretical insight into how such conflicts are resolved and remembered.



### *Border Conflict and Local Agency*

Mad Ali @ Abang (2024) adopts a bottom-up historical perspective, drawing attention to the experiences of local communities in Sabah, Sarawak, and Kalimantan. These populations were central to both the confrontation and its containment, navigating identity and loyalty amid militarized borders. Their involvement illustrates the hybrid nature of the conflict, in which state and nonstate actors intersected across physical and ideological boundaries.

### *Cultural Identity and Propaganda*

Budiawan's (2012) discourse analysis reveals how the conflict shaped national identity through the media, propaganda, and symbolic "sibling rivalry." These narratives, although initially effective in galvanizing support, became unstable as Indonesia's internal legitimacy weakened. This affirms D'Souza's (2010) post-colonial realism, which highlights how identity and sovereignty are contested not only externally but also internally during nation-building.

### *Geopolitics and Regionalism*

Poulgrain (2014) reframes Konfrontasi within the Cold War context, arguing that it was influenced by broader U.S. and British strategic interests. The conflict exposed the failure of bilateral diplomacy and paved the way for a collective regional mechanism. Acharya (2009) and Suwannathat-Pian (2014) link this transition to the formation of ASEAN, which institutionalized norms of non-interference and multilateralism in the wake of Konfrontasi.

### *Hybrid Conflict and Security Theory*

Konfrontasi exemplifies a hybrid conflict, combining conventional military action, guerrilla warfare, ideological propaganda, and civil resistance. According to Hoffman (2007), such conflicts blur the lines between war and peace, requiring integrated strategies for both defense and reconciliation. This framework helps explain why the resolution of Konfrontasi required not just battlefield success but also institutional and cultural responses.

### *Institutional Legacy and Contemporary Relevance*

The post-Konfrontasi environment saw the birth of ASEAN, which drew directly from the confrontation's failures to establish principles of peaceful dispute resolution. The conflict thus served as a turning point in the region's diplomatic evolution. The relevance of these developments is underscored by present-day tensions in the South China Sea and ongoing debates about ASEAN's efficacy. The enduring lesson is clear: sustainable peace depends not solely on military might but on inclusive regional frameworks grounded in shared norms.

### *Linking Theory with Practice*

These thematic patterns reinforce theoretical models: ripeness theory explains the timing of resolution; post-colonial realism addresses identity and legitimacy; constructivist regionalism captures institutional responses; and hybrid conflict theory provides a lens for complex, multidimensional confrontations. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that the resolution of Konfrontasi was not accidental but the result of intersecting forces that shaped both its immediate outcome and long-term impact.

Konfrontasi left an indelible mark on the political, military, and diplomatic trajectory of Southeast Asia. It tested the limits of ideological confrontation, military containment, and regional diplomacy. The resulting shift from confrontation to cooperation laid the groundwork for institutionalized peace through ASEAN and remains a critical reference point for contemporary regional challenges. The findings of this review affirm that post-colonial conflicts demand hybrid approaches to resolution, balancing hard power with negotiation, identity politics with pragmatic governance, and bilateral antagonism with regional solidarity.

## **Conclusion**

The Indonesia and Malaysia Konfrontasi (1963 to 1966) stands as a critical inflection point in Southeast Asia's postcolonial development, where ideological polarization, military confrontation, and diplomatic realignment

converged under the pressures of Cold War geopolitics. Rooted in President Sukarno's rejection of the Malaysian Federation as a neocolonial construct, the conflict extended beyond conventional warfare to include psychological campaigns and cross border insurgency. While British led counterinsurgency and diplomatic support were instrumental in containing the crisis, the pathway to resolution demanded a broader recalibration of political priorities and regional cooperation.

Recent research has broadened the analytical scope of Konfrontasi, highlighting the significance of local actors and multilateral alliances. As Mad Ali @ Abang (2024) illustrates, borderland communities in Sabah and Sarawak played a proactive role in resisting incursions and navigating loyalty under threat, suggesting that grassroots agency was not peripheral but central to the conflict's dynamics. Likewise, Australia's involvement under the Anglo Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA) reinforced the Commonwealth's strategic commitment, positioning the conflict as a test case for collaborative regional defense. These elements, when viewed together, underline that the resolution of Konfrontasi emerged not solely through elite diplomacy or battlefield outcomes, but from a complex interplay of domestic resilience, international solidarity, and localized resistance.

Crucially, Konfrontasi's conclusion, enabled by Suharto's pivot to pragmatic foreign policy and culminating in the 1966 Bangkok Accord, ushered in a new phase of regional diplomacy. This recalibration catalyzed the founding of ASEAN in 1967, embedding principles of noninterference, consensus, and peaceful dispute resolution that continue to shape regional governance. The transformation of violent confrontation into institutional cooperation offers enduring policy lessons: that sustainable peace is built not on unilateral force but on inclusive dialogue, strategic adaptability, and shared norms.

Today, as Southeast Asia contends with challenges such as the South China Sea disputes, contested sovereignty, and rising geopolitical competition, the legacy of Konfrontasi remains highly relevant. It reminds policymakers and scholars alike that regional stability is best secured through hybrid strategies, balancing hard and soft power, accommodating local realities, and institutionalizing multilateral engagement. In this sense, Konfrontasi did not merely conclude a period of hostility; it inaugurated a diplomatic architecture that continues to underpin Southeast Asia's collective resilience.

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