

The Indonesia-Malaysia border as a *simulacrum* of nationalism: A hyperreality study of the Jagoi Babang community in West Kalimantan

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Abstract

This article seeks to investigate how simulacra are carried out by Malaysia and the efforts of the border community in Jagoi Babang to maintain their identity with a spirit of nationalism towards Indonesia. Using Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality and simulacra, this study explores how the border community filters various simulacra efforts carried out by Malaysia to change the reality of the border community towards Indonesia. This study uses a case study approach involving observation, documentation, and interviews with 15 informants from various backgrounds. The findings show that Malaysia creates simulacra by giving Indonesian communities in the border region free access to Malaysian state facilities. Meanwhile, the border communities make two efforts to maintain their national identity and avoid being influenced by Malaysian simulacra. First, they strengthen nationalism by using the Indonesian language. Second, they defend their culture through cultural activities and training for the younger generation. The research has theoretical and practical implications because the community has the active ability (agency) to reject simulacra, thereby enriching Baudrillard's theory. In practice, strengthening language and culture at the border is a vital form of non-military national resilience that must be integrated into border policy alongside security and economic approaches.

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Introduction

Indonesia, with the world's fourth-largest area and a coastline of about 81,900 km, is an archipelagic nation that directly borders both land and maritime neighbours (Hermawan & Sutanto, 2022). These land borders with Malaysia, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea, and



ten countries at sea, create distinctive strategic dynamics for trade, politics, and, especially, the daily lives of border communities (Bria, 2018).

West Kalimantan is one of the provinces in Indonesia that has a direct border with another country, Malaysia. The Indonesia-Malaysia border is not only a territorial line, but also a symbolic space where nationalism is reproduced through political narratives, media, and social practices (Sudagung, 2021). Each of West Kalimantan's border regions faces various problems affecting people's lives and the region's status. The lack of basic infrastructure has hindered economic activity, leaving most border areas still not significantly better off. Conditions in border areas, especially in Kalimantan, are quite alarming, with economic inequality in the community strikingly higher than in neighbouring countries. The Indonesia-Malaysia border has long been defined not only by territorial lines but also by complex political and cultural constructions. Historically, the Indonesia-Malaysia border has been a source of conflict, ranging from the Sukarno-era *confrontation* to disputes over the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan, and the Sebatik island dispute, which led to mutual claims between the two countries. However, at the local level, border communities often have stronger cultural and economic ties to the neighbouring country than to national power centres (Tagliacozzo, 2005).

In the postmodern context, national borders become simulacra—constructed representations where narratives of nationalism may differ from the daily experiences of border communities (Eilenberg, 2012). Considering Baudrillard's (1997) theory of hyperreality and Anderson's (2016) concept of "imagined communities," this study examines how state-constructed narratives of nationalism interact with, and sometimes conflict with, the lived, transnational identities of border residents.

The phenomenon of waning nationalism and patriotism among border communities is inseparable from the government's failure to fulfil their basic needs (Suriadi et al., 2022). On the other hand, neighbouring countries also meet the basic needs of Indonesian people on the border, such as Malaysian products, television broadcasts, currency, red cards, schools for Indonesian children, hospitals accessible to Indonesian people, school buses for Indonesian children, and other special treatment. Provision of the basic needs of society by neighbouring countries, as arranged in a simulation according to Jean Baudrillard's theory.

According to Baudrillard's (1997) *simulacra* theory, simulation (*simulacra*) will affect hyperreality (a situation that does not correspond to reality) in people's lives through special treatment or attention given by other countries to matters of special interest. The hyperreality that is feared to occur is that people feel they are not part of Indonesian territory, fading nationalism and patriotism, shifting the national identity of border communities, and people prefer and prioritise Malaysian products. Because excessive attention or attention that makes Indonesian people on the border feel that the reality in the Indonesian region is no longer adequate to fulfil their life needs, as if it is provided by neighbouring countries, which causes hyperreality.

The facts on the ground show some interesting paradoxes. *First*, although the state intensively builds a nationalist narrative through border policies and media coverage, border communities maintain strong economic and cultural ties with Malaysia (Tirtosudarmo, 2018). *Second*, conflicts such as the Ambalat dispute and the Sipadan-Ligitan islands are often used to mobilise nationalist sentiments, but for border residents, these issues are abstract compared to daily economic affairs. Third, there is a gap between media representations that portray the border as a sacred line of state sovereignty and the reality of people who view it as a fluid, flexible living space. Based on the description above, this research aims to analyse the construction of *simulacra* of nationalism on the Indonesia-Malaysia border. This research selected the Jagoi Babang border area in Bengkayang Regency as its research location. The reason for choosing Jagoi Babang is that, based on temporary observations, the Jagoi Babang border does not yet have a Cross Border Post (PLBN), so that various *simulacra* from neighboring countries are very dominant in the area; as a result, there is the potential for

hyperreality related to the fading of nationalism, patriotism, and the national identity of the Indonesian nation. In addition, the region is quite homogeneous in terms of customs and cultures or ethnicities that live there (homogeneous), as well as the high dependence of Indonesian society on neighbouring countries.

The findings of this study are expected to shed new light on understanding the dynamics of contemporary borders, where nationalism is no longer just a geopolitical issue, but also a game of signs and representations that are often more real than reality itself. Thus, this study is relevant not only to academics studying border culture and politics but also to policymakers seeking to formulate a more humane, context-specific border management strategy.

Method

This research uses a qualitative, case study approach. The use of a qualitative approach with case studies seeks to answer and provide a comprehensive description of the existing problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This research seeks to answer how *simulacra* are applied by Malaysia to Indonesian people in Jagoi Babang District, Bengkayang Regency, which causes *hyperreality* and the fading of nationalism among border communities towards Indonesia. We used a purposive sampling technique to select informants as data sources. This technique is used to obtain valid results because it is based on the abilities and information possessed by the informants (Campbell et al., 2020; Berndt, 2020). The 15 informants in the study were selected based on their roles and involvement in social life in border areas. The complete data for the informants are presented in a table. As a sample, Temenggung, a community leader; Maria, an area leader; Alex, a social activist; and Suryo, a community member active in social relations, all have their names displayed as pseudonyms.

We selected the informants based on their having the information needed to help answer the research questions. We consider that all informants have detailed information about the simulacra perpetrated by Malaysia against border communities in Jagoi Babang. This can be seen from their role in social life so far: they are active in groups and individually in activities to build community awareness and maintain their nationalism towards Indonesia, to fight the Malaysian narrative and undermine it through simulacra activities.

We collected data through field observations and structured interviews focused on the community's social life to obtain results on the *simulacra* carried out or applied by Malaysia that led to the fading of nationalism among the Indonesian people at the border. In our effort to explore and understand the social situation and reality of people's lives, we conducted in-depth interviews (Taylor & Litvak, 2015). All collected data were condensed and summarised, and the most important points were selected to focus on the key aspects of the research (Miles et al., 2014). In the condensation process, we focused only on aspects related to the simulacra carried out by Malaysia that could diminish the nationalism of border communities in Jagoi Babang. We did this to make it easier for us to collect further data. Documentation and interview data were collected for descriptive analysis. The descriptive data were drawn from written or oral statements about the simulacra Malaysia carried out in the hyperreality of the nationalism of the border communities we observed (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Previously, we carried out a systematic process in collecting and managing data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation by grouping data into categories, describing them into units, synthesising information, arranging patterns, and selecting significant things to study so that conclusions could be drawn that made it easy for various parties to understand them clearly. We use triangulation to analyse the data we have collected. The data is a combination of various sources and methodological techniques in a study of social phenomena (Denzin, 2017).

We identified themes related to Malaysia's *simulacra* efforts and the Indonesian community's efforts on the border to maintain their identity. For example, the simulacra carried out by Malaysia, such as the mapping of freedom of access, including what it provides to the

border community in Jagoi Babang, as well as other related symbols. We also mapped the efforts of the Indonesian community at the Jagoi Babang border to resist and defend their identity, including through nationalism and cultural defence. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis of interview data, observations, and documentation. After transcribing and thoroughly reading the data, we coded significant statements and observations.

For example, the statement *"we can shop until late at night in Malaysia"* was coded as *"access to Malaysian facilities,"* while *"at home we must use Indonesian"* was coded as *"defence of identity."* Similar codes were then grouped into broader themes—such as grouping codes about access to Malaysian facilities and economic convenience into the theme *"simulacra of Malaysian prosperity,"* and combining codes about language use and cultural preservation into the theme *"national identity defence strategies."* The process of grouping these themes was continuously tested through data triangulation and discussions with informants until a complete pattern emerged regarding how the Malaysian simulacra were confronted with identity defence strategies by the border community.

The reason we use triangulation is that each technique has advantages and disadvantages, and makes it easier for us to analyse the data. Data analysis is the process of interpreting data, whether in text or images. We use interactive data analysis techniques as introduced by Miles et al. (2014). This interactive model has three main components as a reference for conducting data analysis: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. We continued the analysis throughout the research, even before all the data was collected, considering the research's conceptual framework, the issues raised, and the data collection approach we chose.

Results and Discussion

Geographically, Indonesia has many border areas, one of which is West Kalimantan, namely the Jagoi Babang border in Bengkayang Regency, which is directly adjacent to the territory of Malaysia. That way, people's lives on the border will be shaped by cultures from both countries. Because people from Indonesia and Malaysia can easily enter and exit both countries. These activities will affect the culture of each community in both countries. From the field observations we made in the border area of Indonesia and Malaysia, especially the Jagoi Babang area, there are activities carried out by the Malaysian state through Simulacra which may not be known by the border community that Malaysia is building an image of a country that is able to provide the widest possible access to the people of Jagoi Babang so that they are interested in becoming part of Malaysia. One informant said as follows.

"We in the border area really feel how Malaysia facilitates the affairs of the people here, such as facilitating infrastructure access, so that many jagoi babang people buy Malaysian products and then resell them in Indonesia using rupiah".

The statement explains that the Malaysian authorities grant border communities in Indonesia very broad freedom, allowing economic transactions, such as shopping, using special cards. Such activities can undermine and diminish a person's national spirit towards their country. It is important to note that the Indonesian government must counter this simulacrum by developing infrastructure and improving people's welfare. Because with this increase, it can serve as a filter for the community in maintaining nationalism (Bria & Suharno, 2018). Not only is the use of ringgit evident in border areas, but simulacra can also be seen in the community's freedom to access several facilities in Malaysia, such as education and health care. So, some Indonesian citizens prefer to become Malaysian citizens to enjoy more facilities provided by Malaysia.

Nationalism as a Filter of Malaysian *Simulacra* in the Jagoi Babang Border Area

As good Indonesian citizens, it is important to know how to filter all forms of *simulacra* or mere simulations provided by Malaysia to Indonesian citizens in the border region. The border

region has now become a place for both countries to carry out various activities involving all sectors, such as culture, economy, politics, and even health education, which are easily accessible, especially the facilities provided by Malaysia to the Indonesian people in the border region. Through this, Malaysia is creating simulacra for the community in the Jagoi Babang border region.

The simulacra carried out by Malaysia, for example, provide free access for people in the border region to enjoy health and education facilities in Malaysia without complicated requirements. Based on our field observations, people tend to use the ringgit for sales and purchase transactions and other payments. As stated by our informant, Mr Malik (*pseudonym*), as follows.

"Communities in the border region with Malaysia receive special treatment from the Malaysian government, as I have experienced. I am free to enter and leave Malaysia to buy and sell goods in Indonesia at Indonesian prices. However, when I buy in Malaysia, I use the ringgit currency. Sometimes, there are Indonesian citizens who use the ringgit currency for transactions in the border market."

This informant's statement reinforces our findings that Malaysia has begun to create simulacra from small things often done by the community. Simulacra live in people's activities without them realising that they are being persuaded to become part of Malaysia through symbols. These symbols are known as simulacra. Some Indonesians who work as traders sell goods from Malaysia, such as food and beverages, because they are cheaper and easier to obtain than bringing them into city centres in Indonesia. This is reinforced by Figure 1, which we took in the field.

Figure 1.

Malaysian products in convenience



Source: Research Data, 2025.

Traders purchase goods in Malaysia and resell them in Indonesia at prices and in rupiah, which is more profitable because the goods are very cheap in Malaysia. Easy access and lower prices than in Indonesia are the reasons people do business in Malaysia. This was revealed by an informant named Bondan (*pseudonym*) as follows.

"When I shop in Malaysia, some friends offer to become part of Malaysia to make it easier to access the various facilities provided by the Malaysian government. In addition, access to Malaysia is easier and faster than to the centre of Pontianak, which takes more than 5 hours by road, and the road access is still inadequate. Therefore, I prefer to go to Malaysia."

This Malaysian simulacrum is very dangerous if the Indonesian people on the border do not have a strong sense of nationalism, because the temptation from Malaysia can shake their

nationalistic spirit. Malaysia does not directly offer or invite Indonesian citizens; rather, it does so through symbols and by providing access to various facilities for border communities. Therefore, the Indonesian government must support the community in strengthening their nationalism towards Indonesia by prioritising border communities and providing adequate facilities so they are not tempted by Malaysia's efforts to persuade them to join Malaysia.

So far, some communities still depend on facilities from Malaysia and often enjoy them. This reality can affect the community's imagination of the meaning of nationalism that has been built up to this point. In this context, the simulacra carried out by Malaysia have certainly altered the hyperreality of the Jagoi Babang border community, potentially affecting the community's nationalism. This is evidenced by several Jagoi Babang residents who have chosen to become Malaysian citizens. Therefore, it is important to filter these simulacra through concrete actions, no longer through simulations or socialisation about nationalism, but through actions such as building health and education facilities and facilitating the economic sector, for example, through trade routes that encourage the community to prefer domestic products over Malaysian products.

Our field research found that the simulacra carried out by Malaysia are very real and have an impact on society. The simulacra carried out by Malaysia include providing cross-border access through official and unofficial routes, using the ringgit currency for transactions in the border area, providing access to education and health care, and making it easier for people to trade in Malaysia. What the border community, especially Indonesian citizens, does is supported by the Ministry of Home Affairs through the provision of Cross-Border Post Cards (KPLB). This support makes the simulacra carried out by Malaysia no longer seem apparent; they have become a reality. We conducted an interview with an informant named Bondan (*pseudonym*) as follows.

"Communities in the border region have easy access to Malaysia for trade, medical treatment, education, and even work. This is possible provided that border residents have a KPLB or Cross-Border Pass Card, which is specifically issued to residents living near the border. Therefore, many residents here conduct transactions using ringgit, and some even work as educators in Malaysia."

The informant's statement reinforces our research findings on the simulacra of Malaysia on Indonesian citizens in the border region. Indonesian citizens in the border region have easier access to Malaysia than to Indonesia. This creates a hyperreality that causes the fading of nationalism among the people of the Jagoi Babang border region because of the simulacra of the Malaysian state. It is not only through symbols in performing simulacra that people's minds can be blurred regarding nationalism.

In the border context, Anderson states that nationalism can be produced through *simulacra signs* and symbols that create the illusion of unity and sovereignty. This process often obscures the complex reality of border communities that may have hybrid identities or dual loyalties. Nationalism, in this case, is not only about real identity but also about representations that are constantly repeated until they are considered the truth.

Figure 2 shows how easy it is for people to own Malaysian vehicles. This phenomenon illustrates how simulacra work in real life: Malaysian license plates are not merely markers of foreign vehicles, but have become symbols of status, legal leniency, and economic efficiency that are more "real" than official regulations. The boundary between legal and illegal, between Malaysian and Indonesian vehicles, becomes blurred, creating a border hyperreality where simulation trumps reality.

For some people, having a Malaysian license plate is more economically advantageous (e.g., tax-free, easy to resell), so they consider it more "legitimate" even though it violates Indonesian law. These vehicles are used in Indonesia but are registered under Malaysian identity, causing confusion between "Malaysian vehicles" and "Indonesian vehicles."

Figure 2

Malaysian Vehicles Belonging to Indonesian Citizens in The Border Area



Source: Observation Data, 2025.

Filtering *simulacra* (hyperrealistic signs that replace reality) in border areas through an understanding of nationalism requires a critical approach to the state's symbols, narratives, and policies. Border communities must be able to distinguish between symbols and reality. Understanding nationalism as a construction rather than a destiny. Anderson (2016) explained that nationalism is an imaginary community formed through language, education, and media. At the border, this construction is often imposed through school curricula that emphasise loyalty to the state, even though community identities may be more fluid.

Based on Baudrillard's perspective (1997), nationalism in the Jagoi Babang border community functions as a filter of simulacra, creating a new reality that may differ from the local community's socio-cultural reality. Symbols of nationalism (such as development, language, policy) become more real than the original identity, thereby shaping the perceptions and behaviours of border communities in complex and often contradictory ways. This shows that in the postmodern era, national boundaries are not only geographical but are also shaped by the play of signs and forces that create their own reality.

Malaysia's granting of free access to facilities to the Indonesian border community in Jagoi Babang should be seen as an attempt to create a culture of enticement in the context of soft power competition between countries, where material prosperity is displayed to shape preferences and cultural loyalty. According to Fajar Andalas et al. (2021), such practices constitute a contemporary form of cultural diplomacy that aims to build hegemony through cultural penetration in border areas, creating what postmodern theory refers to as hyperreality. However, the response of the Jagoi Babang border community confirms the thesis of subaltern agency in postcolonial studies, in which local communities are not merely passive objects of hegemonic power but become key actors who actively negotiate and even reject this influence through their daily cultural practices (Morris, 2010).

In this context, border communities are involved in a complex process that gives rise to what transnational studies experts refer to as "hybrid identities," a condition in which identities are no longer singular but are the result of the intersection and negotiation of various influences that produce fluid and contextual identity formations (Kraidy, 2016). The lives of border communities thus constitute a tangible manifestation of the "transnational space" as described by Thomas Faist (2019), a social space that connects two distinct state systems and gives rise to forms of attachment, practices, and flows that transcend territorial boundaries. As explained by Arpanudin and Dewantara (2025), citizenship is not merely a legal status but a dynamic

and often complex field of social experience. Therefore, the lives of the people on the Jagoi Babang border are always influenced by two interconnected cultures.

The most obvious example of this hyperreality is the phenomenon of Malaysian motor vehicles. Malaysian license plates are not merely markers of foreign vehicles, but have become symbols of status, legal leniency, and economic efficiency. In Baudrillard's analysis, simulation (Malaysian license plates) has completely replaced reality (vehicles owned by Indonesian citizens used in Indonesian territory). This symbol has its own value and logic that is more persuasive than Indonesian national laws and regulations. The boundary between legal and illegal, between Malaysian and Indonesian vehicles, has become blurred, creating a zone of hyperreality on the border where loyalty is determined by utility and convenience, not by constitutional ties.

Therefore, efforts to "filter these simulacra with concrete actions" must be understood as attempts to create a counter-hyperreality of Indonesia. Responses that rely solely on "socialisation about nationalism" will always lose because nationalism itself, in this context, has become a sign that is losing the competition in the border meaning market. The proposed solutions, such as "building health and education facilities and facilitating the economic sector," are essentially attempts to produce material and symbolic signs that can compete with Malaysian simulacra. From this perspective, infrastructure development and the provision of superior services at the border are not merely public policy but a semiotic strategy to reclaim the imaginary space and create a more persuasive Indonesian hyperreality, where being part of Indonesia is perceived as more beneficial and prideful.

The Use of The Indonesian Language as A Form of Strengthening Love for The Indonesian Homeland

Strengthening nationalism through various approaches can be a solution for the Indonesian government in filtering Malaysian simulacra in border areas. One of them is improving community welfare, repairing public facilities across the education and health infrastructure sectors, and strengthening the economy. In addition, increasing nationalism, such as loving local products and using Indonesian more often than Malay, can also strengthen people's sense of nationalism. The use of Indonesian can increase nationalism towards Indonesia, as Indonesian is the identity of the Indonesian nation (Martono et al., 2021). Our informants conveyed that Indonesian is a unifying and distinguishing factor in determining the status of relations between Indonesia and Malaysia, and is one of the strategies for anticipating simulacra from Malaysia. Nurudin stated the following.

"We always use Indonesian to communicate with the Indonesian border community in our daily lives so that we can distinguish between those who are from Indonesia and those who are from Malaysia, because in the border area, even though the majority are of Dayak ethnicity, the language used tends to be Malay, making it difficult to distinguish between Indonesian and Malaysian citizens."

The specific strategy implemented by the Jagoi Babang community, such as consistently using Indonesian, is a form of "infrastructural resistance" against cultural penetration, in which language serves as a cultural infrastructure that maintains social cohesion and collective identity. More than just a means of communication, language in this context functions as "symbolic capital" that is mobilised to maintain cultural autonomy in a contested social field, where Indonesian serves as a marker of citizenship and regional languages as markers of deep cultural roots (Benu et al., 2023).

Efforts to strengthen nationalism using the Indonesian language at the Jagoi Babang border are an essential yet complex strategy that must be understood beyond mere patriotic discourse. Within the framework of Benedict Anderson's 2016 theory of imagined communities, language plays a fundamental role as a unifying tool, enabling millions of people who do not know each other to imagine themselves as part of the same nation. Anderson (2016)

emphasises that the national language, in this case Indonesian, functions as a "unifying medium of communication" that creates a shared space of experience. Therefore, the effort to "use Indonesian rather than Malay" is not merely a matter of linguistic preference, but a political effort to strengthen the symbolic boundaries of the imagined community of Indonesia, which is threatened by the hyperreality of Malaysia.

In this context, Indonesian is transformed from a mere communication tool into the "identity of the Indonesian nation," a signifier of collective identity that directly confronts the signifier of Malaysian identity, namely Malay. The strengthening of this Indonesian signifier is an attempt to create a counter-narrative to the narrative of ease and prosperity simulated by Malaysia. However, this analysis must be critically linked to the reality on the ground. An approach that treats language solely as the "spirit of nationalism" risks simplification if it is not supported by concrete material.

According to Bourdieu's perspective on symbolic violence (1991), language is not a neutral sign system but rather a form of *symbolic capital* whose value is determined by a particular linguistic market. In the border region, there are two competing linguistic markets: Indonesian and Malaysian. When economic, educational, and health access are easier and more "profitable" in Malaysia, the instrumental value of the Malay language in that market automatically becomes higher. Pragmatic border residents will tend to adopt the language that provides more direct economic and social benefits. Therefore, forcing the use of Indonesian without increasing the value of the "Indonesian market" (through "improvements in community welfare and public facilities") will only be a form of empty symbolic violence. Indonesian will be seen as a formal obligation separate from the reality of their lives, while Malay will remain a functional and powerful language in everyday life.

Thus, the effectiveness of Indonesian as a bastion of nationalism depends heavily on its ability to be presented not only as a symbol, but as an integral part of a counter-hyperreality created by Indonesia. In Jean Baudrillard's theory, hyperreality is a condition in which signs (*simulacra*) replace reality. Currently, the Malaysian Malay language is part of the simulacra of prosperity offered by the neighbouring country. To filter this, the Indonesian language

Indonesians must become the central signifier of a new reality built by Indonesia at the border, a reality marked by quality schools, well-equipped health centres, and a vibrant economy. "Loving local products" is part of the effort to build this ecosystem of signs, in which Indonesian becomes the language of transactions, education, and efficient public services. In these conditions, Indonesian is no longer merely mandatory; it will be organically chosen because it is embedded in the state's value system and provides a sense of comfort in daily life. In other words, linguistic nationalism will only be effective if the language is truly alive and meaningful in meeting pragmatic needs and in building a better future for border residents, thereby strengthening the bond of imagination as the Indonesian nation through real, competitive material experiences.

Cultural Defence as a form of Nationalism in Indonesia by the border community of Jagoi Babang

Indonesian border communities often live in a complex cultural space due to intense interaction with neighbouring countries. However, amid the challenges of globalisation and Malaysia's efforts to build *simulacra* (hyperrealistic signs that replace reality) through the media, education, and infrastructure, the people of Jagoi Babang have responded with cultural defence as a form of nationalism towards Indonesia. Cultural resilience is a strategy to maintain Indonesian identity while responding to political, economic, and social dynamics in the border region. One informant told us the following.

"We still preserve our ancestral culture, we carry out various annual cultural activities such as Dayak festivals, and we also use the Dayak and Indonesian languages rather than the Malay language, which can bring us closer to Malaysia. This is an effort by the border

community to maintain and increase their sense of nationalism towards Indonesia. Because our community has gradually been influenced by foreign cultures, especially from Malaysia, due to easy access to Malaysia, even our children often watch television programs and use media from Malaysia.”

The informants' statements indicate that the border community faces unique challenges, as Malaysian information, symbols, and lifestyles are readily accessible through the media, trade, and daily social interactions. Simulacra, or hyperrealistic signs that often replace the original meanings of culture, become a threat when Malaysian values, considered foreign, begin to erode the community's original identity. Based on our observations, communities in the Jagoi Babang border region defend their culture through daily practices that reaffirm local culture as a bastion of nationalism. The Jagoi Babang community actively preserves their local language, traditions, arts, and rituals to distinguish themselves from Malaysian influence.

Figure 3 shows cultural activities carried out by the Jagoi Babang community involving the younger generation to strengthen nationalism through cultural defence applied to Dayak cultural activities. These cultural activities are important because they serve as a reminder and message to the younger generation that this nation has cultural wealth to be proud of, even to neighbouring countries such as Malaysia. This is because increasing awareness of nationalism and love for the homeland through cultural arts is more friendly and effective (Pramitasari, 2021). This cultural resilience helps preserve cultural values amid external threats. From our field observations, the border community still maintains its culture amid cultural onslaughts from outside, especially from Malaysia, which dominates symbols to influence and obscure the community's reality regarding the Indonesian state.

Figure 3.

Gawai Cultural Activities by The Dayak Community on The Jagoi Babang Border



Source: Observation Data, 2025.

Additionally, the nationalism of the Jagoi Babang community is reflected in their critical consumption of Malaysian media. The entry of Malaysian internet networks has made it easier for them to disseminate their content and simulacra through media such as television programs and digital content. We found that some border communities in Jagoi Babang still enjoy Malaysian television programs and digital content. Therefore, it is important for border communities to have a critical culture towards Malaysian media. This was conveyed directly by one of the informants who works as a teacher in the border area.

“We are accustomed to accessing television broadcasts from Malaysia, and some people here also use internet facilities supplied from Malaysia. However, we continue to encourage people here to be critical so that their sense of nationalism is not easily eroded. I particularly impart this critical understanding to students from an early age so that they are not easily influenced by outside cultures, especially Malaysian culture.”

In line with participants' information, we see that border communities have been very critical of Malaysian television broadcasts and digital content, prioritising and supporting domestic production or content that aligns with local values. This is because, if not approached critically, Malaysia could insert Malaysian national symbols into every piece of digital content or television program. This is because, in the reality of the media, falsehood can be interpreted as truth, issues can be perceived as information, signs can be treated as reality, and simulacra can be accepted as actual reality (Rosyid, 2019). In addition, economic activities serve as a means of cultural defence, with Indonesian products and cuisine prioritised to strengthen national identity. Thus, cultural defence is not only symbolic but also practical, creating a social mechanism that naturally filters out foreign simulacra.

We also found that the cultural protection carried out by the Indonesian community in the Jagoi Babang border area received support from traditional institutions and local governments, especially in Bengkayang Regency. This support comes in the form of programs that prioritise strengthening Indonesian identity. Cultural festivals, workshops, and civic education are often held to remind the community of the

The importance of maintaining cultural sovereignty. This reinforces the awareness that nationalism is not only about territorial boundaries, but also about maintaining the purity of cultural meaning amid the onslaught of global hyperreality. Our informant, who works at an Indonesian government institution, stated the following.

“The government continues to work to prevent Malaysian simulacra by engaging border communities, especially in defending culture through various programs involving all sectors to contribute to strengthening national integration in the Jagoi Babang border region.”

The synergy among elements is crucial because, in this era of technological advancement, strengthening Indonesia's cultural identity is necessary to prevent nationalism from fading. The issues of nationalism and simulacra carried out by Malaysia in the border region are not only the concern of the community in the Jagoi Babang border region, but also of all parties, to maintain the integrity of the nation and state. Therefore, the synergy among elements in the pentahelix concept must be enhanced, as each element of the nation plays a role and contributes to its respective field, thereby strengthening nationalism in filtering out simulacra in Malaysia (Wijaya et al., 2023). We have simplified the explanation of our research findings in Table 2.

Table 2.
The Border Community's Filter of Malaysian simulacra at the Jagoi Babang border

Form of Implementation	Indicator	Information
Use of Indonesian and Regional Language	Social Behavior	Border communities use Indonesian as the language of unity and use Dayak and Malay as local languages to remind and distinguish their identity from Malaysia. This shows that border communities still have a spirit of nationalism.
Infrastructure Improvement	Welfare	The central government through the West Kalimantan regional government, especially Bengkayang Regency, continues to make improvements and improve infrastructure from all fields such as the Economy, Transportation, and improvement of road infrastructure to facilitate the access of border communities to the city center in Pontianak, so that they prefer transactions in Indonesia rather than Malaysia.

Form of Implementation	Indicator	Information
Cultural activities such as Gawai Dayak	Cultural Defense	Border communities continue to carry out cultural preservation such as Gawai cultural activities which are always held every year, and other cultural activities to maintain and care for local identity and national identity. These cultural activities involve all elements commonly called Pentahelix to ensure that all have their respective roles in countering Malaysian simulacra.

Source: *Observation and Interview Data, 2025.*

Table 2 illustrates the various efforts made by border communities to filter Malaysian simulacra in border areas in various ways, such as the use of Indonesian as a unifying language used nationally by the Indonesian people, and the use of regional languages such as Malay and Dayak as local identity languages that serve as reminders that the local communities in the Jagoi Babang border area have a different identity from Malaysians even though they are of the same race. The use of Indonesian and regional languages strengthens nationalism in Indonesia by fostering a stronger sense of love for the homeland.

The Indonesia-Malaysia border region, such as Jagoi Babang in Bengkayang Regency, West Kalimantan. The border is a liminal space where the concept of nationalism is not only political (Turner, 1991) but also involves many *simulacra* activities involving symbols or signs that can obscure the original reality (Baudrillard, 1997). Border societies live in hyperreality, a condition that blurs the boundaries between the real and the presented, driven by economic, cultural, and state policy interactions that are often symbolic rather than substantial.

Horstmann and Wadley (2006) state that border regions are not only geopolitical battlefields, but also complex spaces where national identities are constantly negotiated in everyday practices such as simulacra activities. Based on Baudrillard's theory, simulacra are imitations that no longer refer to real reality but create their own reality. Nationalism in border areas is no longer merely a collective consciousness based on identity, but rather a symbol produced through various efforts, such as symbolic border policies, nationalist narratives in education and the media, and hyperreal state iconography. It is this condition that Malaysia exploits to spread Malaysian identity among border communities through simulacra.

Life in the border region, especially in Jagoi Babang, presents an interesting phenomenon: the simulacra of Malaysian prosperity have created a hyperreality that blurs the line between social reality and the image of prosperity. This is evident in the behaviour of many border communities in Jagoi Babang, who widely use the ringgit currency in economic transactions and rely on Malaysian health and education facilities. Of course, using the ringgit can obscure their true lives as Indonesian citizens who should be transacting in rupiah. As Baudrillard (1997) notes, in simulacra, humans are not actually present in real reality but always think imaginatively and are deluded into seeing reality in the space where simulation takes place. This simulacrum is intended to control society in a subtle way, namely by providing something that does not actually correspond to reality, so that society feels dependent.

Because border communities frequently enjoy access to facilities in Malaysia, they are interested in becoming Malaysian citizens, believing life will be more prosperous if they become part of Malaysia. Efforts to provide the best for some people are a strategy to create a more prosperous country than the imaginary country (Humphreys et al., 2021). Therefore, to prevent this from happening, the community must strengthen its sense of nationalism in various ways, such as using the national language and regional languages that serve as distinguishing identities. This is because language habits and standardisation play an important role in building and awakening a sense of nationalism in every citizen (Stergios, 2006). Not only through language, but nationalism can also take the form of culture that expresses a nation's

identity (Kolstø, 2019). As defined by Hutchinson (2016), culture-based nationalism is a language movement grounded in a nation's moral consciousness to foster unity.

This is because the lives of border communities in the Jagoi Babang region are easily influenced by external cultures, depending on how actively they are promoted and the narratives constructed around them. As stated in Malinowski's theory, "a passive culture will lag behind compared to an active culture in promoting and developing itself. Therefore, border communities are not passive victims of hyperreality, but active actors in negotiating their identity. This can be seen in their pragmatic loyalty to Indonesia, which depends on the economic benefits and access provided (Tanasaldy, 2012). Border communities take advantage of this access to shop using Cross Border Postcards. This is what makes communities persevere in the face of the existing reality, even though it is not actually real. This is also reinforced by life strategies such as local culture.

Meanwhile, efforts to preserve culture through activities and training for the younger generation constitute a "everyday nationalism" project carried out from the bottom up, where national values are not only passed down through formal education but also through cultural practices that are alive within the community. According to Michael Billig (1995), practices such as these constitute "banal nationalism" that is more effective at building national bonds because they are embedded in daily routines and therefore do not feel forced. What is interesting about the findings in Jagoi Babang is how the community actually utilizes the available transnational space to strengthen their national identity, a phenomenon referred to as the "border paradox," where the more intense the cross-border interaction, the stronger the awareness of differences and identity boundaries, so that nationalism at the border is no longer just a concept but a practice that differs from nationalism in urban areas.

Overall, the dynamics in Jagoi Babang contribute significantly to the global discourse on borders by showing that border spaces are "living laboratories" for the process of globalisation from below, where local actors are not merely passive victims of global forces, but active agents who reframe reality according to their identity frameworks (Cons, 2016). This finding is in line with recent research on border communities in various parts of the world, which shows that in an era where national space is often considered to be eroded by global forces, it is precisely at the border that we can see how nation-states find their most formidable defenses through cultural practices and the commitment to identity of citizens on the front lines (Horstmann & Wadley, 2006). In other words, nationalism at the border is not rigid and closed, but rather flexible, adaptive, and therefore more resilient in the face of various forms of foreign cultural penetration, a finding that enriches our understanding of new forms of citizenship and statehood in the 21st century (Balibar, 2018).

Conclusion

Efforts to filter out all forms of simulacra imposed by neighbouring countries in border areas are crucial to maintaining a sense of nationalism, especially for the border community in Jagoi Babang, West Kalimantan. One of the efforts made by the border community in Jagoi Babang to filter simulacra carried out by Malaysia is to strengthen nationalism by fostering a love for the homeland, increasing critical thinking towards every symbol of the neighboring country so as not to be easily influenced, using Indonesian and regional languages, and defending culture through various activities involving all elements to take their respective roles. This research has real implications for social workers in promoting nationalism and cultural preservation to strengthen national identity. This is because for the people of Jagoi Babang, cultural defence is a form of active nationalism, not merely participating in flag ceremonies, but also preserving language, customs, and traditions as a bulwark against Malaysian simulacra.

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