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New Geographies and Temporalities of Power: Exploring the New Fault Lines of Southeast Asia

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NEW GEOGRAPHIES AND TEMPORALITIES
OF POWER: EXPLORING THE NEW FAULT
LINES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Introduction: the problem of ethnic separatism and conflict

This paper examines the increasingly significant problem of ethnically based separatist movements and ensuing conflicts in Southeast Asia. The movements discussed here may be understood as ‘movements’ in three senses of the term:

- A tendency or trend – that is, a diffuse phenomenon that is disseminated into different areas of social life, such as an orientation towards greater local autonomy
- A series of organised activities working towards an objective – that is, a more specific phenomenon that pulls together different organised activities into one convergent direction (the common goal), such as a new and distinctive nation-state
- An organised effort to attain an end – that is, an institutionalised phenomenon, which may be a government, a party, an army or an institute, serving as a vehicle for reaching a specific destination, such as the declaration of independence.

In terms of their orientation, separatist movements are centrifugal. They occur on certain peripheries of certain nation-states. Three questions arise from this:

- On which peripheries are they likely to arise?
- In which nation-states are they to be found?
- Which types of centre-periphery relations are associated with the emergence of such movements?

Answers to these questions will contribute to a comparative sociology and political economy of the centrifugal movements that have emerged in Southeast Asia. Such a comparative approach currently does not exist, as these movements tend to be dealt with as culturally and historically unique processes within national specificities. Such a perspective indeed nests within a larger inter-disciplinary social science of nationalism and the nation-state. In other
words, to a greater or lesser extent, these movements are articulations of
nations of intent or, to use Guibernau’s term (1999), ‘nations without states.’ Or
to put it yet another way, separatism is an alternative nationalism and a
separatist movement is a sub-state seeking to be a full-fledged state.

In this paper, we explore the broad historical context of the underlying emergent
ethnic conflicts. This overview places an emphasis on the contestation over
‘production and social space,’ and attempts to situate these spatial processes
within the context of state restructuring associated with changing patterns of the
international political economy. One of the distinct advantages of this approach
is that it shifts the focus from the stifling debate between primordialist and
constructivist perspectives within which much of the recent discussion of ethnic
conflict in Southeast Asia has been framed.

The primordialist perspective is that ethnic identity and sentiment are
essentialist pre-existing cultural givens that define belonging and social
existence. In contrast, the constructivist approach argues that ethnic identity is
situationalist, as in an imagined community discursively and politically
constituted. Accordingly, identity is not essentialised but contingent; that is,
identity is not based on an objective series of characteristics but constituted and
contingent on a distinctive array of social and cultural arrangements.

Unfortunately the critical process often stops at this point, which justifies a ‘so
what?’ response. Ironically, constructivists find themselves in a trap; namely,
that identity becomes an absolute and rigid notion where no political bargaining
or negotiation is possible. Indeed, much of the constructivist debate conceals a
hidden primordialist assumption that ethnic identity, preferences and group
boundaries are immutable and fixed. This is largely because it fails to ask why
political conflict becomes refracted through ethnicity rather than other identities,
such as class.

A key contention of this paper is that identity categories are not fixed; they may
shift dramatically from one social category such as ethnicity to another such as
class or religion. It is suggested that research should focus on the underlying
structural shifts in forms of accumulation and state power that allow the
possibility for a ‘political opportunity structure’ in which ethnicity becomes a key
political sorting category for political action. In essence, we need to bring politics
and, more generally, the state back into the analysis of the emerging fault lines
in Southeast Asia.

Hence it is imperative that the research agenda be redesigned such that we can
move to examine more explicitly how identity itself becomes a political resource
used by the state and in turn by local leaders and groups for their own interests.
In short, we need to explore ‘how and why’ ethnic identity has become a
crucially important symbolic political resource. However, these new forms of
agency are not simply plucked out of thin air by political actors. Rather, these
new forms of identity and the spaces that contain them are made possible by
deep seated transformations in state structure and regimes of accumulation,
which in turn are driven by the rapidly changing global political economy. This paper is but a first attempt to understand the salience of these symbolic resources in terms of the broader structural changes in the international political economy and the impact on the institutional and spatial organisation of the state apparatus.

Regimes of accumulation and the production of space

The integration of Southeast Asian economies into the global market and the rise of market-oriented policies have created great regional disparities of wealth and income, which have led to social conflicts and fractures. These have often been refracted through the assertion of ethnic and national identity, particularly in resource-rich regions where revenue is being disproportionately and unfairly appropriated.

It is more than just a coincidence that the bubbling of discontent over appropriative accumulation at local expense – and the rise of separatist movements – occurs in regions rich in resources. The ideological use of indigenism in these movements is also more than coincidental, because indigenism relates people to place in a seemingly ascriptive manner that heightens the intrinsic justice of insiders’ rights in the face of what is perceived as unjust appropriations by outsiders.

In the context of resource expropriation, a significant local response has been centrifugal separatism as an attempt to reclaim local resources. The Asian economic crisis of 1998 clearly exacerbated these centrifugal tendencies. One of the major reasons was that it undermined the clientalist structures between the centre and periphery, which had co-opted peripheral élites into the dominant political structures. For example, in Indonesia the removal of subsidies and other forms of fiscal transfers not only weakened the power of the political élites in the centre to co-opt local level élites, it also provided strong incentives for local power élites to resort to ‘identity resources’ as a way of maintaining their stranglehold on local and regional political structures.

But the political economy of centre-periphery relationships needs to move from a direct causal relationships between economic change and the accentuation of ethnic fractures to a more sophisticated understanding of the way in which a particular arrangement of centre-periphery relations are themselves the outcome of specific economic and historical forces. Much of the literature on identity conflict in Southeast Asia assumes a particular configuration of spatial relations between the centre and periphery. Both the primordial and constructivist versions of identity often appear to deny the very structure of ‘space’ that is built into the dynamics of ethnic and separatist conflicts in Southeast Asia. In contrast, a key proposition of this paper is that spatial arrangements; that is, the spatial armature of the state, far from being a permanent element of the political and social landscape, are themselves a product of a particular constellation of political and social forces. Put simply, space is produced, organised and transformed by political power; spatial
organisation and its associated imaginary are products of social contestation and conflict.

In seeking to construe the underlying relationship between the centre and periphery as one that needs to be centrally concerned with the production, organisation and distribution of space, we attempt to give more salience to issues of power and the organisation of state power in shaping identities and ethnic conflict. Moreover, by placing ethnic identity within a spatial framework, we wish to highlight the centrality of spatial organisation and structure in the organisation of ethnic identity. In essence the identification of insiders implies the recognition of their local rights, especially over land and other resources. The significance of this lies in opposition to claims by outsiders over the same land and resources. The identification of insiders is thus simultaneously the identification of outsiders as people who do not belong ‘here’ – the insiders’ place of origin.

If centrifugal movements arise when the gap between centre and periphery widens beyond a critical distance, it also seems that local concern with insiders’ rights over resources is heightened by outsiders’ claims over those same resources. The result is indigenism as a response to the experience of victimage.

For example, in Indonesia, in Riau Province, development processes are driven not by local needs but by external agendas emanating not only from Jakarta but also from Singapore. In this context, the formation of the ‘Growth Triangle’ in 1989 – encompassing Singapore, Johor and Riau – should properly be understood as collusion between the national governments of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. From a local Riau perspective, the ‘Growth Triangle’ has meant the regionalisation and globalisation of resource extraction and transfer. The key relationship in the ‘Growth Triangle’ is between resource-poor but capital-rich Singapore and resource-rich but capital-poor Riau. In this relationship, resources from Riau flow out (including fresh water, oil, bauxite, tin and timber) and capital from Singapore flows in, but not to the people of Riau (see Wee and Chou 1997, Chou and Wee 2002). It is this context of resource expropriation that frames the separatist impulse of Riau.

In short, the production of ethnic identity and ethnic politics occurs within a specific spatial field in which entry, as well as exit, is determined on the basis of specific ethnic imperatives. This perspective places a good deal of emphasis on a particular political reading of ethnic claims as political strategies or instruments, as in the work of theorists such as Brass (1994). However, by placing it within a spatial context, the strength of our approach is to recognise that these instrumental strategies are themselves contingent on broader changes in the spatial organisation of political power, thereby providing a ‘political opportunity structure’ for new configurations of space.

Understanding ethnic demands from within a political economy standpoint allows us to incorporate recent developments in the analysis of space and
power by social theorists such as Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (1999). In particular, their analysis of the production and reproduction of space points to the way in which spatial configurations are inextricably linked to the way in which certain social and economic forms are associated with a particular production of space. Therefore, the production of space and its various possibilities allow for certain kinds of conflicts, which should be understood in the broader structural context of specific economic regimes of accumulation and their associated social forces. The central proposition of this paper is that the structure of centre-periphery relations and its current crisis cannot be disengaged from the social and economic forms of the accumulation regimes that have been entrenched in Southeast Asia for more than two decades.

The developmentalist project and the spatial-temporal armature

Southeast Asia has been dominated by a particular regime of accumulation that may be broadly identified as ‘developmentalist.’ Before discussing the spatial dimensions of this specific set of growth strategies, it is useful to briefly list some of the major social and economic components of this developmentalist regime.

First, it is characterised by a set of policy strategies similar to the East Asian NICs, which placed a high premium on rapid industrialisation. However, unlike the NICs, Southeast Asian economic developmentalism relied on rapid inflows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), especially from Japan. At the same time, these states built robust export-oriented industrialisation strategies. For example, Malaysia in the 1980s developed a whole gamut of heavy industries, ranging from steel to a nascent automobile industry. In varying degrees, other countries pursued similar strategies (see the various country chapters in Rodan, Hewison and Robison 2002).

Second, this transformation was accompanied by a distinctive set of social and political coalitions. Jayasuriya (2001) notes how the strategy of what he calls ‘embedded mercantilism’ depended on a set of trade-offs between economic segments or sectors, which were composed of distinct capitalist groupings with differing linkages to the state. Foreign investors drove the tradable sector, while the non-tradable sector was largely in the hands of enterprises or corporate groups closely linked to the apparatus of political power. The growth generated by the tradable sector was effectively compensated through an implicit and explicit set of bargains between capital in the tradable sector and in the non-tradable sector.

One of the important elements of this coalition was the emergence of ‘nomenklatura capitalism.’ This term is used to highlight the close connection between political élites and insulated domestic cartels. But in the Southeast Asian context, the connections are welded deeper than the clientalism of Northeast Asian developmental states, because the management and control of business groups are closely intertwined with the state and party apparatus. ‘Nomenklatura capitalism’ here points to an important shift in Southeast Asian
economies as agents or enterprises within the state, or indeed in dominant parties that became key players in the domestic economy.

Finally, apart from these coalitions and associated policy strategies, developmentalism was associated with highly centralised and authoritarian political structures. In Indonesia, these centralised political structures reached their zenith during the mid point of the New Order period. Similarly in Malaysia, Prime Minister Mahathir has centralised power within state institutions and UMNO.

These institutional aspects were also strongly associated with a determined state-led form of cultural nationalism that infused developmentalism with a hybrid form of economic and cultural nationalism. For example, Malaysian economic policies have a strongly cultural nationalist orientation.

Much of the literature on Southeast Asian nationalism neglects the fact that the kinds of cultural nationalist programs that evolved in Southeast Asia under the rubric of ‘Asian values’ were infused with the economic goals of developmentalism where the economy was represented or imagined primarily in cultural terms. In other words, nationalism took on a reactionary modernist character (Jayasuriya 1998).

Crucially, the political project of developmentalism was also associated with a particular social production of space. Space is just as much a component of the state form of developmentalism as the coalitional and institutional components of the developmentalist political project. Along with the centralisation of state power, there has been an equally important attempt to conceptualise the space of the nation-state in cultural nationalist terms. Over the last four decades, there has been a region-wide pattern of power consolidation. Furthermore, in several cases, this process supplanted an earlier, relatively more democratic phase; for example, in Burma and the Philippines. This institutional centralisation of state power has gone hand-in-hand with the production of a centrally defined national space.

However, this production of national space was often layered on top of earlier pre-capitalist structures of spaces. Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the politics of space in Southeast Asia is the layering of different ‘ethnic’ productions of space beneath the more abstract space of cultural nationalism. These diverse ‘ethnic’ productions of space are not just a residual category that are yet to be subsumed under the cultural nationalist conceptualisation. On the contrary, they draw on alternative sources of authority for spatial definition and therefore constitute alternatives to the cultural nationalist production of space. In particular, they draw on temporal imaginaries that may variously be construed as ‘history’ (an event-filled past that defines the present) or ‘culture’ (a meaning-filled present that reproduces the values and beliefs of the past). In contrast, the temporal imaginary of national space is ‘development’ (time that progresses from a traditional past to a modern future). Indeed, without this temporal dimension, there is no ‘developmentalism.’ The developmentalist production of
space thus cannot be divorced from the developmentalist production of time. It is in this sense that we speak of spatial-temporal armatures where constructions of space and time mutually imply each other.

The state’s production of national cultural space is legitimated by the temporal future of the developmentalist project. This temporal orientation obviates aspects of the past and the present that are not seen as leading towards the imagined developmentalist future (Jayasuriya 1998). The effect of defining the developmentalist future on the grounds of space in the present is that it standardises all state space as potential resources to be harnessed and accumulated for its development.

Scott’s (1998) concept of ‘state simplifications’ is of relevance here. As he noted, simplification is an important part of the transition from indirect rule to direct rule:

State simplifications…are designed to provide authorities with a schematic view of their society, a view not afforded to those without authority. Rather like U.S. highway patrolmen wearing mirrored sunglasses, the authorities enjoy a quasi-monopolistic picture of selected aspects of the whole society…. The economic plan, survey map, record of ownership, forest management plan, classification of ethnicity, passbook, arrest record, and map of political boundaries acquire their force from the fact that these synoptic data are the points of departure for reality as state officials apprehend and shape it. In dictatorial settings, where there is often no effective way to assert another reality, fictitious facts-on-paper can often be made eventually to prevail on the ground, because it is on behalf of such pieces of paper that police and army are deployed (Scott 1998: 79, 83).

When this process of simplification is coupled with a regime of accumulation that is clearly biased towards the political centre, those on contested and simplified ground often begin to question such categories of simplification; for example, the units, the boundaries, the names, and so on. These are then seen not as objective ‘facts’ but as the subjective artefacts of certain expropriative interests. The failure of the developmentalist project in winning the hearts and minds of those whose ground is cut from beneath them has been made manifest by alternative productions of space that are justified, not by an imagined developmentalist future, but by an imagined pre-capitalist past that is seen as a golden age.

**Diversity on the periphery**

In this situation, a widening gap emerges between centre and periphery. In view of this process, nation building is not just an irreversible, post-colonial ‘done deal.’ The nation-states of Southeast Asia (as in other parts of the world) are
very much polities in process, which are in the making and un-making. For example, the making of East Timor is part of the un-making of Indonesia.

Separatist movements are an intrinsic part of this making and un-making process. They are undoubtedly a phenomenon of the periphery that arises when the gap between centre and periphery widens beyond a critical distance. But are such movements found on all peripheries? Quite clearly, the answer is ‘no.’ To take the Indonesian example of Sumatra, which may be considered as peripheral to the national capital of Jakarta, we find a diversity of centre-periphery relations:

- A well-established centrifugal movement in Aceh marked by armed struggle
- An evolving centrifugal movement in Riau marked by demonstrations and political negotiations
- A historical centrifugal movement (1956-1961) in West Sumatra (homeland of the Minangkabau)
- No discernible centrifugal movement in Central Sumatra (homeland of the Batak)

To explain this diversity, we need only modify Gellner’s statement (1965: 166), ‘Essentially, nationalism is a phenomenon connected not so much with industrialisation or modernisation as such, but with its uneven diffusion’ [our italics]. Our modification is as follows: centrifugal movements arise as a result of the uneven diffusion of the nation-state.

By the ‘uneven diffusion of the nation-state’ we mean that there is uneven participation in its project by different ethno-cultural groups, leading to political stratification that is not just individual but collective. In other words, even in a situation of power asymmetry between centre and periphery, the periphery is not uniformly disempowered.

In Southeast Asia, the process of power consolidation at the centre has brought about a patrimonial structure that may be described as a consortium of patron-client groups (variously in alliance or opposition). As Brown argues (2001: 12),

\[ \text{It has frequently been noted that the communitarian norms of Southeast Asian cultures coexist with the personalisation of political practice. Even in those countries where the forms of institutionalised democracy have become established, the patrimonial politics of patron-client linkages remains a central feature of political life. Patrimonial elites do indeed vary significantly in their responsiveness to their clienteles, but in all variants, the politics of patrimonialism involve and promote inequalities of status and power. … Patrimonial politics is thus fully compatible with, and in some circumstances conducive to, the mobilisation of both a majoritarian ethnocultural nationalism and a minority-focused multicultural nationalism. However, the} \]
patrimonial element in politics is fundamentally incompatible with civic nationalism in that it is unable to promote the norms of equality of citizenship upon which civic nationalism is based.

We extend Brown’s argument by noting that patrimonial politics is fully compatible with ‘nomenklatura capitalism’ and authoritarian developmentalism. As a result, the uneven access to power in a patrimonial nation-state is personalised along ethno-cultural lines, rather than on class lines. This is an important point because it means that it is not just the alternative periphery that is ‘ethnic,’ but also the very core of power at the political centre.

But is this access to power given or taken? In other words, does the political centre ration out uneven access to power or do different groups on the periphery access power unevenly? Our answer is ‘both.’ We see this quite evidently in the Southeast Asian countries where separatist movements exist.

In Indonesia, the Javanese dominance of national politics is obvious (see, for example, Mulder 1996, Anderson 1972, 1988, 1990). But ethnic politics in Indonesia should not be understood simply in terms of ‘Java versus non-Java.’ Different ethno-cultural groups of ‘non-Javanese’ also access power in the nation-state in different ways and to different degrees.

In this context, a comment commonly made by Riau Malays of the Bataks is instructive:

Put a Batak into any government post and soon that whole department will be employing his relatives. This does not happen with Malays. Why? Because the Batak have their marga ‘lineage.’ Malays don’t have marga.

This comment is actually a comment on the Indonesian nation-state. In an ideal-typical nation-state, ‘social origins should not matter in determining placement in the occupational and prestige hierarchies’ (O’Leary 1998: 50). But in Indonesia, social origins do matter, not just for individuals, but also for collective groups.

Nation-states that are consortia of patron-client groups both feed and feed on ‘pre-modern’ social structures and relations.¹ But different ‘pre-modern’ social structures and relations vary in terms of their cultural content and thereby their political potential in interaction with such a context.

The better organised a patron-client group is, the more effectively it can participate in a patrimonial nation-state. In this situation, the social origins of different patron-client groups provide different cultural raw materials for group formation; for example, in terms of pre-modern kinship patterns. Ethnicity, in this sense, is not just a static ‘zoo’ of fixed categories within an unchanging nation-

¹ This argument is perhaps analogous to the Marxist analysis of the relationship between ‘merchant capitalism’ and ‘pre-capitalist social relations.’ See, for example, Smith (1983: 335–337).
state. On the contrary, it is a dynamic arena of competing groups with different 'ethnic capital' in terms of political potential.

Significantly, both Bataks and Minangkabaus have descent-based corporate groups, whereas Acehnese and Riau Malays do not (see, Kipp 1993 and Kahn 1993 respectively). This social difference conveys more than just cultural diversity; it contains different political trajectories in a patrimonial nation-state.

Nation-states that are consortia of patron-client groups may be characterised as 'modern' on the outside (in its international relations with other nation-states), but 'feudal' on the inside (the organisation of power). Citizenship in such nation-states is nominally individual but effectively collective.

There is ample evidence to suggest that this characterisation is applicable to Southeast Asian countries where separatist movements exist; namely, Burma, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.²

We argue that in this type of state, centrifugal movements tend to arise among those who feel marginalised in accessing the power of the state, not just as individuals, but also as collective political units among other such units.³ They thus seek to form their own political domain where, collectively, they will not be inferior citizens.

This entails a centrifugal orientation, a turning away from the national centre towards a re-definition of one's own location as the centre. This is a reversal of the centre-periphery relationship. And how does the periphery become re-defined as the centre? To begin with, this effort at re-defining periphery as centre must be legitimated; it must be seen and felt by its advocates as just and true.

The fragmentation of space-time and the crisis of the developmentalist project

The Asian economic crisis signalled the end of the developmentalist project that defined Southeast Asia for the last quarter of the 20th century. No doubt, the crisis was only symptomatic of more deep-seated fissures developing within the institutional and coalitional foundations of the developmentalist regimes of Southeast Asia. In particular, the force of economic liberalisation while entrenching dominant coalitions over the short term laid the basis for an inevitable collision between global economic forces and the dominant coalitions.

² See, for example, Mulder (1996), Alatas (1997), and Schiller and Martin-Schiller (1997) on Indonesia; Riedinger (1995), Sidel (1999), and Hedman and Sidel (2000) on the Philippines; and Carey (1997), and Houtman (1999) on Burma.

³ In a comparable way, Brown (2001: 11) in his paper describes Indonesian student activists as lacking involvement 'with political networks…. The result is that those who most strongly articulate civic norms are precisely those who lack access to political influence'. So both marginalised indigenes and students create movements as bottom-up political manifestations.
solidly entrenched in the ‘nomenklatura capitalism’ of Southeast Asia. In other words, the roots of the Asian economic crisis lay in structures of the Southeast Asian political economy.

Clearly, this crisis has unsettled the dominant coalitions within the region and it has been very difficult to sustain the embedded mercantilism of the boom years. While this does not necessarily mean the dismantling of the systems of ‘nomenklatura capitalism’ in Southeast Asia, what is now highly discernible is the steady fragmentation of the coalitional and institutional structures of the developmentalist regimes.

In some states, such as Thailand, there has clearly been an attempt at developing new forms of state power, such as the emergence of new forms of the regulatory state. However, one of the main objectives of this new regulatory state is the construction of a specific kind of state; clearly, its purpose is to provide a set of regulatory institutions – often insulated from other state organisations and agencies – that can protect the market order. Hence, the new regulatory state reflects a more general transformation of the state from one which performed numerous allocative and interventionist functions to a role as a gatekeeper between the global economy and domestic economy (Jayasuriya 2000, 2001a).

But this transition from the developmentalist regime is also related to a more general transformation of the production of social and economic space. What is distinctive of the spatial practices of the regulatory state is the emergence of a decentred political economy in a number of newly industrialising countries such as India and China. It is not just a process that is confined to emerging market economies. In fact, the making of a single market in the European Union (EU) provides us with a paradigmatic case of a decentred political economy. In the Indian context, the work of Rudolph and Rudolph (2001) has articulated the significance of the emergence of what they term a ‘federal market system’ in the shift towards a regulatory state in India. A federal market system points to the emergence of ‘new patterns of shared sovereignty between the states and the centre for economic and financial decision-making. This increased sharing shifts India’s federal system well beyond the economic provisions of its formal constitution’ (Rudolph & Rudolph 2001: 1542). What is significant about these new decentred political economies is the changing relationship between the centre and its component units in the federal system. In countries such as India, China and Mexico, this transition is reflected in the shift of power to its various component parts.

By contrast, in much of Southeast Asia, these new forms of spatial power are reflected in the ongoing tradition towards forms of decentralisation and localism. This trend towards localism has been given effect through a broad range of decentralisation policies introduced in countries such as Thailand and Indonesia. There is much contention over these new forms of ‘rescaling’ the local state, and a range of social forces is constantly challenging spatial reconfigurations, like other state practices. There is little doubt that the
centralised spatial practices of the developmentalism are breaking down as the new decentred political economy of Southeast Asia takes root. However, these new spatial practices are accompanied by a new constellation of social forces that are, at least in part, located within the institutions of local political structures. In this context, ethnic identity becomes one critical marker through which the new local spatial structures are organised by local political forces. It is important to recognise that there is a considerable range of these new spaces of power, which, for example, includes:

- New ‘ethnoscapes’ reflected in movements for local autonomy
- Cross-national border zones; for example, the Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia ‘Growth Triangle’
- New forms of regional economic space, such as the ‘Multi-media Corridor’ in Malaysia
- New forms of localism and regional governance created by policies of decentralisation and devolution
- Transnational/domestic spaces as well as flows reflected in diasporic nationalism and labour migration
- The rise of cities wanting to be seen as global or regional centres, such as Singapore and Hong Kong

The recent work of Ong (1999) is relevant for our argument, particularly her central guiding concept of graduated sovereignty; that is, the idea that the state flexibly manages different population segments located in various zones of sovereignty. As Ong (1999: 224) argues:

I have thus identified what might be called a system of graduated sovereignty that is superimposed on the conventional arrangements of national states in Southeast Asia. In varying degrees, Southeast Asian states have responded to globalisation by assigning “different social destinies” to their populations according to the roles that those populations play in making their countries competitive and profitable.

In this context, ‘ethnicity often becomes a sorting mechanism for defining the meaning and the claims on sovereignty’ (Ong 1999: 220). From our perspective, the fragmentation of different spatial zones enables ethnicity to become one key ‘sorting mechanism’ that determines the boundaries of these new spaces of power. This argument dovetails with our earlier argument concerning the uneven diffusion of the nation-state, resulting in the political stratification of different ethno-cultural groups.

On the one hand, the state may assign ‘different social destinies’ to different populations, as argued by Ong. On the other hand, as we have argued, different ethno-cultural groups, with their differentiated access to state resources, also take ownership of their respective destiny and chart courses for themselves that
may, in the cases examined in this collection, take them out of the purview of the existing state.

In this enterprise, they may even be aided by globalisation through its creation of new linkages between local élites and transnational actors, which often bypass or marginalise central institutions and actors within the state apparatus.

In short, the process of economic globalisation leads to a profound restructuring of national space in that it initiates new forms of local and national spatial organisation. Consequently, from this vantage point, globalisation is implicated in the very constitution of national space, disrupting old forms of spatial organisation (and temporalities), whilst at the same time producing new spaces of power. Sassen presents this argument well when she notes that:

one way to conceptualise these insertions of the global into the fabric of the national is as partial and incipient denationalization of that which has historically been constructed as the national or, rather of certain properties of the national (Sassen 2000 219).

From this point of view, the emergence of new ‘ethnoscapes’ reflects a collision between the competing spatial and temporal ordering of the projects of developmental capitalism and the emergent forces of globalisation. None of this is to lay claim to the argument that the spatial ordering of developmentalism is somehow superseded. Far from it. Our argument would suggest the need to take into account resistance and the accommodation, as well as conflict, which emerge from the interaction of the national and the global.

In tandem with these processes, it is also clear that the crisis of the developmentalist economic regime facilitates the emergence of a range of new or even previously repressed spatial-temporal imaginaries that run counter to various dominant ones. In short, as we have emphasised, the crisis of the developmentalist regime has led to a contestation over the spatial-temporal armature of the state. *Space and time are never pre-given but always constitute a constant arena of contestation. Crisis in the broader economic and social regime of accumulation enables the possibility of the new spatial-temporal arrangements, as well as alternative modes of conceptualising the space and time of the state.* We turn now to consider the ideological foundations of these alternative spatial-temporal imaginaries.

**Atavism and indigenism: ideological foundations of spatial-temporal imaginaries**

There are two thematic commonalities in the ideological shaping of different centrifugal movements across Southeast Asia:

- Atavism – ‘reversion to a past style, manner, outlook, or approach’ (Merriam-Webster)
• Indigenism – ‘articulation of rights that come from belonging to a place’ (our definition)

Atavism allows one to say, ‘Once upon a time, this was the centre. And as it was, so it shall be.’ The past is thus seen as leading to a particular trajectory of the future – that is, a past-defined future and not a past-rejecting developmentalist future – even if the present is out of sync with both past and future. Indigenism allows one to say, ‘We are the original inhabitants of this place; we belong to it and it belongs to us.’

With regards to the latter concept, we follow Gray (1995: 40ff) and Benjamin (2000: 22) in differentiating between ‘indigeny’ and ‘indigenism’:

Taking a hint from Gray (1995: 40ff.), I must distinguish between unselfconscious indigeny as an embedded social dimension…and the self-conscious indigeny involved in asserting some degree of autonomy from the state. Let’s call the former ‘indigeny’ and the latter ‘indigenousness’ (after Gray). However, pace Gray, indigenousness is at least as often used by the state for its own purposes (Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia), as it is by those who wish to get the state off their backs (Benjamin 2000:22).

In this essay, our focus is on ideological indigenism; that is, ‘the self-conscious indigeny involved in asserting some degree of autonomy from the state,’ or what Gray and Benjamin call ‘indigenousness.’ Our focus in this collection on the atavism and indigenism of separatist movements addresses a gap in the theorising of nationalism.

O’Leary’s (1998: 77) mapping of theories and theorists on nationalism is depicted in Table 1. As indicated, there is currently a theoretical gap with regards to ‘nations’ that are ‘(often) continuous with premodern ethnies’ and that are ‘primarily tools of manipulative elites or ideological masks for other interests.’ In addressing this gap, we are not saying that all nations should be characterised as such. We are merely recognising the empirical reality of such a category in the form of movements for alternative sovereignty that may be understood as nations of intent.

We argue that atavism and indigenism are important components of what is being imagined. Atavism roots the imagination in time, indigenism roots it in space. Atavism emphasises the continuity of past and present, with implications for the future. Indigenism emphasises the relationship between people and place, with implications for their rights over place. In this way, atavism and indigenism serve to authenticate the imagining of a community of the future. With reference to O’Leary’s mapping in Table 1, we argue that continuity with ‘premodern ethnies’ is authenticated ideologically so that it is felt as ‘authentic.’ It is not just a naïve, unmediated expression of ‘authentically felt identities’ (to use O’Leary’s term).
### Table 1: O’Leary’s theories of nationalism and principal theorists (with suggested readings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nations are...</th>
<th>primarily tools of manipulative elites or masks for ideological interests</th>
<th>primarily expressions of authentically felt identities</th>
<th>both tools of elites and authentic expressions of identities</th>
</tr>
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</table>

*Source: O’Leary (1998: 77).*

As implied above, atavism is not an unselfconscious ‘primordialism’ with pre-existing loyalties that are unthinkingly transmitted. On the contrary, atavism is an active reaching back to the past to draw upon ideational and moral resources. Atavistic constructions of the past may or may not be historical. However, it is not veracity that is the point here. The point is temporal location. Cultural constructions that are temporally located in the past enable usages for present purposes. The present is thus reconstructed in terms of this constructed past, thereby legitimating a particular trajectory towards the future.

George Orwell (1954) declared in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

Who controls the past controls the future.
Who controls the present controls the past.

In the context of our argument, we take the liberty of modifying his verse thus:

Who controls the past controls the present.
Who controls the present controls the future.

The question is: who *does* control the past? The past is plural; it is neither homogeneous nor uni-dimensional. Moreover, constructions of the past need not even be historically true. So which ‘past’ – or more cogently – whose ‘past’ is to be adopted as the authoritative account? The ‘past’ is thus a site of struggle; like the present and the future, it too is contested political territory.
For example, McKenna (2002: 10) discusses such contestation among Philippine Muslims – between new religious teachers, trained in the Middle East and calling ‘for a return to the plain, unadulterated teachings of Islamic scripture,’ and the traditional nobility ‘harkening back to an idealised local past’ and a ‘cultural tradition of local saints.’ Wee (2002) discusses a similar process of contestation among Riau Malays – between those on Sumatra looking back to a golden age of shared Malay culture, and those in the Riau Archipelago referring more specifically to a bygone Riau-Lingga sultanate. Rajah (2001) traces the production and reproduction of narrations of nation among the Karens of Burma, narrations that began in the nineteenth century and are now tragically reproduced in refugee camps in Thailand.

Conclusion

As an initial foray into providing a broad theoretical framework for understanding the manifestation of new forms of spatial armature within the state, one of the central questions that theorists of ethnicity have to confront is why particular forms of ethnic or other identities become salient at particular historical moments. The foregoing falls directly into a theoretical perspective advanced by Brass (1994) and others; that is, an instrumental understanding of ethnic identity. Put simply, this is the view that identity itself is a symbolic political resource.

However, the approach taken here goes much further than this by identifying various structures of centre-periphery relations as themselves a product of broader regimes of economic, social and spatial-temporal governance. In this context, the central proposition of this essay is that the recent emergence of new fault lines in Southeast Asia has to be understood in the context of a more far-reaching crisis of developmentalist regimes in Southeast Asia. The ongoing crisis of developmentalism has opened up new possibilities of spatial-temporal organisation that may be more congruent with a globalised economy. Thus, the emergence of the new regulatory state was paralleled by the emergence of a new decentred political economy characterised by fragmented spatial zones, or what Ong (1999) terms ‘graduated sovereignty.’ Indeed, much of the literature on globalisation neglects the deeply contested struggle of spatial-temporal organisation that is part and parcel of the restructuring of the state.

In fact, as Swyngedouw (2000: 64) points out:

> The preeminence of the ‘global’ in much of the literature and political rhetoric obfuscates, marginalizes, and silences an intense and ongoing spatial struggle in which the reconfiguration of spatial scales of governance takes a central position.

In a nutshell, the crisis of developmentalism is reflected in the transformation and conflict over the spatial-temporal armature of the state, and in this conflict ethnic identity becomes a central selective mechanism.
The advantage of our perspective is that it enables us to explore the impact of transnational processes on the domestic not as something that is externally driven, but as an interaction that transforms the spatial organisation of the state. The crisis of developmentalism in East Asia is reflected in the transformation of the institutional and spatial architecture of the state. In these terms, it is the interaction of the global and domestic economic and social processes that leads to the constitution as well as – let us underline – conflict, over a range of new geographies of power, which range from new ‘ethnoscapes’ to cross-border economic zones. Hence, we need to recognise the way in which ‘this type of analysis signals a spatial configuration of major new transnational economic processes diverging in significant ways from the duality of globalisation presupposed in much analysis of the global economy’ (Sassen 2000: 226). In particular, the demise of the economic and political project of the developmentalist state has led to an increasing fragmentation of what Harvey (1999) terms ‘space-time.’ It is this fragmentation of ‘space-time’ and the differential governance of these new spaces of power that needs to be at the very top of the research agenda on new fault lines in Southeast Asia.
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