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Ethnic diversity and the nation state: from centralization in the age of nationalism to decentralization amidst globalization

Francis Kok Wah LOH

ABSTRACT

The cause of conflict in multiethnic and multi-religious societies is not diversity in and of itself. Rather, it is one's attitude towards diversity. Do we *share political power and economic development* with the regions and minority communities? Do we *recognize the cultural identities of the minorities*? This requires that the nation-state building process be imagined in more inclusive civic territorial lines rather than exclusive ethnic-genealogical lines. With the above as a backdrop, the article explores nation-state building and the related pursuit of economic growth in Malaysia and some parts of Southeast Asia. The article ends with a call for decentralizing power and resources, and for more research on local level governance and democracy.

KEYWORDS

Nation-state building in multi-ethnic societies; ethnic conflict in Southeast Asia; Malaysia; decentralizing the state

Introduction

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the question of ethnic diversity and ethnic loyalties was generally associated with the concept of a plural society, as defined by John Furnivall. In Southeast Asia, plural societies such as Malay(si)a, Indonesia and Burma were associated with colonialism and, as the newly independent countries were being rushed into modern politics, ethnic conflict and violence occurred.

From the point of view of modernization theories, the ethnic and/or communal problems were occurring because traditional norms, values and institutions continued to hold sway in these developing societies even as modernization proceeded. It was therefore important to promote modern norms, values and institutions among the population at large and to assimilate or integrate those groups that were still steeped in traditional ways into the modern newly created national polities.

Apart from highlighting the problem of ethnic and communal conflict, attention was also drawn to other factors, such as language, dialect, tribe, religion, region, caste, etc. Myriad concepts such as tribalism, regionalism, secession, parochialism, particularism, etc., were used by analysts to characterize these sub-national group orientations and solidarities. Whichever the term used, they were associated with a sense of traditionalism that the analysts argued could only be overcome as modernization occurred and more people became imbued with the norms, values and institutions of a modern nation-state.

For Huntington (1968), for instance, the problems of integration were often exacerbated by the goals of the nation-state itself. For, as the modern nation-state promoted socio-economic development, namely urbanization, industrialization, a market economy, expansion and modernization of the communications and educational systems, etc., invariably, social mobilization occurred and egged on popular demands for political participation which, alas, often occurred at a faster rate

than that of political institutionalization. The end result was an unhealthy “revolution of rising expectations.” For Huntington, the process of political participation had to be slowed down while that of political institutionalization speeded up. The famous dictum associated with him was that power had to be centralized before it could be expanded and distributed; hence his priority for establishing “political order in changing societies.”

Geertz (1963) also believed that establishing modern political institutions was critical. But he further argued for the creation of a civic culture and a common citizenship among peoples of different cultural and religious backgrounds. His “integrative revolution” referred to the latter process.

Ethnic conflict in western and in the former communist countries

However, ethnic tensions and conflicts were not simply the prerogative of the developing countries. Beginning from the late 1960s, it was observed that ethnic tensions and conflicts, even secession movements, began to emerge in the western industrialized liberal democratic countries too (see, for example, Hechter 1975; Nairn 1981; Smith 1981; Rex 1986; Castles et al. 1988).¹

From the early 1970s, ethnic problems also occurred in the then communist countries (Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Sokolov 2002).²

In trying to discuss these developments in the western liberal and former communist countries, the concepts of ethno-nationalism and ethno-regionalism have frequently been invoked. In the case of the western European countries, policies of decentralization and multiculturalism have been promoted to resolve these problems. In the case of the USSR and Yugoslavia, the problems have led to the break-up of the two countries, the redrawing of political boundaries, and the emergence of new nation-states.

Hence, the ethnic question, rising ethno-regionalism and ethno-nationalism, even secession, are not problems to be associated with the newly independent and developing nation states of Africa and Asia. From the examples given, it is clear that so-called more developed western industrialized and liberal democratic countries, and those who proclaimed themselves as communists, were not immune from ethnic problems. The major problem is not simply that of a lack of modernization. In fact, modernization often exacerbated the “primordial sentiments” of the various ethnic groups, thereby heightening competition and conflict among them. Nor was it specifically a result of a lack of central political institutions and a common civic culture. It was the nature of that modernization process that underscored these differences. There is enough evidence from the extant literature that there were three related contributing factors involved, regardless of whether the countries concerned are developing countries, western industrialized countries, or former communist ones.

First, the minority ethnic groups or ethnic-nations usually reject attempts by the majority groups to assimilate them into the dominant culture. Instead, minorities demand the right to practice and develop their own cultures. Accordingly, they demand that cultural pluralism be upheld and that governments put into place some policy of multiculturalism.

Second, the minority groups also reject political domination by majority groups. Instead they pursue greater political autonomy via policies of decentralization and the establishment of federal systems; still others attempt to secede from over-bearing central control.

And third, the minority groups reject unequal economic development of the regions. Instead, they demand that the regions where they are domiciled, just like the regions where the majority groups are concentrated, be accorded a just share of the economic cake.

Put another way, the discourse about such conflicts and how they might be resolved, acknowledges that such problems will persist unless all the people of any particular country are accorded similar citizenship rights, regardless of whether they belong to the majority or minority groups.

Clarifying “ethnic,” “nation” and “nation-state”

In his empirical study of 132 countries, Connor (1978) argued that researchers often refer to a minority group that possesses its own language, culture and/or religion, which is distinct from those of the majority group, as an “ethnic group.” In fact, possession of its own language, culture and religion also characterizes the “nation.” Connor further notes that both the ethnic group and nation are defined as social groups that possess a sense of solidarity among its members. Connor suggests that the “ethnic group” ought to be regarded as a “proto nation.” Indeed, every “ethnic group” has the potential to become a “nation.” The difference between the two, for Connor, is the degree of solidarity each accrues. Unlike an ethnic group, the members of a nation not only share a culture, language and religion. They also share a common political goal and acknowledge a common leadership of the group. It follows that the nation is a more united community, at least politically speaking, than the ethnic group where the sense of political solidarity and acceptance of a common leadership of the community are still absent, if not contested.

Defined in this manner, Connor has suggested that the use of the term “ethnic-nation” rather than “ethnic group,” or “nation” or race is more appropriate. On the basis of his definitions of the above terms, Connor concludes that of the 132 countries he studied:

- (i) only 7% can be considered nation-states (essentially comprising a single ethnic-nation);
- (ii) 61% contain a majority ethnic-nation as well as a minority ethnic-nation (majority equals more than 50% of population);
- (iii) 30% are countries that possess more than one ethnic nation wherein no one particular ethnic group constitutes a majority. All are minority ethnic nations.

Only a small number of nation states, such as Japan and perhaps Germany, that have stringent laws on in-migration and deny citizenship to residents who are not Japanese or German descendants, may be considered as true nation-states, with a single dominant ethnic-nation. The vast majority of western industrialized countries, the former communist countries, and the developing countries are, to follow Connor, multi-ethnic-nation states.

Since there is more than one ethnic group in most countries, they ought to be referred to as “multi-ethnic-nation states” not simply “nation-states.” That said, many of these multi-ethnic-nation states are facing challenges from their minority ethnic groups (or ethnic-nations). And in many cases, ethno-nationalist movements have emerged to challenge the majority ethnic-nation or ethnic group dominating the center. And because many of these ethno-nationalist movements are located in specific regions where they predominate numerically, they are sometimes also given the appellation “ethno-regionalist movements.”³

Ethnic conflict in Southeast Asia⁴

In Southeast Asia, every single country is a multi-ethnic nation state.

- Myanmar: apart from the majority Bamar people, we have minorities such as Karen, Kachin, Chin, Kayah, Kayan, Akha, Kokang, Wa, Mon, Arakanese, Shan, Pa-O, and the Indian, Chinese and Rohingya immigrants.
- Thailand: apart from the majority Thai people we have the Lisu, Akha, Hmong, Isan (Laos) in the north and northwest, the Malays in the south, and Chinese and Indian immigrants.

- Indonesia: apart from the majority Javanese people, we have Malays, Achenese, Minangkabau, Batak, Mandaling in Sumatera; Mandurese and Sundanese in Java; various groups of Dayaks in Kalimantan; the Balinese; the peoples of Sumbawa and Lombok; and the more Negrito-looking peoples of Ambon, Flores, Sumba, West Timor and West Papua in the eastern part of the archipelago, called NTT; apart from the Chinese, Indian and Arab immigrants, and the Eurasians of mixed blood.
- Singapore: apart from the majority Chinese population, we also have Indians, Arabs, Eurasians and Malays. Except for the Malays, the others are immigrants.
- Philippines: apart from the majority Tagalog-speakers who live in central and southern Luzon island, we have the Ilocano and Ifugao in northern Luzon, the Visayans of various types (Cebuano, Negros, Samar, Leyte, etc), Moros (Maguindanao and Tausug) on Mindanao and the Sulu islands, and the non-Muslim, non-Christian Lumad, also on Mindanao. There is also a sizeable immigrant Chinese population as well as Chinese and Spanish mestizos, usually belonging to the upper class.
- Malaysia: apart from the majority and indigenous Malays and the Orang Asli in the Peninsula, we have Chinese, Indian, Eurasian, Singhalese and Arab immigrants. In Sarawak, the Dayak (Iban, Bidayuh, Kenyah, Kayan, Kelabit, Penan) constitute the largest ethnic group, while in Sabah, the Kadazandusun with the Murut, Rungus, Sulu, Bajau, Irranun together constitute a majority. In both states, there are also large populations of Malays and Chinese and smaller groups of Indians.

The simple conclusion is that all the countries of Southeast Asia are plural or multi-ethnic, or to use Connor's suggestion, multi-ethnic nation states.

The plural, multi-ethnic, or multi ethnic-nation nature of the Southeast Asian countries raises important consideration of social justice in the process of forging a modern country. Does one only attend to the political, economic and cultural interests of the majority ethnic group? Or does one give equal attention to the political, economic and cultural demands of the minority groups too? Can any developing country, or for that matter developed country only prioritize the interests and needs of the dominant group? Or does one ensure that the poor, regardless of ethnic background get prioritized? If only one group monopolizes the economy, or another particular group accumulated too much power, or if the culture and religion of only one group defines the culture of the entire country, there will surely arise dissatisfaction among those whose political, economic or cultural interests are being discriminated. Conflict will further intensify if only a single group dominates not only the political scenario, but the economic and cultural realms as well.

In Indonesia, the Papuans, the Achenese (before the tsunami), and the East Timorese (before they gained their Independence) are/were independent ethnic groups that were discriminated against by the Suharto regime during the New Order. Led by a critical group of the middle-classes, they began to rebel against the military regime, which was dominated by Javanese, initially seeking greater autonomy and fairer distribution of the nation's resources, but ultimately calling for secession from Jakarta. In the process, the original ethnic groups transformed themselves into ethnic-nations seeking the establishment of their own independent states.

Likewise, the most important reason behind the ongoing Malay-Muslim people's uprising in Patani, southern Thailand, and the Moro people's uprising in southern Philippines, is because of their political, economic and cultural marginalization by the powers-that-be in Bangkok and Manila respectively. Despite various efforts to end hostilities whenever new governments come to power in the capital areas, the rebellions in the southern areas of Thailand and the Philippines have persisted, and more and more of these minority peoples support the rebel leaders' demands for secession.

Ethnic stereotypes

Apart from the *structural objective* factors that give rise to worsening ethnic relations and in some cases to rebellions, we also need to discuss the *subjective cultural* aspect of the ethnic problem. For there persists much prejudice among the various ethnic groups, often derived from stereotypes of “the Others,” which were very often constructed as part of colonial racism. Since the problem is a legacy of colonial racism, we also resort to use of the term “race” in addition to “ethnicity” in the discussion below.

The conventional interpretation of the “race problem” is founded upon the supposedly inevitable frictions between ethnic communities with sharply divergent cultural traditions. Under the circumstances, assimilation or integration was only a remote possibility. However, it is more commonplace to witness modern race relations in terms of rigid group boundaries, which was a byproduct of western colonialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prior to that, inter-ethnic relations among Asian populations in Southeast Asia were also marked by cultural stereotypes and occasional hostility. However, there were also possibilities for inter-ethnic alliances, inter-marriages and acculturation. Quite apart from its political and economic consequences, colonial rule brought European racial theory and constructed a social and political order structured by “race.”

Put another way, racism or ethnicism was not based on “primordialism” as suggested by Geertz (1963). Instead, race or ethnic conflicts were created, institutionalized, and at times modified by the expansion of colonialism. This was the important contribution of writers such as Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi.

What was it in colonialism that spurred on ethnic tensions? In the well-studied case of Malaysia, some emphasize that British colonialism created an unstable demographic balance among widely divergent cultural populations by an unrestricted immigration policy. Or that in the cases of Burma and Indonesia, the drawing of political boundaries quite arbitrarily to coincide with imperial economic and political interests resulted in the creation of new nation-states, which brought together myriad ethnic groups that had very little in common; often their only contact with the others were in times of wars.

Beyond that, it is also highlighted that the colonialists practiced “divide and rule” policies that sowed fear and distrust among the diverse Asian populations. In fact, there was a qualitative shift in ethnic relations and ideology in the late nineteenth century with the importation, spread and institutionalization of European “racism.” In this regard, it has been highlighted that the racial categories and racial ideology in the United States were a cultural by-product of the coercive labor system of early American plantations. The emergence and maintenance of the exploitative institutional framework of slavery, one of the most dehumanizing institutions ever created, necessitated a powerful form of ideology to justify it. Likewise, the development and maintenance of political and economic arrangements during colonialism, required a racist ideology too, one that stressed inherent differences among races.

This promotion of racial ideology coincided with the changing meaning of race, which was previously used as a term to distinguish peoples on almost any criteria to a more narrow classification of biologically defined subspecies, with specific assumptions about how cultural predispositions and the ability of a particular race were biologically determined.⁵

In the Southeast Asian context, this colonial racism legitimized the domination of the colonizers wherein the natives were treated as naïve children unable to manage their own affairs and the common regard was that the natives were lazy (and on account of that remained poor); among other things, they avoided becoming wage labor. For Syed Hussin Alatas (1977), such disposition on

the part of the Malays in Southeast Asia was an indicator of economic rationality, not laziness, for working conditions in the wage sector were deplorable. Hence, if they had access to land, they preferred to resort to farming instead.

In *Traditionalism*, Donna Amoroso (2014, 51–55) discussed how an important shift in the British attitude towards the Malay rulers occurred in the late nineteenth century to legitimize direct British intervention into the Malay states: whereas the Malay rulers were previously regarded as capable of becoming effective modern rulers if properly advised, they began to be viewed as incapable of effectively learning and had to be displaced by the British through colonialism.

There was a related ambivalent attitude of resentment of the immigrant Chinese traders, artisans and other immigrant settlers by the colonial powers, yet also worthy of welcome because they fostered the growth of the colonial economy. As Wertheim (1965, 55) has commented: “The Chinese communities could provide great advantages to the colonial economy — but on the other hand they also provided convenient scapegoats for popular discontent in times of stress.” In the event, the Chinese were regarded by the colonizers as people who did not belong to the local society, regardless of their length of stay, and therefore unlike for the colonizers and the native elite, were not to be absorbed into the political or administrative machinery. More than that, separate jurisprudence was developed for the Chinese “sojourners,” emplaced under so-called “Protectors.” Ultimately, they were to be segregated geographically, economically and socially from the local population. It was such racist stereotypes that informed the colonial policy of “divide and rule.”

Not surprisingly, these attitudes of the colonizers were passed to the Asians too. For instance, since the colonizers did not accept the Chinese as permanent residents of the country and questioned their loyalties, native elites, and sometimes the nationalist leaders, too, believed that the Chinese should not be accorded equal political rights in the new nation-state that they were building. Hence, even if the nationalist leaders rejected the colonial assumptions about white superiority and the stereotypes of their own ethnic community, nonetheless, they tended to accept the unfounded generalizations of the other races living in their midst. In this regard, there were also very negative stereotypes of the Orang Asal or Orang Asli who lived in the hinterland, or in the more mountainous regions. Once established, unfortunately, such stereotypes take on a life of their own.

In the case of Burma, such negative stereotyping and attitudes extended not only to the Chinese but to the immigrant Indians, both Hindu and Muslim, who actually outnumbered the Chinese during colonial times. Although the media today reports about the discriminatory attitudes of the Buddhist Bamar people towards the Rohingya, in fact the origins of these attitudes go back to colonial times. Prejudices also extend beyond the Rohingyas to Muslims in general, and even to the Hindus, all, more dark skinned, and referred to derogatively as Kala (Boutry 2016).

Majorities and minorities

For Anderson (1998, 319), ethnic consciousness is also related to the notions of “majorities and minorities” which were “born of the political and cultural revolution brought about by the maturing of the colonial state and by the rise against it of popular nationalism.” In the heyday of colonialism, this colonial state was backed by an elaborate administrative set-up that penetrated from the capitals to the states or provinces down to the district or kabupaten levels. The colonial power also possessed military and economic might derived from a burgeoning revenue system. The colonial rulers only critical weakness was that they were very visible minorities. From the point of view of the anti-

colonialists, the central problem was how to pull together the various ethnic groups of natives to create a political majority to challenge the colonial minority effectively.

This awareness of majority–minority relations was directly related to the colonizers’ initiative to conduct censuses of the colonized population, this in turn started the process of classifying people along “ethnic groups.” In so doing, the colonialists were able to identify so-called minority groups whom they could draw into a “majority coalition” around themselves against nationalist groups they feared who could effectively challenge and delegitimize the colonizers’ rule, should the nationalists be able to pull together a majority coalition. It was in this manner that several groups of minorities were identified.

For Anderson (1998, 320–322), there were four distinctive groups of minorities. *First*, there were the “christianised groups.” These groups were often favored in terms of education and then employment in the colonial armies, police forces and bureaucracies. Subsequently, as the religious classification of these groups waned, it was their ethnic difference, for example, the Moluccans of Dutch Indies and the Karens of Burma, that proposed them as allies of the colonizers.

Second, another group of potential allies emerged from those classified as “the Chinese minority.” To them were accorded a separate jurisprudence on the grounds that they spoke a different language, had different customs, etc. The result was the segregation of the Chinese in terms of legal status, residence, occupation, etc., even though many included in this category of Chinese might not be able to speak, read or write Chinese. Often, they ended up as allies of the colonialists instead.⁶

A *third group* of designated ethnicities were the hill tribes who were numerically small, geographically remote and without valuable economic resources. Yet they, too, were drawn into the colonialist’s coalition. Initially ignored, the Orang Asli in Malaysia, the smaller tribes like the Kayah in Eastern and the Chin and Kachin in northern Burma, and the mountain tribes in Luzon were mobilized only at the last minute and projected as people different from the lowland ethnic groups.

A *fourth group* drawn into the majority coalition was based on class, namely, the traditional elites of the majority. These elites were often given opportunities to receive western-styled education and then recruited into the lower-rungs of the colonial bureaucracy. The best case of such British allies is the case of the “administrators” of Malaysia; while that of the Dutch were the *prijaji* of Java.

In its dying days of colonialism, as nationalist movements pressured for legislative representation of natives, the colonial powers not only over-represented themselves with ex-officio reserved seats, but carved out safe ethnic seats for their allies. Consequently, the most privileged, conservative and collaborationist elements of the ethnic groups were designated as leaders of these ethnic groups and afforded seats in the legislature.

It is Ben Anderson’s contention that this legacy of colonial racism lives on throughout post-colonial Southeast Asia, for similar attitudes inform the formation of majority coalitions among those in power, or are trying to preserve their power today. Indeed, it is such subjective cultural impediments, not just the objective structural factors that discriminate against minority groups, politically, economically and culturally; together, the subjective and the objective factors explain more dynamically why ethnic problems persist in so many Southeast Asian countries.

The nation-building project to persuade all the people to imagine themselves as members of an imagined community was therefore not easily achieved. The breakdown of Indonesia in the late 1950s, and the long lasting ethnic wars between the majority Bamar people largely domiciled in the Irrawaddy heartland in Lower and Central Burma, and the minority ethnic groups largely in the highlands of eastern, northern and northwestern Burma, are related to this colonial legacy.

Nation as imagined community: inclusive or exclusive?

The structural and subjective elements that define ethnic relations in the colonial era, as well as today, are captured in how we want to define the nation, as more inclusive or more exclusive.

In his influential book *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (1991) argued that the nation is a modern construct associated with the rise of print capitalism. It gets confusing, he says, if one begins to compare nationalism to other *isms*, such as liberalism, conservatism, socialism, etc., to understand the essence of nationalism and the nation. Instead, Anderson (1991, 15) defines the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” It is “imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members ... yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” It is also imagined as “limited” in the sense that it has a boundary, and does not over extend itself like an old-style empire might do (Anderson 1991, 16). It is imagined as “sovereign” in the sense in that it “was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm ... nations dream of being free ... [wherein the] emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state” (Anderson 1991, 16).

And it is “a community” because “regardless of the inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship ... it is this fraternity that makes it possible ... for so many ... to die for such limited imaginings” (Anderson 1991, 16).

If we accept that the nation is an imagined political community which is limited and sovereign, we can next ask what sort of imaginings do we have, and can use to structure and orient the nation, the imagined political community.

Smith (1986) in his important book, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, agrees that the nation is a modern construct. But he also argues that there exist two major “ideal types” of imagining the nation: the “ethnic-genealogical” and the “civic-territorial.”

The ethnic-genealogical way of imagining refers to constructing the nation along the lines of our ethnic, cultural and religious attributes. We highlight our language, customs and beliefs. We promote a certain “historical memory” of the past, including myths and legends, and use all these ethnic attributes to rationalize the present, and to chart the future.

This way of imagining the nation is very common throughout the world and throughout the centuries. It is a powerful and organic way to pull the people who share these attributes together as members of a single imagined community although they might reside far away from one another, and might not have, or will ever meet all the others in their lifetimes.

However, when such a way of imagining the nation is superimposed onto a multi-ethnic multi-religious society, such as the majority group has done over the minority groups in Malaysia, Indonesia or Burma, it privileges those who belong to that majority ethno-religious community, while the minority “others” who do not share the same language, myths, historical memories and religious beliefs begin to feel that they do not belong and feel alienated and excluded. On the other hand, the civic-territorial nation does not focus on exclusive ethno-religious attributes. Rather, it promotes equal rights and opportunities for all who live within a particular territory, regardless of ethnic, gender, regional, religious, racial, age and other backgrounds.

The imagining of this form of nation focuses more on moving forward to the future as a community of common citizens with shared rights, but also civic responsibilities. Invariably, such a nation would also have a common language(s), some shared beliefs and myths of origins of the nation. The celebration of the past via national holidays, symbols should be inclusive and draw widely from the

majority as well as minority groups. Accordingly, promoting multiculturalism via policies and programs are part of this form of imagining the civic-territorial nation.

Most nations fall between these two extremities, veering towards one or the other ideal-type. Those nations that tend towards the civic-territorial tend to be more open to pressures from within and from without, to treat all their people as equal citizens, sharing equal rights and responsibilities. Perhaps the western European countries better represent this category of nations veering towards the civic-territorial. But there are also westerners nowadays, including people in power such as president Donald Trump, who are intolerant and discriminatory towards the newer citizens who have migrated from their former colonies in the Middle-East, Asia or Africa to Europe.

There are also those nations who model themselves after the ethnic-genealogical ideal-type nation. Perhaps the eastern European countries especially in the Balkans, driven by the dominant ethno-religious communities there, imagined themselves in this exclusivist manner. So did the Jews in Israel's nation-state building. Consequently, the minority ethno-religious groups in those countries were alienated and excluded from that form of imagining the nation.

Myanmar, especially under the Tatmadaw (the armed forces), would be considered as veering towards the ethnic-genealogical nation based on the cultural and religious attributes of the dominant Buddhist Bamar people of Lower and Central Myanmar. Naturally, the Shans, Chins, Kachins, Karens, Mon, Wa, Rakhine, not to mention the Rohingya, feel alienated. Consequently, many of these groups, at one time or another, have resorted to armed struggle to secede from the Union.

Let us look at Malaysia. Significantly, the political leaders have not imagined Malaysia to be an exclusive ethnic-Malay genealogical nation, or as an all-inclusive civic territorial one. Rather, we have imagined ourselves as in-between the two ideal-types, and have veered towards one, and then to the other, at different points in our history. In our context, we might counterpose these two models of nationhood as "Ketuanan Melayu" (Malay Supremacy) on the one hand, "Malaysian Malaysia" (equal rights for all) on the other.

During the run-up to Independence in 1957, when most people in the former colonies were involved in anti-imperialist struggles for freedom, justice and equality, Malaysia, too, veered towards the civic-territorial ideal-type. Although we acknowledged the Sultans as heads of states, Malay as the national language, Islam as the official religion, and provided for some special rights for the Malays, the practice and promotion of non-Malay languages, religions and cultures, plus their economic rights and properties were given clear constitutional guarantee.⁷

However, following the racial riots of 13 May 1969, we made a sharp turn towards the ethnic-genealogical nation. The New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced to promote state intervention in the economy on behalf of Malay and other Bumiputera interests. No doubt, there was a need to alleviate poverty among Malays and to restructure Malaysian society such that race would not be identified with occupation since the index of poverty among Malays had remained acute even after a decade of Merdeka. So, a quota system to promote Bumiputera participation in the modern sectors of the economy, in higher education, in the awarding of government contracts, etc., was designed and progressively implemented. In effect, the scope of "special rights" was widened.

In addition, the National Language Act of 1967 began to be strictly implemented, resulting in the use of Malay as the sole medium of instruction except in the national-type primary schools. A National Cultural Policy further privileged Malay culture and traditions. Accordingly, various parts of the Constitution were amended. The transformation of the Alliance to the Barisan Nasional further facilitated the emergence of Umno as the dominant partner in the new BN coalition. And then, beginning from the early 1980s, following Islamic resurgence, the Islamization of

administration and society more generally proceeded. No doubt, Malaysia veered towards the ethnic-genealogical nation in the post-NEP years.⁸

Although Dr Mahathir played an instrumental role in this turn away from the civic-territorial towards the ethnic-genealogical imagination of our Malaysia in the first decade of his prime ministership in the 1980s, the second decade of his 21-year-long rule witnessed a restoration of various attributes of the civic-territorial nation. Due to neo-liberal globalization, he spearheaded liberalization, deregulation and privatization of the economy, to attract foreign direct investments and to make Malaysia more economically competitive. So, the state's role in the economy was rolled back opening up opportunities for Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera business people, some of whom were evidently cronies.

Alongside this reversal of parts of the NEP, he also allowed for the privatization of education, at the tertiary level, then at the secondary school level, and even promoted the use of English in the universities and even in the schools, via the introduction of the so-called PPSMI program, which re-introduced the teaching of Science and Mathematics in the English language. To an extent, these changes occurred due to neo-liberal globalization, which also saw the privatization of many statutory bodies and public utilities to private commercial interests, and the mass media being opened up to global media giants.

Consolidating the state amidst the cold war

Apart from creating a nation out of the myriad ethnic groups, a related task was to consolidate the modern state system.

Modern states with clearly defined political boundaries, a claim to the monopoly of coercive powers and the right to collect revenue and taxes from people who resided within those boundaries, were introduced during colonial times. Laws were promulgated by the colonial state providing for the enforcement of these initiatives. Colonial administration was ostensibly organized along legal-rational principles with full-time officers assigned to particular departments specializing in specific tasks – for example the Police were charged with maintaining law and order while the Revenue and Tax department with raising funds. Other departments dealt specifically with land and mining matters, with the import and organization of migrant labor (Labor Department), with the organization and promotion of food and cash crop production (Agriculture Department); with infrastructure development (the Railways and Public Works Department); and belatedly with education, health, urban development, etc. It was hoped that the new administrative procedures would spearhead the new mode of colonial government and replace the more arbitrary and patrimonial ways of administration.

In fact, the new administrative procedures were established largely in the capitals and regional centers of colonial government, and only in particular spheres like in law and order enforcement and in revenue collection. Beyond these administrative centers and spheres of work, much of the old ways persisted throughout colonial times, even though the principal European officers of the colonial bureaucracy were increasingly assisted by native elites at the lower rungs of colonial administration. Within the colonies, more “direct rule” under the colonial administrators as well as “indirect rule” via native elites was evident. Of course, this modern state system was dominated by the Executive branch with few checks and balances by the Judicial branch. There were hardly any participatory institutions either.

Hence, the newly independent countries had to consolidate their modern state systems rapidly, not just in extending the bureaucracy into new spheres of work and into outlying areas, but to

develop Judicial and Legislative branches as well, after all, the newly independent countries proclaimed themselves as democracies.

The fact of the matter is that throughout Southeast Asia, institutions for participatory democracy were rolled back and centralization of power in the hands of political elites, including those in the military, often also originating from the dominant ethnic group, occurred. The outbreak of ethnic and/or religious conflict, of regional uprisings, and other protests by the Opposition were often used as excuses by the regimes to arrest critics, to curb civil liberties, and ultimately to declare a state of Emergency or martial law, or to legitimize a coup d'état by the military, as in Burma in 1962, or Indonesia in 1967, or in Thailand as early as 1959 and several more occasions thereafter. Indeed, political parties and civil society organizations were often banned, elections canceled and Constitutions suspended.

In fact, with the ascendancy of communist regimes in China (1949) and North Vietnam (1954), the conservative leaders of Southeast Asia were caught in the throes of the Cold War and were led to believe that they faced a dual threat to their national security: an external threat from unfriendly communist countries and internal subversion by their own communists. This was the logic of the so-called "Domino Theory," which postulated the fall of other Southeast Asian countries to Communism subsequent to China and North Vietnam.

For reasons of national security, and to avert "communist subversion" therefore, the conservative leaders entered into alliances with American and other Western powers, and with their help began to expand and modernize their armed forces and related security apparatus. Increasing repression and human rights abuses, as well as the dismantling of democratic mechanisms and procedures, characterized this militarization process. As a consequence, defense and security spending escalated, often provided for by the United States under the auspices of the Joint US Military Advisory Group or via the multilateral Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) arrangement. The net result was the ascendancy of the military, which rose to play the pre-eminent political role in several countries. In Thailand and Indonesia, the military ultimately assumed power. In other settings like the Philippines, the military provided critical support to the civilian political rulers as they stumbled from crisis-to-crisis.

In the case of Malaysia (and Singapore), the national security question was highlighted when the British declared a state of Emergency in 1948. With this proclamation, the Malayan Communist Party and the various unions and organizations it controlled were proscribed. Many of its leaders were arrested. Its radical Malay nationalist allies were similarly affected. A new set of laws, the draconian Emergency Regulations (ER) was introduced. Under the ER, the colonial authorities were given the powers to: arrest and detain without trial communists and suspected communists, deport "undesirables" to China, search for and seize arms and other prohibited items; enforce curfew and control the movement of food and medicine; impose registration and carrying of identity cards; and ultimately force mass resettlement of more than one million rural settlers (see Short 1975).

Although the Emergency was lifted in 1960, many aspects of the Emergency Regulations were incorporated into the 1957 Federal Constitution. The Internal Security Act (ISA) which allowed for detention without trial, and other coercive laws that actually curbed civil liberties and political rights enshrined in the Constitution, facilitated tight control over the rights of citizens in newly independent Malaya. Significantly, although elections have been held regularly since Independence in 1957, the electoral process has been dominated by the Umno-BN (United Malays National Organization-Barisan Nasional) coalition, which has won all 13 general elections that have been held in the country since Independence, not least because of perennial gerrymandering with the cooperation of the pliant Elections Commission and abuse of the mass media, which is either owned by the government or the ruling parties.

Political power has also become increasingly centralized in the hands of the federal government in Kuala Lumpur as a result of the constitutional design as well as the political process wherein the ruling Umno-BN possesses the most comprehensive party machine. This political machinery has facilitated the Umno-BN federal government's ability to determine decision-making at the state level as well, even when those state governments are in the hands of the opposition party (as was the case of the northeastern peninsular states of Kelantan and Terengganu, as well as of Sabah, in eastern Malaysia during the 1990s). With the abolition of local government elections beginning from the mid-1960s, the federal government's reach penetrated even deeper via appointments of its functionaries into district and local level authorities.

Meanwhile, within the federal government itself, i.e. at the national level, power has been dominated by the Executive at the expense of the Legislative, the Judiciary, the mass media, and civil society generally. However, such concentration of power in the hands of the Executive, and the consolidation of the Umno-BN state more generally, is not on account of the use of brute force. Rather, the Umno-BN state resorts to "coercive legalism" to maintain its power, which is why Malaysians often talk about the "rule by Law" rather than the "rule of Law," which connotes a system of constitutional democracy with checks and balances in place. Contrary to the views of the liberal theorists, critics have variously described Malaysia as a "quasi democracy," a "semi-democracy," a "repressive-responsive regime" or even a "statist democracy" (Loh 2006, 264).⁹

Additionally, when the region began to experience sustained economic development amidst their adoption of authoritarian ruling measures, researchers began to highlight the emergence of "developmental states" in Southeast Asia, as in East Asia. Some of their attributes included: a political elite keen on pursuing economic growth; an independent bureaucracy geared towards planning; policies offering incentives to attract FDIs and local investors; infrastructure development; emphases on education and health development and co-operation between state and industry. That said, it was also agreed by researchers that this growth did not facilitate political liberalization but led to authoritarianism instead. Hence, the Southeast Asian states were variously described as "corporate-paternalist," "neo-patrimonial," "quasi-democratic," or generally authoritarian "developmentalist" states (Loh 2005b).

Development¹⁰

The third related task in the nation-state building project is to promote economic development. Perhaps it is with regards to this task, that the project has seen more success. As observed by Anderson (1998, 300–301), this had to do with the Cold War as well. He states: "Nowhere in the world was the Cold War 'hotter' in the third quarter of the [twentieth] century," and nowhere did it cool down more rapidly, thanks to the Peking-Washington rapprochement of the middle 1970s. The US fought two major wars in the Korean peninsula and in Indochina. There were major communist insurrections throughout the region except for Indonesia where there existed legally the largest communist party in the region during the early 1960s.

As a result of this geo-politics, the US developed special security relations with Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, which facilitated their rapid economic growth as well. In turn, these East Asian economic miracles were positioned to venture forth and invest in Southeast Asia. In direct relation to this geo-politics was the "freezing out" of China as a regional economic player for several decades while it pursued an autarchic socialist economy until the 1980s. This resulted in the inflow of FDIs from South Korea, Taiwan and especially Japan into Southeast Asia, especially following the Plaza Accords, 1985.

Initially, after Independence, the linkages with the former colonial powers were maintained. With the aid of the World Bank as in the cases of Malaysia and Thailand, development programs were designed and launched by technocrats attached to central planning agencies to diversify the colonial economies in the 1950s and 1960s. Apart from modernizing the production of raw materials, the technocrats proposed processing those raw materials by kick-starting import-substitution industrialization (ISI). By doing the latter, it was hoped that the import of manufactured goods from the former colonial powers could be reduced and foreign exchange saved. However, ISI did not enable the Southeast Asian countries to overcome their underdevelopment because ISI required the import of machinery and often industrial raw materials as well. Moreover, ISI turned out to be capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive and did not create enough employment opportunities to absorb the unemployed, let alone the under-employed. The ISI strategy also faced the problem of limited local markets since the majority of Southeast Asians were still without much purchasing powers. Hence, unlike the success of ISI strategies elsewhere (say in Germany and the USSR), ISI did not succeed in resolving the problems of “underdevelopment.” Most of the countries reached an impasse with ISI.

Meanwhile, Thailand and the Philippines received considerable American technical and military aid related to the war in Vietnam, to develop American military bases in the Philippines, and to prepare the Thai kingdom to become America’s major staging post for the conduct of its war in Indochina. Indonesia, still experiencing political instability in the 1950s and 1960s, experienced runaway inflation which reached some 600% in the mid-1960s. It was only reeled back in the early 1970s after Suharto had replaced Sukarno.

The shift from ISI to labor-intensive export-oriented industrialization (EOI) beginning in Singapore from the late 1960s, in Malaysia from the early 1970s, and in Thailand and the Philippines from the late 1970s and 1980s gave a tremendous fillip to the Southeast Asian economies and enabled them to roll back the problem of unemployment to some extent. This initiative on the part of the Southeast Asian governments coincided with changes in the global economy as a result of which international capital was increasingly redeployed towards EOI, or as the TNC’s preferred to call it “off-shore processing.”¹¹ As a result of the turn towards EOI, new relations were developed with the two largest economies – the United States and Japan, and with South Korea and Taiwan too, especially following the Plaza Accords 1985, all resulting in new levels of FDIs into Southeast Asia. The late 1980s until the mid-1990s therefore was a period that saw the Southeast Asian region enjoying rapid economic development. That said, there also developed serious concerns about the region’s integration into the neo-liberal global economy, which had led to increasing privatization of major service sectors and infrastructure projects to well-connected cronies. And although growth was rapid and allowed for the emergence of new middle classes, the gap between the top 20% and the bottom 40% of the population also widened. These structural weaknesses embedded in that growth were exposed when the 1997–1998 regional financial crisis occurred, in turn contributing to political reform in Indonesia, and to a lesser extent in Malaysia as well (Jomo 1998; Loh 2008).

Crossing boundaries

It is important to end this discussion on a positive note, for economic growth has contributed towards the growth and consolidation of a multi-ethnic middleclass, which has begun to build inter-ethnic bridges and cross ethnic boundaries. In Malaysia, such initiatives are principally due to the emergence of the educated, globally connected middle classes, estimated to account for about 30% of Malaysia’s population. In turn, their growth and consolidation was due to that rapid economic growth which hit double-digit growth rates in the decade just prior to the 1997–1998 crisis. And because of the successful

implementation of the NEP, particularly the second prong that sought to restructure society such that race would no longer be associated with occupation, the middle classes were represented by all the ethnic groups.

Many Malaysian academicians (for example Saravanamuttu 1992; Kahn 1996; Abdul Rahman Embong 2001; and Loh 2008 among others) have elaborated on how this middle class began to impact on our hitherto ethnic-based politics in new ways, by forming new cause-oriented NGOs (women's movement, environmental groups, human rights organizations, etc.). In *Building Bridges, Crossing Boundaries* (Loh 2010), a team of Malaysian scholars have documented how in theater and performing arts circles, in the "new literature," among women's groups, small businesses, squatter communities, and the indigenous peoples of Sarawak, among others, Malaysians have been crossing ethno-religious boundaries to stand up for their rights. Taking after the structural changes to the Malaysian economy and society, Malaysian politics, too, appears to have made new forays beyond their ethnic strictures.

Taking a longer perspective of political developments in Malaysia, it might be argued that we are on the threshold of a "New Politics" that is egging Malaysians to (re)imagine themselves as a civic territorial nation. Although discriminatory laws and policies, and exclusivist notions of Malaysia based on Ketuanan Melayu, including the push towards introducing Islamic hudud laws are ongoing, the "Old Politics" driven by ethno-religious sentiments, associated with nepotism and cronyism, and led by Umno-BN are under assault as never before. The caustic and loud cries of extremist groups belie the fact that Umno-BN, their increasing imagining of Malaysia as an exclusivist ethnic-Malay genealogical nation, and which can only be successfully managed by themselves, are on the wane.

Significant signs of change are evident. Some 51% of the electorate voted for change in the last General Elections (GE13) held on 5 May 2013. Although there did not occur a change of government in Putrajaya (due to the first-past-the-post electoral system practiced in Malaysia), the voters did facilitate the consolidation of a two-coalition political system, which had first reared itself into view in the 2008 General Election (GE12). A consequence of that was Umno-BN losing its two-thirds majority in Parliament and its loss of several state legislatures in GE12 and GE13.

Additionally, Malaysian civil society has also been able to sustain a popular movement like Bersih 2.0 for several years now. The marches that they have organized have drawn hundreds of thousands of Malaysians, of all ethnic and religious backgrounds, into the streets. The new IT has furthered the entry of young people of all ethno-religious backgrounds into politics, and even to associate themselves with (state) governments particularly in the opposition Pakatan-led states of Penang and Selangor. Lastly, there has been a renewed call for the reinstatement of local government elections, which had been abolished in the mid-1960s.

It is in these regards, therefore, that there has emerged a struggle between this New Politics which crosses ethno-religious boundaries and calls for democratic change, and the Old Politics underscored by race-based politics led by the Umno-BN coalition, in power since Independence in 1957. A new fragmentation within each of the ethno-religious groups is clearly evident.

Conclusion

Ethnic tensions and conflicts do not only occur in developing countries but also in the Western liberal democratic and the former communist countries. Perhaps this is because the majority of countries are multiethnic, or to follow Connor, "multination-states."

From the above discussion, it is clear that the cause of conflict in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies is not diversity in and of itself. Rather, it is one's attitude towards diversity. Do we *share*

political power in terms of law-making and policy decision-making with minorities and people in the regions? Do we share *economic development* with the regions and minority communities? Do we *recognize and respect the cultural identities of the minorities*?

The nation is a modern construct. It is imagined. So, it depends on whether we want to imagine a nation along more ethnic-genealogical lines which makes it more exclusive, or to imagine a nation along more civic-territorial lines that treats all, regardless of ethnic, religious or regional background, equally. We support the latter, which would lead to more inclusive nation building.

In tandem with this, we further propose adopting federalism or decentralization strategies when it comes to state building. Federalism offers a set of formal/constitutional arrangements as well as conventions to help us deal with diversity. It is a form of promoting “shared rule for common interests” while allowing for the pursuit of “self rule in specific instances and regions.” What are these formal arrangements and conventions?

First, in a federal system, sub-national units (states, regions, provinces, etc.) governed by elected leaders are created. The number of such sub-national units and the basis for creating them vary. They can be created on the basis of communalism, linguistic group, or even on the basis of socio-economic disadvantage, hence necessitating special attention.

Whichever the case, the creation of these sub-national units results in the sharing of powers and revenues between the central authorities and these units. Often, the sub-national units are given control of language, culture (including religious), social welfare and primary and often secondary school education. In the case of the latter, the history curriculum and texts can give additional attention to local history. In other words, minority groups are given the opportunity to promote education in their own languages, learn a history that is sensitive to their own ethnic group’s history, customs and region, and to receive services (for example, the courts and welfare) in their own languages. Hence, minorities are given the sense that their culture, history and well-being are protected and respected. India, beginning from the 1990s, is an excellent example of how one balances shared rule in jurisdictions such as defense, currency control and management, major infrastructure development for the entire country with self-rule in matters of language, local cultures and primary and secondary school education. Yet another example is Ethiopia, which prior to its reconstitution as a federal country had been plagued by inter-ethnic cum inter-religious civil wars for decades. It should also be mentioned that there can be asymmetry in the devolution of powers and resources among states. Special circumstances might require additional powers and resources being allocated to say, a marginalized state.

Following Reformasi in Indonesia in 1998, the Constitution was amended to allow for elected local government and the promotion of local cultures and languages, while two new local government laws were passed in 1999 to transfer functions, law making, and revenue down from Jakarta to some 300 plus local authorities, bypassing some 30 plus provincial governments (Dwiyanto, Arfani, and Yusrf 2003; Antlov et al. 2004). An estimated 2.25 million civil servants were also involved in these transfers. This decentralization process has contributed towards the involvement of ordinary people and civil society groups in politics at the local level. Similarly, following the overthrow of Marcos in the Philippines, a new Constitution promoting decentralization to the municipalities, districts and villages was adopted in 1987. The new Local Government Code 1987, like similar new Laws in Indonesia, decentralized functions, law making, revenue and also public officials to local government units.

Significantly, decentralization has been facilitated in Indonesia and Philippines without either country proclaiming itself as a federal one.¹² However, like the sub-national units in the federal system which have their own state/regional elected Assemblies, the local authorities are also elected in

both Indonesia and Philippines nowadays. This has allowed the electorate to demand that these local authorities are more accountable, transparent, and competent. In fact, minority groups can often associate better with these local authorities whose elected officials as well as civil servants are more likely to come from their own ethnic groups. As locals, it is hoped that those in power will also be more familiar with the needs of the region and the demands of the local community. In addition, more attention is also allowed in the use and promotion of local languages, cultures and even religion (as for Aceh in Indonesia and southern Mindanao in the Philippines, which have been given extra autonomy).

Political parties can also play important roles in facilitating unity amidst diversity. Rather than catering for members of a single ethnic group, nowadays, politicians should aspire to mobilize and represent all peoples, regardless of ethno-religious backgrounds. Ideally, a national party that promotes the notion of a civic-territorial nation that offers equal rights to all might be able to attract support from all ethnic groups, majority and minority. However, in order to do this, the national party must adopt conventions that require it to share power, economic benefits, positions with all, as well as celebrate the cultures of all. In other words, the national party should internally negotiate how some more sensitive issues ought to be resolved, instead of allowing those issues to cause tensions and conflicts in the public domain. Parties have also responsibilities to discourage and disallow space for individuals and groups to manipulate ethnically and religiously sensitive issues for political gain.

How would such proposals anchored in imagining a nation along civic territorial lines, and promoting a decentralization state (whether formally regarded as federal or not) impact on the development process? Hitherto, the focus of attention has been on the role of the developmental states that have facilitated rapid growth in the East Asian and Southeast Asian region. Following the 1997–1998 regional financial crisis, privatization policies have also been adopted to revitalize the economy (Antlov et al. 2004, 21–22). There is very little research available about whether development functions and projects have been initiated, and whether these have been successful. In this regard, local governments could also be encouraged to set-up non-profit corporations, or to enter into public-private set-ups, to fast track necessary economic development and employment opportunities locally. The little information available on the situation in the Philippines suggests that the availability of increased revenue on the part of local government units has allowed local and regional economies to grow. The danger is that these local economies could be captured by a new set of local business class. This article ends with a call for further research on decentralizing functions, law making, revenue transfer and taxing, and investigating as well as proposing new initiatives to spearhead economic development at local levels.

Notes

1. In the United States of America, African Americans (previously referred to as “Negros” and later as “Blacks”) were the first group of minorities to stand up, organize and fight against their discrimination and marginalization and to struggle for equal rights as American citizens. Subsequently, we also saw the emergence and political mobilization of Native Americans, Chicanos (Mexican Americans), Hispanics, Asian Americans, and other groups of immigrants too. For many of them, the Washington-based American government, which was largely dominated by the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) community, discriminated against the minorities politically, economically and culturally. They rejected Washington’s efforts to assimilate them into the WASP culture and demanded equal civil rights as citizens of the United States. Put another way, the “melting pot” assimilationist approach towards national unity was rejected. A “salad bowl” approach towards national unity and integration, wherein the

languages, cultures and religions of the minority groups were allowed, even celebrated, was put forth instead.

In Australia the Aboriginal Peoples, and in New Zealand, the Maori also began to organize and to make similar demands. In Australia, where large numbers of non-WASP minorities had emigrated to, there also occurred the political mobilization of minority groups of Jews, Italians, Greeks, Turks, South and East Asians, Arabs, and South Pacific Islanders. They became increasingly assertive of preserving and promoting their political, economic and ethno-religious rights.

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, there also developed movements and political parties of Scots, Welsh and Irish peoples complaining about English domination of the UK. Indeed, they demanded greater political autonomy from London, more economic allocations for their homelands, and set about reviving their own languages and unique cultures. Their demands sparked off related agitation by migrants from the West Indies, Africa, South Asia and East Asia, who had migrated from their original countries, which had formerly been British colonies, to the UK.

In Canada, a political party and movement comprising the Quebecois, the French speaking settlers of the eastern province of Quebec also re-emerged. Not only did they demand equal treatment like the English-speaking Canadians; they further pushed for secession from Ottawa. The struggle of the Quebecois inspired the Inuit (Eskimo) peoples who considered themselves as the “First Nation” in Canada, yet were discriminated and marginalized politically, economically and culturally. And as in the United States and the UK, the immigrant minority communities in Canada from the West Indies, Africa and South Asia also pushed for equal and fair treatment. (To resolve these problems, the Canadian government would eventually put into place a decentralized system of federalism that offered special rights to the French speaking Canadians, created a new province for the Inuit, while a comprehensive policy of multiculturalism was introduced to cater to the demands of the other migrant minorities).

Two examples from continental Europe are worth mentioning. In France, the minority groups located in the peripheral regions of Corsica, Brittany and Alsace, while in Spain the Catalans and the Basque people, increasingly considered themselves to be marginalized by the French majority on the one hand, and the Castilian Spanish on the other. Subsequently, immigrant groups of Africans and Arabs, including large numbers who were Muslims, who had migrated to both countries following the end of colonialism, also agitated for their rights. In Catalonia and the Basque region in Spain, certain groups of these minorities resorted to armed struggle to achieve their goal of independence, or at least greater regional autonomy.

2. In the former USSR, where the ideology of Communism had been promoted among peoples of different ethnic or national backgrounds, the minorities began to demand equal rights, and subsequently, a break from Moscow altogether as the former USSR started to unravel during the transition period of Glasnost and Perestroika under Gorbachev. The Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians, around the Baltic Sea, were among the first peoples to break away from Moscow. Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan located in the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus Mountains also seceded from Moscow and are now full-fledged countries in their own right. We also witnessed the formation of the new republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia where Muslims constitute the majority group in those countries. And then emerged the new country Mongolia located in the former USSR’s “Far East.”

The former Yugoslavia no longer exists. Instead we have the separate countries of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Macedonia. Unfortunately, the breakup of Yugoslavia was accompanied by much fighting, even ethnic cleansing, as occurred in Srebrenica.

At this point, China is facing two major ethno-nationalist uprisings – in Tibet, with its rich tradition of Tantric Buddhism and rule by the Dalai Lamas, and in the Xinjiang province where a large percentage of the original population is Uighur who are Muslims.

3. See also Connor (1990).
4. The discussion below is drawn from Anderson (1998), Bertrand (2001), Brown (1994), Christie (1996) and Hefner (2001).
5. No doubt, such a shift in thinking coincided with the application of evolutionary theory to the origins of the different races. It followed that conquest and domination of the world by European peoples would be given a moral purpose, namely it was natural, inevitable, beneficial to the progress of all mankind, and even endowed by the Creator. It rationalized colonial empires from the late nineteenth

century until that ideology was challenged by the horrors of the Third Reich, and the defeat of the Europeans by the Japanese in Southeast Asia, which was followed by the struggles for self-rule (Hirschman 1986, 339–340).

6. See Wang (1970) on his classification of three tendencies of Chinese politics in Malaya. It was only in Siam and the Philippines that the Chinese were assimilated into the ruling class.
7. Are we referring to this point in time when we debate about the “original” social contract or political bargain between Malays and non-Malays?
8. Incidentally, for some engaged in that debate mentioned in note 7, the reference point of the “original” social contract or political bargain, is more akin to this post-1969 setting, rather than the earlier, more liberal period of Merdeka.
9. Elsewhere, I have likened the establishment of such a strong state characterized by coercive legalism or “the rule by law” to “militarization,” loosely defined. Ironically, “militarization” has occurred in Malaysia without the armed forces assuming the pre-eminent role in politics or in the society writ large. Instead, militarization is by other means: it is derived from the ideology of national security and the consolidation of a national security state led by civilians, but who resort to coercive legalism or “rule by law.” In such a national security state, it is the Police, not the military that plays the lead security role. See Loh (2005a).
10. This section has been taken from Loh (2005b).
11. Indonesia with a vast domestic market did not develop an EOI sector to the same extent. At any rate Indonesia’s ISI only took off belatedly in the 1980s when the price of petroleum dropped drastically, thereby encouraging the Indonesian government to develop sources of revenue other than from oil production and export.
12. On the other hand, Malaysia, which proclaims itself to be practicing federalism, has become increasingly centralized since Independence (see Loh 2015).

Note on contributor

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