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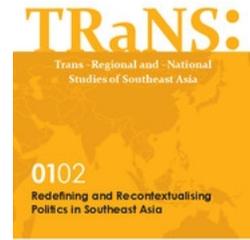
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Southeast Asia's New Nationalism: Causes and Significance

Tuong Vu

Abstract

This paper explains the post-Cold War surge of nationalism in Southeast Asia and discusses its significance for regional peace and cooperation. As argued, the growth of nationalism as a form of mass politics has different causes in each Southeast Asian context where it occurs, but at the regional level the phenomenon can be explained by three factors: the failure of earlier nationalist movements to fully deliver their promises; a shift in the international and regional order (the end of the Cold War and the rise of China); and a change in domestic order (political liberalisation and democratisation) that was also occurring across many countries in the region. While the main mission of the new nationalism is the defence of national territory, the movements have the unintended impact of bringing together national communities once divided by Cold War ideologies. The phenomenon also poses some serious risks to regional peace and cooperation.

KEYWORDS: nationalism, Southeast Asia, mass politics, post-Cold War, democratization, China

INTRODUCTION

THERE WAS A TIME from the 1940s through the 1960s when the themes of nationalism and communism dominated the study of politics in Southeast Asia (Brimmell 1959; Emerson 1960; Emerson *et al.* 1942; Trager 1959). Throughout much of that time, nationalist struggles (led in some cases by communist parties) were raging in Burma, Indochina, Indonesia and Malaya/Malaysia. Today, communism is gone but nationalism is making a comeback, as evidenced in the recent protests involving Cambodians and Thais over Preah Vihear Temple and those in Vietnam against Chinese claims over the Paracels and Spratly Islands. In Indonesia, the last decade has seen frequent mass protests against Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, and the United States. Part of Indonesians' national identity is their Muslim identity, which has spurred massive demonstrations against US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet the Philippines is perhaps the first Southeast Asian country to experience a surge of nationalism in the late 1980s when anti-Americanism led to the closure of US military bases there.

What explains the rise of nationalism *as a form of contentious mass politics* in Southeast Asia since the end of the Cold War? The recent surge of nationalism has escalated tension in this region, but existing theories of nationalism offer few clues for this phenomenon. Most theories were created to explain the earlier rise of nationalism that originated in Europe around the eighteenth century and that produced modern nations worldwide out of traditional societies. These theories are helpful in accounting for the power of anticolonial movements in the early twentieth century as well as the persistence of a few secessionist movements today in the region (e.g., in southern Philippines, southern Thailand, and parts of Myanmar). However, the phenomenon we focus on here involves not marginal ethnic groups but major nations in Southeast Asia that have gained their independent status for decades. This phenomenon requires new explanations.

In this paper, I argue that the growth of nationalism since the mid-1980s was caused by the combination of three factors: the failure of earlier nationalist movements to fully deliver their promises; a shift in the international and regional order (the end of the Cold War and the rise of China); and a change in domestic order (political liberalisation and democratisation) that was also occurring across many countries in the region. The failure of the 'old' nationalism is the deep cause, while the other two factors explain the timing and the mass character of the 'new' nationalism. The paper is divided into three parts. First, I survey the history and more recent growth of nationalist movements in five major Southeast Asian contexts (the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand). Then, the theoretical arguments that explain the phenomenon are discussed. In the conclusion, I will briefly consider the missions, impacts and risks of the new nationalism for regional peace and cooperation. While the main mission of the new nationalism is the defence of national territory, the movements have the unintended impact of reconciling national communities once divided by Cold War ideologies. At the same time, the new nationalism may aggravate historical resentment between neighbouring nations and hostilities between rich and poor countries in the region.

NATIONALISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: FROM OLD TO NEW

At the end of the nineteenth century, all of Southeast Asia except Thailand was under Western colonial rule. Colonial states in the region were established typically in a piecemeal fashion over decades if not centuries (Tarling 2004: 59–85). Colonialism brought Southeast Asia into the global trading, financial, and industrial networks controlled by European powers. Mines, cash crops, and textile mills were developed together with telegraphs, shipping lines, and railroads throughout the region, linking colonial capitals to far-flung villages (Owen 2005: 161–199). Although great variations existed between and within each colony, incipient modern states emerged with modern bureaucracies, laws and

regulatory systems. These states also provided limited social services such as modern health care and education.

In Southeast Asia, nationalist movement as a form of modern mass politics arrived first in the 1880s in Spanish Philippines with the emergence of the 'Propaganda Movement' led by educated elites. This movement asserted a new Philippine identity based on Tagalog literature and arts but did not yet advocate national independence. By the 1890s, the movement spread to lower social strata with the founding of Katipunan that voiced the first demands for Philippine national independence. During 1896–1897, an armed struggle failed to overthrow Spanish rule. After the U.S. acquired the Philippines from Spain, Filipino nationalists resumed their struggle but were defeated by U.S. forces in a drawn out guerilla war during the next five years (Owen 2005: 154–156; Tarling 2004: 89–95).

By the 1910s and 1920s similar movements began to appear in the Dutch Indies, French Indochina, British Burma and Malaya (Duiker 1976; Roff 1994; Tarling 2004: 97–114; van Niel 1960). By and large these movements were led by a new generation of native elites who were educated in colonial schools or in Europe. These elites were strongly influenced by Western ideals of liberty, socialism, and democracy. At the same time, they were frustrated by racism, capitalist exploitation, and political oppression under colonial rule. As Southeast Asia became integrated into European empires, developments in Western Europe, Russia, Turkey, Japan, and China also had profound impact on native elites' thinking and imagination. Soon many began to organise, first to demand more political rights under the colonial system, then for full independence for their nations. New national identities were still being formed: Vietnamese revolutionaries still dreamed of an Indochinese federation, whereas Indonesians did not separate their national identity from those of class and religion (Goscha 1995; Shiraishi 1990). Yet these new identities were powerful enough to motivate millions of Southeast Asians during and after World War Two to fight and sacrifice for national independence.

Fast forward twenty years, and by the 1960s all of Southeast Asia had become independent nations. Colonial rule yielded to independent states either through wars against colonial masters (Indonesia and Vietnam), or through peaceful transfers of rule to native elites (Cambodia, the Philippines, Burma, Brunei, Malaya, and Singapore). Thus the old nationalism accomplished its grand mission of liberating Southeast Asians from the colonial yoke. Thanks to a fierce nationalist struggle, millions of Indonesians today are bound together in a relatively stable political entity (Kahin 1952; Reid 2010). Massive Western armies were defeated at the hand of Vietnamese communists cum nationalists who created a cohesive modern nation-state in the process (Woodside 1976). Modern Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines also have developed into viable states thanks in no small part to nationalism (Hill and Kwen 1995; Roff 1994; Stanley 1974).

Chronologically the Philippines was where post-Cold War nationalism first reappeared in Southeast Asia. Through the 1970s to the mid-1980s, Ferdinand

Marcos ruled the Philippines as a dictator (Abinales and Amoroso 2005). He placed the country under martial laws, suppressed opposition groups, and battled communist and Islamic insurgencies in the south. Together with Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and South Vietnam, the Philippines under Marcos served as a key link in the US strategy to contain communism in Southeast Asia. Because Marcos was valuable as a close ally, American administrations from Carter to Reagan did their best to support him despite his regime's rampant corruption and gross violations of human rights. As the opposition coalesced around Corazon Aquino in the mid-1980s, US support for Marcos enraged democratic activists and stoked Filipinos' anti-American sentiments (Thompson 1995).

After Marcos was overthrown, these sentiments would transform into popular demand for US troops to leave the Philippines (Brands 1992). While anti-American protests had occurred in the 1960s (Meadows 1971), this time they were not linked to radical communist groups. Although the Aquino government wanted to renew the leases of the bases (with higher rents) to the US, many conservative elites were ambivalent about the values of those bases (Yeo 2011: chapter 2). In 1991, the Philippine Senate voted to end the leases, and for the first time in Philippine history the country did not host any foreign military bases.

In early 1995, the Philippine government discovered that China had secretly occupied and fortified Mischief Reef, which is only 150 miles off Palawan Island and which is part of the Spratly Islands claimed by the Philippines (and Vietnam). This Chinese move triggered closer defence cooperation between the Philippines and the US. After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the Philippines welcomed back US troops to train the Philippine military in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism (De Castro 2009: 404–408). The greater US military presence in the Philippines has sparked new waves of protests. Under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Sino-Philippine relations improved following China's offers of aid and investment. There were protests against China, not only for its continuing encroachments in the South China Sea, but also for its involvement in the graft scandal related to business deals signed by President Arroyo (De Castro 2009: 408–417). More recently, in May 2012, hundreds of Filipino protested in front of the Chinese Embassy in Manila, demanding that China backed off from the standoff over the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea (British Broadcasting Corporation, May 11, 2012).

General Suharto differed from Marcos in many ways, not the least in the general's greater success in bringing economic growth to Indonesia (Elson 2001). Yet the Suharto regime was also a dictatorship that maintained strict control over Indonesian society. Under Suharto, the expression of popular sentiments was allowed only through government channels. Early in his rule Suharto suppressed Islamic demand for political participation and forced Islamic groups to profess loyalty to Pancasila, the state doctrine (Effendy 2003). By the early 1990s, he began to court Muslim support and opened up the political sphere for Islamic identity to be expressed (Hefner 2000). Externally, Suharto was not as close to

the US as Marcos was, but he was fiercely anti-communist, having risen to power under special circumstances in which hundreds of thousands of communists were killed (Crouch 1978). While Indonesia did not support the American war in Vietnam, it was much closer to the West than to the Soviet bloc (Leifer 1983).

After the financial crisis struck Indonesia in 1997, the Suharto regime quickly lost its legitimacy in the face of enormous street protests. Since Suharto stepped down in 1998, Indonesia has seen a sharp, sometimes violent, resurgence of Islam. Yet there was more to the movement than an effort to assert religious belief. Since the 1920s, Islamic identity has become a part of many Indonesians' national identity (Vu 2010). The Dutch were opposed both because they were foreigners and because they were infidels. Although many Muslim Indonesians adhered to Pan-Islamism, prominent Muslim leaders such as Mohammad Natsir and Mohammad Roem chose to collaborate with nationalists such as Sukarno and Hatta during the Japanese occupation (1942–1945). The bargain among these leaders created an Indonesian state that was not an Islamic state but still had a religious character.¹ Suharto initially suppressed Muslim identity after his rise to power, but in the last decade of his rule reversed that policy and supported an Islamic role in nation building (Liddle 1996). This union of Islam and the nation in Indonesian imagination has guided numerous mass protests in the last decade against the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Perwita 2007). These protests both expressed Indonesian Muslims' solidarity with their fellow Muslims viewed as being victims of the US and asserted the identity of Indonesians as a Muslim nation in opposition to Western domination. These protests have sometimes strained Indonesia's relations with the US against the wish of Jakarta.

Muslim groups not only protested against the US, but also joined other groups to demonstrate against Singapore, Australia and even fellow Muslim Malaysia for policies or statements that were perceived as harmful or insulting to Indonesia. An issue that has recently concerned Indonesians involves the abuses of Indonesian workers and maids by Singaporean and Malaysian employers. In 2009, a series of abuse cases of Indonesian maids in Malaysia triggered massive protests in Indonesia, resulting in the Indonesian government's moratorium on the recruitment of maids to Malaysia. This ban was not lifted until the end of 2011 after Malaysia agreed to a number of measures to improve the working conditions of Indonesian maids (*The Jakarta Post*, 21 October 2011).

Unlike in Indonesia, the recent surge of nationalism in Vietnam is primarily directed at China. Vietnam fought a border war with China in early 1979, followed by many armed clashes until 1988. While precolonial Vietnam had fought imperial China, the conflict between the two communist powers in the 1980s was not primarily about China's domination but about the Vietnamese

¹The first principle of Pancasila, the five principles on which the Indonesian state is based, proclaims a belief in one God.

invasion of Cambodia whose Khmer Rouge leaders were allied with China (Chen 1987; Evans and Rowley 1990). China also punished Vietnam for the latter's harsh treatment of ethnic Chinese and for its military alliance with the Soviet Union. Although Vietnam was able to resist China, by the late 1980s it had sunk into a deep economic crisis due to misguided socialist policy, the Western economic embargo, the costly occupation of Cambodia, and the reduction of Soviet aid (Vo 1990). A new generation of Vietnamese leaders decided to embark on economic reform which essentially meant rural de-collectivization, the end of central planning, the acceptance of a domestic market economy, and the opening up of Vietnam to Western trade and investment (Fforde and de Vylder 1996). When the Soviet bloc collapsed, Vietnamese leaders responded by tightening political control and restoring relations with China in the spirit of socialist solidarity (Vuving 2006). Externally Vietnam joined the ASEAN in 1995 and normalized relations with the US in the same year. Thanks to economic reform and a favourable global environment, Vietnam has achieved rapid growth in national income. The country now trades widely with the West and has joined the World Trade Organization. Until recently Vietnamese leaders have seen China as a reliable comrade in an ideological struggle against American imperialism. While US-Vietnam relations have warmed up considerably, significant mistrust of the US still exists within the top Vietnamese leadership, concentrated especially within its security and propaganda apparatus.

Anti-China sentiments emerged in Vietnam around 2005 (Thayer 2009). After Vietnam and China signed a new border treaty, news about the territorial concessions Vietnamese negotiators made to China was circulated inside Vietnam and on the internet and drew sharp outcries. At the same time, China stepped up its claims on sovereignty over the Paracels and Spratlys by arresting and shooting at Vietnamese fishermen in the contested areas. The Vietnamese government's efforts to appease China while covering up these embarrassing events enraged many Vietnamese intellectuals and youths who organized spontaneous protests in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in 2007 and 2008. Anti-China feelings have run feverishly high ever since, brewing in private conversations and on the internet. In 2009 when it was reported that Chinese companies had been given licenses to exploit mineral and forest resources in many strategic locations in Vietnam, a website was founded by three intellectuals who collected thousands of signatures for a petition specifically against Chinese involvement in bauxite mining projects in central Vietnam (Thayer 2010). In the summer of 2011, hundreds of protesters marched in Hanoi for eleven Sundays over twelve weeks against China's alleged encroachment on Vietnam's sovereignty in the South China Sea (or the Vietnamese 'Eastern Sea'). The authorities violently suppressed the demonstrations but a core, dedicated group of protesters seem to have formed and continue to meet regularly.

Like Vietnamese who resent their domineering neighbour to the north, Cambodians have long harboured deep resentment of Thailand and Vietnam,

both of which once colonized their country and annexed large areas of the ancient Khmer kingdom. In the words of John Tully (2002: 242), Cambodian nationalism "...contained a thick strand of envy..." from its inception. Anti-Vietnamese riots broke out in the early 1970s that led to thousands of ethnic Vietnamese being killed. Under the Khmer Rouge, the murder of ethnic Thais and Vietnamese was systematically practiced (Kiernan 1996). However, throughout the 1980s Cambodia was occupied by Vietnamese troops and its government, led by pro-Vietnam communists, was a client of Vietnam.

Since the first free elections supervised by United Nations peace-keeping forces in 1993, anti-Vietnamese and anti-Thai sentiments have returned. Opponents to the Vietnam-backed Cambodian People's Party (CPP) led by Hun Sen have sought to incite anti-Vietnamese feelings to weaken Hun Sen. Thanks to deft political manoeuvres and use of military, Hun Sen was able to maintain and even consolidate his domination over Cambodian politics (Hughes 2003). The opposition still survives thanks to its ability to win some seats in elections and to Western pressure that keeps Hun Sen from doing away with all democratic institutions (e.g. a critical English-language media).

Yet election years have been extremely tense times as political parties joggle in anticipation of the polls. It was in this context when anti-Thai riots broke out in Phnom Penh in early 2003. Rioters burned down the Thai embassy and looted several Thai-owned businesses in Phnom Penh. The reason was a statement allegedly made by a Thai movie star about Thai ownership of Angkor Wat (Chachavalpongpun 2009: 456). Although Hun Sen criticized the statement on radio a day before the riots erupted, he denied his government's involvement and blamed the opposition, which also denied any involvement. Five years later, the 2008 elections also formed the background against which Cambodia's clash with Thailand over the Preah Viheah Temple took place. While Cambodian military was no match for the Thais in any serious conflict, Hun Sen responded to Thai protests (see below) by sending troops to the temple area and by insulting Thai authorities (Chandler 2010).

Historically nationalism in Siam/Thailand has never been as intense as in its neighbours Cambodia and Vietnam. Siam was not colonized, and national awareness developed in part thanks to Siamese kings who sought to build a modern nation-state in the early twentieth century. King Vajiravudh in particular created the slogan 'Nation, Religion, King' which centred on Thai identity and which tied the nation to Buddhism and the monarchy (Tarling 2004: 115; Vella and Vella 1978: 177–179). Since its early days, Thai nationalism has often been expressed through anti-Chinese and anti-Western sentiments (Callahan 2003: 495). Sino-Thais who control much of Thai economy have historically been targets of riots (Wasana Wongsurawat 2009). France and Britain were resented for forcing Siam to sign many unequal treaties and for seizing territories considered to belong to Siam (these territories are today part of Laos, Cambodia,

and Malaysia) (Owen 2005: 350–355). Yet during the Cold War Thailand was a close American ally and Western influences on Thailand were widespread.

After the financial crisis in 1997 that wrecked the Thai economy, nationalist anger re-emerged among some elites, occasionally directed against Sino-Thais, but mainly against the West (Callahan 2003). These elites resented the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) austerity programs imposed on Thailand. They were also infuriated by the takeover of heavily indebted Thai firms at cheap prices by foreign corporations. Those nationalist sentiments did not form a mass movement, but they contributed to the success of Thaksin Shinawatra whose party was named *Thais Love Thais* (Thai Rak Thai). After becoming Prime Minister, Thaksin cancelled IMF programs but maintained a close relationship with the US.

Thaksin was overthrown by the military in 2006, but his party under the leadership of Samak Sundaravej regained power in 2007. In 2008, the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), a coalition of many groups that opposed Samak, launched a challenge against his government by organizing protests against Cambodia's claim for sovereignty over the Preah Vihear Temple located along Thai border with Cambodia (Hughes 2008). The temple had been ruled by the International Court of Justice in 1962 to belong to Cambodia, and Samak government did not contest Cambodia's claim to it when the Cambodian government submitted an application to the United Nations for the temple to be acknowledged as a World Heritage Site. The protests, which were supported by the Democrat Party then in opposition status, led to brief gun battles near the temple between Thai and Cambodian troops, causing three deaths. The issue contributed to the dissolution of the Samak government later that year, to be replaced by a new government led by Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva. As Prime Minister, Abhisit continued the hard line, leading to another clash between the two militaries in February 2011 that caused several casualties on both sides. Despite the coming to power of a new pro-Thaksin government since late 2011, the conditions in the temple area remain tense.

The new nationalist movements in five Southeast Asian countries are not completely new in the sense that their discourse frequently seeks to appeal to traditional patriotism (Vietnam, Cambodia) as well as anti-colonialism and antiwestern sentiments (the Philippines, Indonesia). These themes were the hallmarks of the old nationalist movements of the early twentieth century. Yet the new phenomenon is unfolding with different forms in a different domestic, regional and international context. Now that colonial powers have long gone, the enemy of the nation is different. Enmity is now primarily directed at neighbouring countries as well as national governments and elites (except in the Philippines where the US remains a main target of nationalist animosity). With new enemies to confront, the goal of the new movements now involves not the national right to self-determination but national pride and the integrity of national territories. The struggle clearly marks a new, higher phase of national development as

relationships among countries in the region deepen through greater economic and cultural interaction. That new socio-economic context is also reflected in the new movements' methods of street protests and mobilization through online media. Whether these methods enhance the mass character of the new movements awaits future research.

EXPLAINING THE NEW NATIONALISM

What explains the post-Cold War resurgence of nationalism across Southeast Asia? A brief review of theories about the causes of nationalism is sufficient to suggest their limited relevance to the phenomenon we are now witnessing. Most theorists focus on the 'old' nationalism of past centuries that is credited for giving birth to modern nations and nation-states. The main debate pits 'modernists' who consider nations as modern constructs, against 'perennialists' who claim a larger role for primordial identities in shaping modern nations. Among modernists, Ernest Gellner (1983) believes that nations were created out of a need in modern industrial societies for a high culture that is specialist, literate, and based on a standardized mass educational system. Benedict Anderson (1983) argues that nations emerged in modern time as a result of the decline of sacred monarchies and cosmological script communities, a revolution in the concept of time, and 'print-capitalism' which fostered anonymous reading publics. In contrast, Anthony Smith (1987) from the perennialist camp posits that ethnic identities predated modern nations and shaped the formation of national communities. Although a modernist, John Breuilly (1994) treats national identity not as a belief but as material for political mobilization. Breuilly argues that nationalism appeared in eighteenth-century Western Europe as a political reaction to absolute rulers' efforts to consolidate their states. Beginning as a demand for political representation by excluded groups, nationalism would spread beyond Europe and be adopted by those who were excluded because of their cultural identities.

The above theories offer convincing explanations for the rise of nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century in Southeast Asia. The role of modern education in fostering new national consciousness in colonial Southeast Asia is well documented for practically all colonies (Tarling 2004). The rise of modern national consciousness in Indochina, Malaya, and the Dutch Indies occurred at the same time with the spread of vernacular languages, the appearance of newspapers and novels, and the development of modern industries, telecommunication, and means of transportation. The modernists are generally correct, yet perennialists such as Smith (1987) have a point: new national identities for people inhabiting *mainland* Southeast Asia were strongly conditioned by pre-existing identities. The new Burmese identity was built around a Burman core. The Indochinese identity lingered on a decade after the French had been

overthrown by the Japanese, but eventually came apart and was supplanted by three pre-colonial identities (Annamese, Khmer, and Lao).

By focusing on politics, Breuilly's framework is uniquely useful for explaining not only the old nationalism but also the ongoing struggles for self-rule in southern Philippines, southern Thailand, northern Burma, and Papua New Guinea (Tarling 2004: 214–221). Those struggles involve ethnic minorities who are politically excluded and who yearn for their own states. They are responses to the sometimes brutal efforts of modernizing states in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand to expand their control over borderland areas (McCargo 2008; McKenna 1998). The importance of ethnic identities in those struggles also underlines Smith's point about the difficulties facing modern nations built on a multi-ethnic base.

Yet existing theories can only partially explain the post-Cold War surge of nationalism in the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia. Modernists are particularly silent about what happens to nationalism once it has emerged. Perennialists like Smith can point to traditional rivalries and conflicts going back for centuries between Chinese and Vietnamese and between Cambodians and Thais. Yet Smith's framework cannot explain the ebb and flow of post-independence nationalism. The theory also misses much of the political dynamics between the Vietnamese government and anti-China protesters, and the manipulation of nationalist sentiment by Thai and Cambodian elites. Smith can't say much about anti-Americanism in Indonesia and the Philippines.

We therefore need to move beyond existing theories to examine the growth of nationalism in Southeast Asia since the mid-1980s in its context. In particular, I argue that the phenomenon was caused by the conjunction of three factors: the failure of earlier nationalist movements to fully deliver their promises; a shift in the international and regional order (the end of the Cold War and the rise of China); and a change in domestic order (political liberalisation and democratisation) that was also occurring across many countries in the region. The failure of the old nationalism is the deep cause while the other two factors explain the timing and the 'mass' character of the new nationalist movements.

The first cause of the new nationalism has to do with the failure of the old nationalism to deliver many of its promises. It is true that the old nationalism succeeded in liberating Southeast Asia from colonial rule, but one should not overlook its significant failures. First, nationalism in most cases simply replaced European governor-generals with indigenous dictators or oligarchs. For decades, Southeast Asians chafed under dictators (Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, Ne Win in Burma, Sukarno and Suharto in Indonesia) and totalitarian communist regimes (Vietnam, Laos since 1975, Cambodia during 1975–1993). Khmer Rouge leaders killed far more Cambodians than French and Americans ever did. Burmese people were poorer and more oppressed under Ne Win and his successors than they were under British rule. Vietnam's communist regime exploited and oppressed peasants through collectivization more than

the French colonial state was ever able to (Vu, *forthcoming*). The Suharto regime was more repressive toward Islam in its first two decades than the infidel Dutch colonial regime had been. Postcolonial state oppression and exploitation in Cambodia, Indonesia, Burma and Vietnam were not simply the result of state building efforts as had been the case of absolute monarchs in Breuilly's framework. Rather, they primarily originated from extremist ideologies that claimed to be nationalist but in reality destroyed national unity through class, ethnic, or religious persecutions. In these cases it can be said that nationalist movements failed to resist and ended up being 'hijacked' by rival ideologies (communism in Vietnam and Cambodia, anti-communism in Indonesia, and 'Buddhist socialism' in Burma). This point will become clearer when we discuss below how the end of the Cold War contributed to the recent surge of nationalism.

The second failure of the old nationalism was its inability to break the dependency on the former colonial master (the Philippines) or to solve territorial disputes with neighbours (Vietnam and Cambodia). After its failed struggle against the US in the 1900s, Filipino elites fully cooperated with the American colonial regime (Abinales and Amoroso 2005: 125–127; Tarling 2004: 93–97). Some even requested the US to annex the Philippines as one of its states. Filipino autonomy was largely achieved in the 1930s with the collaborating elites competing for votes in local elections. The Philippines was granted independence by the US following the end of World War Two on the condition that American economic and security interests were protected (Abinales and Amoroso 2005: 171–173). The failure of Filipino elites in cutting ties with its former colonial master has been a prominent theme in the postcolonial nationalist discourse (Bankoff and Weekley 2002).

The old nationalism also failed to fully settle border disputes. Following World War Two, the Cambodian government was able to reclaim two western provinces (Battambang and Siem Reap) from Thailand. In 1962 Cambodia secured a ruling from the International Court of Justice on the Preah Vihear Temple but not the land surrounding the temple. Cambodian failure in fully resolving territorial disputes with its neighbours is a common problem facing newly independent countries and a common cause for the continuation of nationalism after independence in Africa and elsewhere (Barrington 2006: 15–19).

The case of Vietnam is quite different. For decades its communist leaders viewed communist China as a close comrade and big brother. Until the early 1970s, they accepted China's claims of sovereignty over the Paracels and Spratlys despite the fact that those islands had been Vietnam's territory in the colonial period and were under the control of the Saigon regime at the time. For example, a 1958 diplomatic note signed by Premier Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam essentially concurred with China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. When Chinese forces attacked and expelled Saigon's troops stationed in the Paracels in 1974, Hanoi did not utter a single word of protest. In the current disputes, China is using these events in support of its claims, while the

Vietnamese government has failed to offer an official explanation for what happened.

The failures of the old nationalism are a deep but insufficient cause for the new nationalism in Southeast Asia. An equally important cause is a shift in the international and regional order as a result of the end of the Cold War and the rise of China. It is not a coincidence that the resurgence of nationalism occurred at the end of the Cold War (Jager 2007). The Cold War had its origins in Europe but Southeast Asians were not pawns in the hands of the superpowers as commonly believed (Vu 2009: 1–16). Rather, many Southeast Asian elites truly believed in either Western democracy or Soviet socialism, and worked hard to enlist the support of one of the superpowers for their partisan cause. Ho Chi Minh went to Moscow in early 1950 asking Stalin for a Soviet-Vietnamese mutual defence treaty (Gaiduk 2003). Stalin turned down the request but agreed to recognise Ho's government and delegated to Maoist China the task of helping Vietnamese communists. At the same time, Ho's rival Ngo Dinh Diem and his supporters inside and outside Vietnam pulled all strings to get the US to commit to him as a man capable of defeating communism (Miller 2004). The Thai government was among the first to offer troops for fighting alongside the Americans in Korea – in return for American support (Wasana Wongsurawat 2009).

Because many Southeast Asian elites truly believed in Cold War ideologies, they sought to harness patriotic sentiments to serve ideological causes. In North Vietnam, to be patriotic was reinterpreted to mean “to build socialism” (Vu 2009b: 48–51). People were made to believe that China was Vietnam's generous and beloved socialist brother despite the traditional conflict between the two countries. In South Vietnam, people were made to accept that patriotism meant a commitment to fight communism. Alliance with the West against fellow Vietnamese were considered ‘patriotic duties.’ In Thailand, pro-US military dictators frequently used nationalism as a tool to suppress leftist groups (Callahan 2003: 498). While anti-communism was suppressed under Sukarno's formula of *Nasakom* (nationalism-religion-communism), communism under Suharto was charged with being anti-*Pancasila* or against the nation. Depending on context, nationalism was suppressed while socialist brotherhood or anti-communist fraternity were promoted. Alongside ideological affinities were military and other forms of alliance, for example linking communist Vietnam to China and the Soviet Union; the Philippines and Thailand to the US; and Singapore and Malaysia to Britain.

When the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, surviving communist regimes (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) were forced to turn to Western capitalist countries for aid and investment. Cambodia's Communist Party abandoned communism to cling to power through a transitional period from war to peace under United Nations' mediation. To implement market reform Laos and Vietnam also dropped parts of the communist orthodoxy such

as collectivised agriculture and central planning. Although Laotian and Vietnamese leaders still believed in communism, it would be difficult for them to promise a communist paradise to their people (as they had done up to that point), while having to beg for foreign investment from the West. Freed from the ideological shackles of their governments, the educated publics could turn their imagination to new forms of community based on other ties, of which the most critical ones have been religion, ethnicity, and markets.

At the same time, a parallel trend occurred in anti-communist countries where the Soviet demise alleviated their governments' longstanding fear of communist subversion. With the death of global communism, rulers in these countries no longer had the motivation to propagate or enforce an anti-communist ideology (Chantasawat 2006). In fact, their capitalist elites quickly saw new opportunities for making money, as living standards in socialist countries were low and their workers were not allowed to organise independent unions. Thailand's Prime Minister Chatchai Choonhavan was the first leader of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to visit Vietnam, famously calling for 'battlefields' to be turned into 'markets.' For supporters of communism in Thailand and Malaysia, the collapse of the Soviet bloc perhaps dispelled whatever remained of the communist allure. As communist parties surrendered or were dissolved in these countries, an important barrier to the formation of national or other communal bonds was removed. The end of the Cold War thus facilitated the opening up of ideological space for new imaginations of the nation on both sides of the old ideological divide.

Together with the end of the Cold War, the rise of China is an important shift in the regional order that has fuelled the recent surge of nationalism in Southeast Asia. Despite Chinese leaders' professed belief in its 'peaceful rise,' China's rapid modernization of its military and its sometimes aggressive behaviour in the contested territories have aggravated China's relations with its neighbours (Bolt 2011). Currently China is making sweeping claims of sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, against contradicting claims by Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia. Militarily, China is developing a blue-water navy which raises questions in the region about its long-term intentions. Economically, China's thirst for energy resources has led to its involvement in controversial mining projects in Vietnam and Indonesia. The flood of cheap Chinese goods and labour has triggered concerns in Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia. China's own nationalism is increasingly militant in its rhetoric, further inflaming anti-Chinese sentiments in Southeast Asia (Gries 2004).

In Southeast Asia, the rise of China is also politically significant because of the large and powerful Chinese diaspora. China's dynamic economy has increasingly drawn back wealthy ethnic Chinese from Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The pull is primarily economic, but also has cultural dimensions. Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia have had a tenuous relationship with host communities, with those in Thailand and the Philippines most

integrated and those in Indonesia and Malaysia least. Closer relationship with their ancestral homeland has slowed down and even reversed the long and painful process of integration into their host societies, promising future conflicts (Shin 1989, *pers. comm.* March 2010).

China still has many ‘friendly neighbours’ such as Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, which helps stem the rise of anti-Chinese sentiments (Chambers 2005; Maung 2009; Vuving 2006). But these relationships involve many complicated issues and may not be stable. For Myanmar, the issues are China’s geostrategic ambitions in the Indian Ocean, the control of resources by ethnic Chinese in Myanmar’s economy, and the migration of hundreds of thousands of Chinese into ethnic areas in Myanmar (Haack 2010). For Thailand, Sino-Thais have been deeply integrated into Thai society, but resentment against them still persists both among some urban elites and in rural towns (Callahan 2003; Chantasasawat 2006). For Vietnam, both anti-Chinese sentiments and the dependence of Vietnamese economy on Chinese imports are contentious issues (Giap 2011; Thayer 2010b: 399–404; Vuving 2010). As we have seen above, the Vietnamese government has failed to completely suppress the anti-Chinese movement despite its tight control over society. In the future, anti-Chinese movements may emerge in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, as they have in the past, if people in those countries perceive China and ethnic Chinese as a security threat.

The wave of political liberalisation and democratisation that swept through Southeast Asia since the mid-1980s is the third factor that has contributed to the recent rise in nationalism. The literature on ethnic conflicts and ethno-nationalism has pointed out that democratization encourages the political mobilization of ethnic and national identities among groups competing for power (Snyder 2000).² Although this point applies to the Southeast Asian cases under study, it neglects the conditions that make nationalist claims appealing to people or voters in a particular country, regardless of what the elites intend to do. The simple fact is that liberalisation and democratisation create conditions for greater and more sustained mass participation. Expanded popular participation in democratic politics forces political regimes to accept and carry out the popular will to some extent. In less democratic contexts, reduced state control over quasi-political organisations (e.g. student and religious associations) and over the means of communication (e.g. web blogs and social media websites) facilitates the forming of horizontal networks of activists that can mobilise support for nationalist causes.

²Snyder (2000: 32–39) contends that elites’ competition for popular support at the earliest stages of democratization fosters the use of nationalist appeals. The particular type of nationalism that emerges (‘revolutionary’, ‘counterrevolutionary’, ‘civic’, or ‘ethnic nationalism’) depends on whether the interests of dominant elites are compatible with democracy, and how strong representative institutions are relative to administrative institutions.

In the Philippines and Indonesia, democracy however imperfect has triumphed over dictatorship. In the Philippines, 'People Power I' which overthrew the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, was followed by its sequel, 'People Power II' in 2001 which removed another president (Joseph Estrada) from office. While the Philippine government has invited the US back to help with its war against Islamic separatist forces, its relationship with the US is frequently targeted by demonstrators. In Indonesia, the fall of Suharto has ushered in a multiparty system, a vibrant civil society, and free media. With new freedom of press, expression and organisation, mass groups in Indonesia have regularly flexed their muscles and criticised the government's foreign policy. Muslim groups claiming to speak for the populace have been mobilized to express solidarity with Muslims elsewhere (Anwar 2010: 130–131). Although Islamic parties in Indonesia have failed to dominate the government thus far, the expression of the popular will is not limited to institutionalised channels.

In 'semi-democratic' Thailand, the liberalisation of politics since 1973 and especially since 1992 has also opened up a huge political space for popular movements. We have seen above how the opposition to the Samak government seriously derailed Thai-Cambodian relations. Cambodia became formally a democracy after 1993, and although the Hun Sen regime has amassed much power, Cambodia today is still not the Cambodia under Sihanouk in the 1960s, under Khmer Rouge in the 1970s, or during the Vietnamese occupation in the 1980s. There are today regular elections when opposition parties can campaign to a limited extent and can still count on an independent foreign language media in the country. An example is Sam Rainsy, who leads the largest opposition party and who often manipulates anti-Vietnamese sentiment to challenge the Hun Sen regime's legitimacy. Rainsy now lives in exile, but his party still has the ability to bring popular attention to political issues in the future. In communist Vietnam, political liberalisation has accompanied market reform despite the government's intention to maintain absolute control. The growth of a market economy that lies partly outside government control has led to the rise of a new middle class and an intellectual stratum which, albeit small, is less dependent on the state as in the old socialist era. A market economy requires interaction with Western governments, business, and international institutions, which brings in and sends out information, money, and people. This economy makes it difficult for the state to keep strict control, and the recent explosion of anti-Chinese sentiments in Vietnam is clear evidence of this fact.

On the one hand, the resurgence of nationalism in Southeast Asian countries reflects conditions of local history and politics, in particular the failures of the old nationalism in many areas. On the other hand, as a regional phenomenon the new nationalism bears the stamps of three regional trends: the end of the Cold War, the rise of China, and the liberalisation and democratisation of politics. Nationalism has not surged in every country in Southeast Asia, nor has it been

equally intense in the countries where it emerges. Nevertheless, as a regional trend it is unmistakable.

CONCLUSION: MISSIONS, IMPACTS AND RISKS OF THE NEW NATIONALISM

The resurgence of nationalism is an important political trend in Southeast Asia that existing theories do not provide ready explanations. This paper proposes that the phenomenon was caused by important failures of the old nationalism, the end of the Cold War, the rise of China, and the wave of liberalisation and democratisation since the 1980s. In concluding, I briefly consider what the main missions of this new nationalism are, and what potential risks are involved for Southeast Asia.

If the main mission of the old nationalism was to liberate the nation from colonial rule, the most important mission of the new nationalism for Cambodians, Thais, Vietnamese and Filipinos appears to be the defence of national territories. This new mission is causing the reversal of the trend of disarmament in Southeast Asia in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War. Under popular pressure, the Vietnamese government has adopted a more assertive position on territorial issues. Vietnam was the largest customer of Russian arms in 2009, with purchases of submarines and other military hardware. The signs of a growing arms race are conspicuous. During 2005–2009, Southeast Asian countries imported twice the volume of weapons they had done in the previous five years (Weitz 2010).

An unintended impact of the new nationalism is the reconciliation of compatriots who belonged to opposing camps in the Cold War years and who were brainwashed with Cold War ideologies and their hateful messages. As the nation is resurrected in popular imagination and as the spectre of communism fades, it is now possible for Indonesians to discuss the events of 1965–1966 during which hundreds of thousands of communists were massacred by the military and Muslim groups. Some modest attempts at restitution and reconciliation have been made with families of former communists and (to a greater extent) with ethnic Chinese. In communist Vietnam, the reaction to Chinese aggressive moves on the South China Sea has drawn together many pro-government Vietnamese and anti-communist overseas Vietnamese three decades after the bloody civil war.

The new nationalism by itself is not sufficient to cause interstate wars in Southeast Asia but the risks are serious due to two particular conditions in the regional order. One such condition is the deep historical resentment between many neighbouring countries such as between Thailand and Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam, and Cambodia and Thailand. The other is the sharp inequality in national income across Southeast Asia. At the top are Singapore and Malaysia where many Indonesians and Filipinos work as housemaids and construction

workers, and where many Vietnamese and Thai women go to find husbands or work as prostitutes. About two million Indonesians work in Malaysia, half of whom came illegally (*The Jakarta Post*, 21 October 2011). Many Malaysians seek better paid work in Singapore but travel to southern Thailand for cheap (sexual) entertainment. Inequality provides the fertile ground for nationalist envy (in poorer countries), arrogance (in richer neighbours), and eventually hostilities.

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