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**The Nation-state and the Limits to
Globalization in Southeast Asia**

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Abstract

This paper makes a number of interesting points about the fate of globalization in Southeast Asia and also about the fate of (selected countries in) Southeast Asia in the face of globalization. With slight reorganization the paper would be more focused. The main argument of the paper could be presented more pointedly at the very outset. The interplay of the three key categories: Globalization, national ideology, and local culture in Southeast Asia presents an interesting case study. The discussions on regionalism and transnationalism (p.19) and new ethnicities (p.21) could follow the discussion of Singapore as a separate section rather than being under the subheading of Singapore. On regionalism, more examples such as the Latin American bloc, Mercosur, South Asian bloc SAARC and the relevant African organization would enrich the discussion. Why not quote Giddens directly?

The Nationstate and the Limits to Globalization in Southeast Asia

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1. The Mediation of Cultural Universes

Culture enables people to make sense of their lives by making available ideas and meanings, with which they are able to articulate their experience of the world. It enables individuals and groups to traverse the u-turns and dead ends which inevitably come with the business of living, and helps to resolve the contradictions and uncertainties of such experiences. However in a world made smaller by the expansion of capitalism, technological revolutions, economic interdependence, and the rise of nation-states, the cultural resources for making sense of an increasingly complex world have multiplied several times. These sources of cultural knowledge may be global or universal, regional, national, and communal - all of which are arbitrated by the individual or the group.

1.1 Cultural Significance of Globalization

The global refers to post-capitalist society in which the everyday lives of people are dominated by consumption and the economy, and the culture in such a society may be described as consumer-utilitarian. Such an economy has more than just utilitarian significance. As Schudson (1994: 32) describes: 'In modern society, many goods are mass produced and widely distributed, and these goods may become not only devices of practical import but symbolic structures that command attention and evoke devotion or

allegiance for their own sake and from the fact that they have been shared.' Common consumption patterns and lifestyles, and their dissemination through a widespread communicative network have been primarily responsible for creating a new consciousness in which the world is regarded as a single place or locale.

1.2 Regional Associations

While the influence of consumer culture has been pervasive in most societies, regional associations are a more recent development and their origins may be traced to the Cold War years. Regional groupings such as the European community, ASEAN, and NAFTA have subsequently emerged as loose economic and political unions - mainly to facilitate freer movements of trade and industry. Such groupings may also refer to 'Pan' nationalisms, which Smith (1990: 186) defines as attempts to unify several states into a single political community on the basis of common cultural characteristics such as lingua franca - examples of which, he cites, as Pan-Arabism, Pan-Africanism, and even Pan-Latin Americanism. While he refers to these as incipient regional cultures, their influence has been more patchy than real.

1.3 Imperatives of Nationbuilding

The emergence of the nation-state is a modern phenomenon in so far as it has evolved over the past two centuries, a period which saw the development of industrial society and the expansion of capitalism. In contrast to the diffuse influence of regional and global cultures the nation-state, as a source of cultural knowledge, has exercised a dominant and comprehensive influence in the lives of its citizens. As an institution actively engaged in

constructing society yet building a community, it has taken great care in making available public symbols and ideas to invoke a blueprint for society. It sets the parameters within which the 'good society' should operate and one's personal and collective identity should be subsumed. Nationbuilding is ideological work because it is highly articulated, self-conscious, and attempts to provide comprehensive solutions to both contemporary and anticipatory problems.

Nationbuilding consists of three processes. First, it requires state elites to formulate a common or national ideology. In Southeast Asian states this often involves setting out explicitly certain ideas and values which are deemed desirable for their citizens. Hence *Pancasila*, multiracialism, and *Rukun Negara* have been espoused in Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia respectively as national ideologies. Second, a public culture compatible with the tenets of the national ideology is promoted. Although this may be confined to public occasions and celebrations, such visible displays of culture have a symbolic significance which serves as reminders to the population that they belong to a single community. Third, the careful construction and articulation of a common ideology and public culture is necessary for the purpose of nurturing a collective or national identity. Individual citizens expect some consistency between their private identities and the symbolic contents upheld by public authorities, the latter are expressed in public institutions and celebrated in public events (Breton, 1984: 124-5).

Moreover, the imperatives of nationbuilding require the state to essentialize and totalize (Chun, 1996: 70). To essentialize means to reduce something to its supposed pure form

and to treat it as if it exists in reality. For example, states in Southeast Asia often essentialize ethnicity by assuming that ethnic groups possess inherently different cultural or behavioural characteristics; these are then used to distinguish them for the purpose of government. By way of illustration, the state essentializes 'Chineseness' in Singapore as much as 'Malayness' in Malaysia and 'Javanese' in Indonesia. To totalize is to apply the classification to as many of the inhabitants as possible in order to facilitate government. In this way, the nation-state homogenizes, categorizes, and absorbs in order to eliminate ambiguity (Bauman, 1990: 165-6). If physical borders separate states spatially and are zealously maintained in order to assert the identity of the state, then cultural boundaries are equally important in distancing the minds of population groups for the same end. A nation-state is a conceptual community because it attempts to impose a cultural homogeneity on its population (Giddens cited from Schlesinger, 1991: 167).

1.4 Community and Tradition

The final source of cultural knowledge is found in the communal or ethnic community. It is one of the most enduring of human organisations, it antedates the rise of the nation-state and has pre-modern origins (Smith, 1988). Such a cultural resource is also described as traditions (Swidler, 1986: 279). They are articulated cultural beliefs and practices, but unlike ideology they are usually taken for granted, partial rather than all-inclusive, diverse and not always enthusiastically supported - particularly when they are no longer appropriate to modern conditions. They may be used against the state or for the state. They frequently offer resistance to the ineluctable expansion of capitalism and to the development of a global consciousness. Because the nation-state and globalization share

to an extent a common goal in homogenizing the diversity of 'natural' communities, the latter often find themselves in a position of having to offer 'cultural resistance' to preserve their identities. One can view, Chun (1996: 69) asserts, such discourses of identity 'as interpretive mechanisms through which specific people, institutions or cultures localize (or indigenize) diverse global flows in order to negotiate a meaningful life space or position themselves within a situation of power'.

All four sources of cultural knowledge - global, regional, national, and communal - more or less impinge on the personal consciousness and identity of individuals. Each of these may be referred to as a collectivity, Giddens (cited in Schlesinger, 1991: 166) describes them as locales of operation. Locales are physical settings in which typical interactions occur. They are constituted by interactions in time and space, and are necessary to sustaining meaningful communication between actors. Locales may be as diverse as shops and empires. When the four locales referred to in this discussion are taken together, they form a complex culture which individuals and groups continually have to cope with. Individuals, groups, and organisations are involved in an endless process of mediation between the locales or levels of cultural sensibility. They seek to resolve inevitable tensions, conflict, and contradictions, which arise when the locales intersect. This paper addresses how, in particular, nation-states in Southeast Asia attempt to mediate between the global and communal constituencies, as sources of cultural knowledge for individuals and groups.

1.5 The Limit of Globalization: the Nation-State

We begin by reiterating Giddens' point that 'the emergence of the nation-state was integrally bound up with the expansion of capitalism' (cited in Schlesinger, 1991: 166). It is therefore a modern development (see Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983). As we alluded to earlier, globalization has its origins in the expansion of capitalism. Globalization is a post-capitalist development and its effect on nation-states is to make the boundaries between them more porous. The nation-state is the site in which the universalizing tendencies of globalization are articulated. However the nation-state, despite the remote possibility that it may dissipate in the face of universalization, sets its limits according to the logic of its existence. The explanation for this may be sought in the nature of global and national cultures (Smith, 1990: 177-9). Smith argues that a global culture is essentially calculated, artificial, and technically-oriented. It is a melange of disparate influences drawn from everywhere and nowhere. For this reason it is timeless, ahumanistic, and decontextualized. In contrast national cultures are particular, timebound and expressive, and their eclecticism operates within cultural constraints. They are historically-conscious and are therefore contextualized. It is the decontextualizing proclivities of globalization, for example the preoccupation with material consumption, which dehumanizes individuals and communities - whose identities are only meaningfully enunciated in context. As a consequence the nation-state, while it is committed to development, must moderate the 'homeless' condition of globalization. For this purpose it appeals to communal or ethnic traditions as the basis of national identity; in doing so it has to contend with the danger that such appeals may easily slide into ethnic chauvinism which may prove the undoing of plural societies. Hence such traditions are reinterpreted and neutralized to head off the possibility of polarization, and to make it more acceptable to a heterogenous population.

Because of the need to contextualize national identity, state elites often go back into history to resuscitate pre-modern traditions, which may then be used as the basis of national ideology and public culture. Developed by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1989: 1-14), the use of 'invented tradition' involves identifying particular practices and beliefs which help to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour. Such traditions are also attempts to establish continuity with an appropriate past. Repeated often enough, the practices may then be routinized in the public institutions of the state and adopted as public culture.

In spatial-symbolic terms, the connection between national and communal cultures may also be framed as centre-periphery relations. Shils (1975) argues that a society has a cultural centre from which its influence radiates. The centre refers to a central order of symbols, values and beliefs which govern society. The periphery is that social space which, because of its remoteness, is relatively free of control from the centre. National culture is viewed as emanating from the centre and is homogenizing whereas communal culture is peripheral and resistant to such homogenization. Despite the apparent tension between the two, both national and communal cultures are context-bound and may be seen as competing against each other. A global culture is contextless, and although pervasive and unavoidable, it is refracted through nationbuilding to make it palatable to traditional communities. Identities, whether of nation-states or communities, are only sustained by anchoring them in historical experiences and memories, and cultural specificities. Because the emergence of the nation-state, as we referred to earlier, is interwoven into capitalist development and globalization, it has necessarily involved itself with the homogenizing tendencies of the latter. In doing so, the nation-state is in danger of losing its distinctiveness, on which its identity and existence are dependent. From time to time, it

must 'pull back' and reaffirm its historical lineage and cultural roots to revitalize its identity. Hence although the 'traditional community' may be an obstacle to nationbuilding, the nation-state is unable to do away with it.

1.6 Transnationalization: A Challenge to the Nation-State ?

In the discussion of Indonesia and Malaysia, this essay will illustrate the contradictory roles of the nation-state in the face of globalization. It examines the interplay between global, national, and communal cultures as they work out some kind of accommodation amongst them in these Southeast Asian societies. So far we have dealt with these cultural universes as if there are discrete influences. One of the other consequences of the globalization and the development of post-capitalist society is a more recent phenomenon. This is the process of transnationalization, which not only involves the migration of labour but also the movement of capital across national boundaries. Transnationalization has produced what Basch et al (1994: 7-8) call transmigrants. The essential element of transnationalism is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies, and their identity manifest itself in transnational terms. In contrast to Indonesia and Malaysia, cultural mediation in Singapore has taken a different turn. This is because its strategic location and economic origins have forced it to come to terms with cross-national influences much earlier than either Indonesia or Malaysia. The discussion on Singapore will address this issue.

2. Indonesia

2.1 Pancasila

When Indonesian nationalists declared independence from colonial rule after the Japanese

surrendered to the Allied Forces in 1945, they also took the opportunity to formulate the ideology of the independent nation, called *Pancasila* which they incorporated into the new constitution. At first reading, the five principles laid down in *Pancasila* - namely, belief in God, humanitarianism, nationalism or national unity, democracy, and social justice - would appear to reflect the liberal influence of western political theory and a commitment to economic development. However, any understanding of the nationalist interpretation of these ideas would quickly dispel the view that *Pancasila* was an unquestioned affirmation of western notions of political and economic progress. For example, when both Sukarno and Suharto refer to the democratic principle, they had in mind the idealized concepts of traditional village government - that consultation and consensus were essential to any decision-making (Ramage, 1995: 13). The principle, as far as they were concerned, did not refer to Western forms of parliamentary democracy. The other tenets, humanitarianism emphasized the practice of tolerance and respect between all Indonesians, and nationalism required the submergence of regional and ethnic loyalties to an allegiance to the Indonesian state (ibid). All these were attempts to formulate a national philosophy which respected and accommodated the plural character of Indonesian society. The fifth, social justice, is a commitment to the egalitarian principle which can only be realised through sustained economic development and rising standards of living (ibid). This has been a central preoccupation of the New Order government of President Suharto, which saw the active encouragement of direct foreign investment after 1965 when Indonesia abandoned the socialist path the growing local communist movement was taking it. In sum *Pancasila*, when it was conceived as the basis of Indonesia's national ideology and its subsequent interpretations, has been attempts by the nation-state to mediate between the

demands of global economic development and the loyalties of local communities and traditions.

2.2 National Culture vs Cultural Traditions

Given the geographical dispersal of the Indonesian population and the cultural diversity of its population, the state is particularly sensitive to the omnipresent danger of the politicization of their regional, ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences. These have from time to time erupted into separatist movements since the founding of the Republic. For this reason, the state has taken great pains to forge a "philosophy", in Geertz's words (1990: 79), "soft enough to soothe 'cultural' sentiments, and hard enough to contain them with the careful fenced preserve of the officially unpolitical". Acciaioli (1985: 151-3) illustrates how the rich cultural traditions of Indonesia's local communities have been emasculated by the practice of such a state ideology. *Adat* or 'customary usage which has been handed down from the ancestors' has been the basis of regulating the social behaviour of the more than 300 ethnic groups in the archipelago. Over the years, first with the colonial administration and later with the penetration of the nation-state over much of Indonesia, the practice of *adat* in many communities has increasingly been restricted and does not enjoy the authority it once had. Instead it has been relegated to the performance of ceremony or ritual, and its value is primarily aesthetic. The expansion and promotion of tourism under the New Order has also given an opportunity to the state to neutralize the political potential of cultural differences by restricting cultural expressions to performance and display (Acciaioli, 1985: 158).

While Pancasila philosophy, in recognition of the humanitarian and democratic principles, allows for the practice of different cultures out of respect for the heterogeneous composition of the population, these are subsumed within the overriding requirement of national unity. National culture in Indonesia is defined as a hybrid mix of the best of existing cultures in the nation, but the political dominance of the Javanese has meant that greater prominence has been given to their influence (Hooker & Dick, 1993: 4). Hence official culture has drawn from Javanese traditions which have been reinterpreted within the requirements of Pancasila and a pan-Indonesian identity (ibid: 7). The articulation of Pancasila ideology, particularly under the New Order government, has been developmentalist; and the presentation of national culture has necessarily been plural, eclectic, impartial, and cosmopolitan (Geertz, 1990:89). Carried to its extreme, the state may find itself in the unwitting position of decontextualizing its national identity. If this happens its legitimacy may be called into question, this will be elaborated in a moment. It is therefore unable to abandon its Javanese roots not only for this reason, but also because its political support is dependent on Javanese society. Furthermore, Java is the cultural-spatial centre of Shils' description, from which it must operate in order to maintain its influence over the periphery, the Outer Islands of Indonesia.

2.3 Reinterpreting Development

Since the early 1970s urban Indonesian society in particular has been flooded by the consumerist culture associated with international capitalism and has undergone rapid economic and social change in less than twenty years. In the late 1980s, growing concern has been voiced by many Indonesians that such changes, achieved under the New Order

government, should be balanced by a re-evaluation of the spiritual and mental well being of the population (Hooker & Dick, 1993:1-2). As a consequence, the state finds itself in an ambiguous position. "On the one hand", Foulcher (1990:302) comments, "middle class consumerism is an essential component of 'development' as it is conceived in Indonesia, while on the other the lifestyle which it spawns is viewed with apprehension, as the location of the negative 'side-effects' of development". In response, the state and its representatives have attempted to reconstruct 'Indonesian' values and traditions to ameliorate the perception that 'development', which is so central to the policy of the New Order government, may be negative.

One of the ways it attempts to do this is to use the national language, *Bahasa Indonesia*, (which is based on Malay), to convey to the population an 'Indonesian' understanding of development (Foulcher, 1990:305). In his Independence Day speech in 1983, President Suharto gave a detailed list of the qualities which a modern society needs in order to successfully sustain development (Hooker, 1993: 279). This included a mental attitude that is considerate, thrifty and simple, hard-working, conscientious, orderly, dedicated, honest, and noble. Spoken in *Bahasa Indonesia* on a national scale to both native and non-native speakers in the country, the official standardization of a language helps to shape the behaviour and communication pattern of many communities into one dominant orientation (ibid: 273). The content cited in the President's speech in 1983 may be interpreted to mean that if development is disciplined by the values he outlined, then Indonesians need not fear the excesses of material growth.

2.4 Gotong Royong

The state is actively involved in reconciling the contradictory forces between capitalist development and the preservation of the identities and practices of local communities. In seeking to do this, the government sometimes invents traditions. One of these is the indigenous practice of *gotong royong* or mutual assistance. *Gotong royong* is practised in village communities in most parts of Indonesia, and it may take various forms (Bowen, 1986: 547-49). As labour exchange, it is commonly employed in major agricultural tasks such as hoeing, ploughing, planting, and harvesting. The second type of mutual assistance is generalized reciprocity which refers to both a general obligation and the idea of eventual return. For example, a village may be obliged to help out in the marriage of a child or the death of a relative, as a matter of obligation or in return for past favours. The third type consists of labour that is mobilized as a consequence of political subordination, and is akin to corvee labour when it is commandeered by a local official. These types of *gotong royong* vary culturally depending on their regional location. In the New Order, the institution of *gotong royong* has been appropriated by the state to support efforts at top-down implementation of development programmes (Bowen, 1986: 553). In one such programme introduced in the 1980s, financial grants were given to villages on condition that they provided free labour and materials not locally obtainable, to construct or repair infrastructure such as irrigation, roads, and public buildings. *Gotong royong* has been incorporated into national culture and is recognized as such in Indonesia. The significance of this practice is that it facilitates national development, by rendering it in a way recognizable by village traditions. At the same time, by presenting it as the spirit of selflessness and as an expression of the identity of the village community, government

officials are able to soften any negative perceptions the villagers may hold toward such development. A cultural practice, which appears to be distinctive to individual communities, has been appropriated and homogenized by the state - and then promoted as official culture and incorporated into the collective identity of Indonesians.

3. Malaysia

Although Malaysia introduced its version of national ideology, *Rukunegara*, soon after Sino-Malay riots broke out in 1969, the principles enunciated were a specific response to the dangers of inter-ethnic conflict and a commitment to maintaining national unity. As a document in national ideology, it has not been subjected to the close scrutiny that *Pancasila* has received; neither has it been articulated with the same regularity and intensity. Unlike Indonesia where its government has had to contend with some deeply rooted and longstanding cultural traditions, Malaysia is relatively a new society: created by a first wave of intraregional migrants from within the Malay archipelago, followed by a second wave of extraregional migrants from China and India. The interface between these two movements of population was British colonization which spanned most of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. It was during these years that Malaysia was exposed to a capitalist world through a colonial plantation economy. In contrast to the forbidding territorial spread of Indonesia, much of the peninsula was soon brought within the fold of a global capitalist economy.

The main beneficiaries of this economic development were, before 1970, the non-Malay

population, particularly the Chinese who made up a disproportionate segment of the urban bourgeoisie. Engaged first in retailing and mining, their prosperity grew out of an early generation of merchants and miners; now they may be found in all sectors of the industrial and commercial economy. Their economic visibility for most of the years prior to 1970 inevitably led to an acute awareness by the Malays of their own relative deprivation, and increasing resentment of the economic position of the Chinese. This culminated in the fateful general elections of 1969 and the riots which followed, when the Malays were confronted with the possibility that they may lose political dominance for the first time.

3.1 Economic Nationalism

The political emphasis of Malay nationalism in the post-war years shifted to economic nationalism in the 1970s. The New Economic Policy (NEP) was launched in 1971 for the specific purpose of propelling the Malays to a position of economic parity with the other ethnic communities. Under the proactive NEP in which the state assumed an economic and interventionist role in increasing Malay equity participation and creating a middle class in Malay society, the economic status of *bumiputera* was revitalized - to distinguish the beneficiaries of the NEP. The status conferred on Malays privileged access to education, employment, and investment. "The ideology of *bumiputeraism* ", Lee (1992: 160) comments, "was invented to assert Malay indigenesness and justify development policies in favour of concretising Malay modernity". As an ascriptive status, the category of *bumiputera* illustrates a significant attempt by the state to mediate the Malay response to capitalist development albeit in terms which were perceived as interethnic competition. As economic restructuring proceeded throughout the 1970s and 1980s, one consequence

was the urbanisation of Malay society and the emergence of a nascent class structure, consisting of a Malay proletariat and middle class. The effect of the modernization of Malay society was the appearance of contradictions. One of these, Lee (1992: 160) continues, was the demand made on Malays between a new-found individualism and growing state pressures. How both the Malay middle class and proletariat reacted to the pressures of development will be discussed later.

3.2 Islamic Revivalism

In the late 1970s and 1980s, as the full effects of the NEP came to be felt throughout the peninsula and as more Malays were inducted into the capitalist economy, a simultaneous development occurred in Islamic revivalism, commonly referred to as the *dakwah* movement. Islamic fundamentalism developed in two directions. One group is led by the long established rural-based Pan-Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), and it draws its support from the peasant constituencies of the northern states. The other movement has been described as evangelistic, heterogenous, and uncoordinated, and it has influence over the more educated, professional, urban middle class, and younger population (Nagata, 1984: 81-130). "Unlike their parents", Couch (1996: 171-2) comments, "whose practice of Islam was often ritualistic and traditional, the educated offspring came into contact with new religious ideas and interpretations through student organizations, visiting preachers, and Islamic literature" While Islamic revivalism in the conservative rural areas may be interpreted as a reaction against excessive economic development (Lee, 1992: 164), it is less clear whether fundamentalism amongst urban educated Muslims is an anti-modernist response or an adoption of a more intellectual and rational approach to religion. The state's

response was to embark on an Islamization programme in the 1980s, which included the reaffirmation of what were considered to be good Islamic practices and behaviour, and Islamic initiatives in education and banking (Couch, 1996: 170-1). Although fears were expressed about the government's intention to establish some kind of Islamic state by the non-Malay population, Couch believes that state-sponsored Islamization is in part an attempt to prevent such a possibility.

3.3 The Middle Class and Malay Culture

As a consequence of affirmative action in the NEP, the Malay middle class has expanded. A significant constituent of this middle class is made up of civil servants, educators, and professionals. Many others are employed in the media, state-owned enterprises, and the private sector. This group, though they have benefitted from the NEP, are not wholly committed to giving full support to economic modernisation and are indeed fearful of rampant commercialism (Kahn cited in Kessler, 1992: 146). With the decline of the traditional Malay peasant cultural order in the face of development, "Malay culture" has been revived and romanticized for the consumption of this middle class. Because the cultural images presented in this revival are the antithesis of modern society - which is urban, impersonal and rushed in contrast to the rural, personalised and contemplative - it has struck a resonance with the urban middle class who are of rural origins but whose links with peasant society today are tenuously maintained (Kahn, 1992: 165).

3.4 The Malay Proletariat

The Malay proletariat has, on the other hand, reacted differently to capitalist development. The industrialisation programme of the 1970s has created industrial estates in major urban centres on the west coast and multiplied employment opportunities. The exodus of Malay rural migrants to these centres has resulted in housing shortages. In a study of the southern state of Johore (Guinness, 1994: 232-48), Malay workers rejected the unsatisfactory housing provided in the estates and instead, chose to live in squatter settlements (representing 'traditional' Malay villages) illegally sited on state land on the outskirts of the city. What is uppermost in the minds of such workers are the practical problems of everyday living, in this case finding adequate shelter within an acceptable environment. Guinness argues that despite the illegality, the government has turned a blind eye to Malay squatters particularly because they are a source of cheap labour for industry and because they provide significant electoral support to the Malay ruling party in opposition to predominantly non-Malay, urban constituencies.

The Malaysian examples cited in this discussion depict how local communities, the Malay middle class and proletariat, have mediated between global and national demands in two contrasting ways. On the one hand, 'Malay culture' has been repackaged to meet the consumption needs of an expanding middle class. On the other, the urban proletariat gravitated toward urban *kampongs* as the preferred means of shelter in an industrial environment. In the case of the state, it has sometimes played contradictory roles in attempting to balance the needs of both constituencies. When Malays, as an ethnic community, were perceived as losing out economically to the Chinese, the UMNO-dominated state responded by espousing the ideology of *bumiputraisim*, to justify the

privileging of indigenes in economic participation. Similarly, to head off the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, the state interpreted Islamic practices in modern and pro-development terms.

4. Singapore

Singapore is a small multi-cultural nation-state situated in the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. There are several features of the society that makes it an interesting case study of the impact of globalization and culture. First, Singapore has undergone tremendous social and economic changes in the last thirty years. Deciding early on that industrialization was the key to its survival, it opened its economy and society to external influences. A cosmopolitan and trading society by origin, it was exposed to global forces. Secondly, Singapore, a nation of migrants, is made up many ethnic groups. The Chinese constitutes the largest ethnic group, accounting for 77% of the population. 13% are Malays and 7% are Indians. Others, a residual category, constitutes 3% of the population. These people, while Singaporeans, draw their cultural resources, in part, from the historical civilizations of China, India, and the Malay Archipelago. In addition, there are about three hundred thousand foreigners working in Singapore.

4.1 Regionalism and Transnationalism

Too often, the debate in globalization has been on the polarities of local versus global. For example, Albrow(1990) argues that much of the debate on globalization has centered on the distinction between the two. This paper argues that there are two other dimensions to consider when we examine the processes of globalization in respect to Singapore. One

is the increasing emphasis on regionalization and the other is the process of transnationalization.

The end of the Cold War era has been marked by the proliferation of regional organizations. The most recent has been the drive in Europe towards the creation of a European Community and the European Monetary Unit. In continental America, the setting up of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Area, which, originally consisted of the United States, Canada and Mexico, looks set to incorporate many of the Latin American countries. The same processes are happening in Southeast Asia. There are a string of acronyms: APEC, PECC, ARF, ASEAN, respectively translated as Asia-Pacific Economic Conference, Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference, ASEAN Regional Forum and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The desire of many nations who are not members clamouring to join these regional organizations testifies to their increasing importance in the new global age. Why are regional organizations important?

First, in the new global economic competition, regional organizations provide strength in numbers and influence. This is particularly true in Southeast Asia, where smaller countries, like Singapore and Malaysia, with little economic clout can exert greater influence in international forums through such organizations. In one sense, the new global age has reduced the influence of the superpowers. While in the post war period and the 1960's, the United States was the main engine of world economic growth, increasingly, the 21st century will be one where there are regional centres. For example, Asia will control over 30% of the world economy in the year 2000. We will see more competition

between these regional centres, rather than simply bilateral ties; demonstrated recently in the negotiations of trade quotas and the 'open-skies' policy, where landing rights are moving towards regional considerations rather than bilateral landing treaties.

In the new global age, national barriers to trade will diminish. We will begin to see the importance of networks of trade companies rather than country specific companies. There has been remarkable growth in capital investments in China, Malaysia, Indonesia, India and Vietnam. We will see greater transnationalization of businesses. Capital has no national boundaries and will move to where the resources are. In such a situation, there will be decreasing emphasis on national boundaries and a growth in a network of economic linkages and commodity chains. Labour, in the longer term, will follow the way of capital. However, how governments manage migrant labour will be problematic as the concept of citizenship will change more slowly compared to the regulation of capital. A significant proportion of the workers in Singapore is made up of migrant workers. The migration of people, or more accurately, the mass movement of labour will have an effect, as it will be elaborated later, on the definition of homeland and ethnicity.

The processes of regionalization and transnationalization are sociologically significant because it is an alternative way of looking at the relationship between local and global.

These processes are both local and global at the same time. Regionalization allows countries in the region to maintain, to a large degree, their autonomy and control of domestic resources and issues within the country, and yet, at the same time, to participate in trade within a large entity. Similarly, transnational companies are situated in the local,

but are plugged into a regional/global network.

4.2 New Ethnicities

One interesting consequence of globalization is the creation of **new ethnicities**. Advocates of primordialism view ethnicity as an immutable and static. Within a situational conception of ethnicity (see Nagata 1984), the debate is about how people assume different identities in different situations and environments. As we move toward a global age, there is a redefinition of what constitutes ethnicity and how it is used. The Chinese Diaspora is a good illustration. The Chinese, over the course of the last century have migrated to various parts of the world. At the present, it is estimated that there are over 55 million Overseas Chinese, and there are sizable population in just about every country in the world, except for some countries in eastern Europe and parts of Africa.

Tu (1991:22) suggests that a new kind of Chinese diaspora has appeared in the new global age: "cultural China". It refers to a single universe whose common interest in a modernizing and revitalized China transcends national boundaries and discourses. In a changing global environment that has witnessed once patriotic overseas Chinese becoming permanently settled in their adopted countries, the dispersal of Chinese intellectuals to the West and Asia, the rise of the four Asian dragons and the success of the Chinese abroad, Tu raises the possibility of a renewed sense of Chineseness, a kind of pan-national imagined community of exiled Chinese intellectuals (See Chun 1996).

It is true that in the course of living with indigenous population for many years, it is

difficult to find any single or set of markers that can be used to define their Chineseness. For example, in a recent gathering of Chinese businessmen, one of the authors discovered that the majority does not speak Chinese, practise Chinese religions, or have any real ties with the homeland. Thus, the traditional markers of Chinese ethnic identity; language, education, religion or history are not central for the Overseas Chinese. Yet, there is a primordial sense of being Chinese. Part of the reason for this is the expansion of opportunities for investment in China, followed by organized conferences of the Chinese Diaspora and gatherings of Chinese businessmen. For example, the First World Chinese Entrepreneurs' Conference held in 1989 attracted delegations from all over the world. Similarly, there have been gatherings of Hokkiens and Teochews from all over the world. Because of the Chinese proclivity to emphasize *guanxi* and the preference to work with *ziji ren*, these meetings of the Chinese facilitate the networking of Chinese businessmen.

The new ethnic identity of Chineseness is essentially an 'economic identity'. It is no longer based on a common cultural and sentimental attachments. People identify themselves as Chinese without reference to the conventional markers of identity. It is a pragmatic, and instrumental identity based on shared economic interests. The influences of global culture, trade flows, and transnationalism have created a transnational identity that transcends political and geographical boundaries, and is characterised by interlocking modes and networks.

While clearly a transnational identity is emerging in some groups and in some societies, we should be cognizant of the influence of local space, history, and sensitivities. Critics

view the homogenization of this new Chineseness as evidence of the rise of Chinese chauvinism. This has caused concern to some governments in countries that have a sizable Chinese minority. The resultant product of this tension between indigenization and globalization, of the local place versus transnational space will be, in my view, an ethnicity that operates at multiple levels. As Chan and Tong (1995:9) argues,

Contact between cultures and groups has potential integrative and divisive consequences; it creates conditions for cooperation and fusion, as well as conflict and differentiation, partly because sameness and differentness are simultaneously accentuated by the groups' co-presence. Also, global culture homogenise group differences but is rarely not met with the respective groups' own idiosyncratic attempts at indigenization and incorporation.... Local cultures decide when and in what form they are being homogenised by the global culture.

Friedman (1989) suggests that one of the features of globalization is the crisis of identity, precipitated by the weakening of national identities and the appearance of new identities. This will call into question the concept of citizenship - the abstract meaning of membership grounded in a territorially defined and state-governed society - and its replacement by an identity based on primordial loyalties, such as ethnicity, race, local community, language and other culturally concrete forms. The idea of an ethnocentric nation-state, in the new world order, is increasingly problematic and there have been reconfigurations in national identity, but to suggest their replacement by ethnic identity is overstating the case, and underestimating the power and resilience of the nation-state. As we have argued earlier, the globalization process is mediated by local interpretations.

In Singapore, there is a tension between the idea of citizenship and citizenship rights, and the demands created by the internationalization of Singapore society and its economy.

This is operationalised in the concept of "Singapore Unlimited," a term coined by the Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong. In order to maintain its economic viability, Singapore needs to be a part of the international grid. Yet the obligations and responsibilities of citizenship at home (for example, all able-bodied male Singaporeans are eligible for compulsory national service of 3 years in the army) require the maintenance of national identity. In Singapore, this is operationalised by using the Swiss model, where one third of all Swiss citizens live and work outside the country. To maintain ties with home, Singapore clubs and international schools have been established in countries with a significant Singaporean population. Using a computer analogy, Singapore provides the central node and Singaporeans overseas become nodal points. The justification for such a network is overtly economic, especially with the drive to regionalise the economy. However this may also be viewed as a necessary consequence of modernity. The idea of a bounded nation is important, but it may not be a necessary condition for fostering nationalism: A sense of being Singaporean wherever a person is, is. Thus, being Singaporean in the 21st century may be non-spatial and unbounded, but neither is it necessarily replaced by alternative cultural practices.

5. Conclusion

Globalization, as we understand it, is the logical development of capitalist expansion. It is a post-capitalist phenomenon in which people's lives have become consumption-conscious and utilitarian-oriented. The consequence of this is that the boundaries which have separated communities and states are now increasingly permeable, and the identities individuals and groups hold are less certain. The emergence of nation-states in the 18th

century, in part a response to capitalist development, has contributed to the maintenance of these boundaries and identities but it has also been responsible for diluting them. In particular, the nation-state has been instrumental in mediating between the local community, which is a reference point for most individuals, and the universalizing influence of post-capitalism. The limit of globalization is its inherent capacity to decontextualize social existence, the nation-state plays an important role in countering the rootlessness of such existence. However, labour migrations and capital flows have been responsible for a recent phenomenon that is described as transnationalization. This raises the question of whether groups and individuals, caught in the full tide of these transnational flows, will develop multiple identities and loyalties, and pose an alternative to the nation-state.

This essay has attempted to look at how three Southeast Asian societies, with different geopolitical histories and cultural traditions, have responded to the making of their own nation-states in the face of globalization and deculturalization. No attempt is made to document in any comprehensive manner these responses. Instead, we have sketched in broad terms how the processes of localization, regionalization, and globalization have operated in these societies.

Indonesia's preoccupation with the construction of a national culture is comprehensible in a situation in which ethnic traditions have been so deeply embedded in such diverse localities. Malaysia, more exposed to capitalist development and globalization, is concerned with how the Malay community, in contrast to the Chinese, will successfully adapt to economic change. The economic origins of Singapore, on the other hand, has forced this island state to come to terms early on with the free flow of capital and labour

which inevitably accompany the expansion of capitalism. In doing so, the Singapore government has been quick to respond innovatively to the issues which confront most modern states today - namely migration, citizenship, democracy, and the construction of national identity. In sum, the responses of these three Southeast Asian societies represent points on a continuum. Singapore, because of its geopolitical history and a predominantly migrant population, is able to absorb with relative ease the full effects of globalization. Malaysia is not far behind, but the ethnic constitution of the society reveals examples of localization, in which both modern and traditional elements are juxtaposed. Indonesia appears to be the most resistant to globalization, given the remoteness of many of its ethnic constituents and the depth of some of its cultural traditions. However Indonesian syncretism may well throw up a few surprises in the next decade, as it struggles to come to terms with economic change induced from the outside.

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