

Nationalism, Ethnicity and the Asia Pacific

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There is obvious tension between ethnicity and nationalism in nation-states that seek to modernize rapidly. Nation-building can, however, be assisted where the tensions are resolved by negotiation and consensus. The state would reflect the wishes of its dominant ethnic majority but, in seeking economic development, pushes the process forward gradually and behaves moderately. Countries in the past have succeeded in solving national problems of progress and prosperity in this way. But contradictory trends are to be found today. New nation-states are tempted towards unity while globalization encourages cross-border linkages that enhance ethnicity. The new Asia Pacific Economic Forum (APEC) represents at least four kinds of societies in which ethnic minorities project their various hopes for the future. Respect for history, especially the histories of these minorities, would help member countries to avoid making the mistakes that have destroyed communities elsewhere in the world.

THE FORTY STATES OR STATELETS OF THE ASIA PACIFIC HAVE HAD little in common in the past as any kind of grouping. Nevertheless, for the past decade or so, they have tried to imagine a region with which they could identify and create an organization of which they could usefully be members. Many of them genuinely want to find connections that, by bringing the states closer together, would make them richer, safer and more stable. State-building in the context of nationalism and multiple ethnicities highlights the many differences and few similarities these countries share. If they do effectively develop some kind of regional commonality, it will be an extraordinary one. The region would be one in which some of the world's old civilizations and ancient cultures have survived, as well as one in which postcolonial and other newly determined borders have delineated some of the world's newest nations. It is also where millions have immigrated and settled down over the centu-

ries, and where some of the new 'nations', 'cultures' and 'states' are struggling to deal with specific questions of ethnicity.

Nationalism in one form or another has become a force for change during the 20th century. The idea that various peoples think of themselves as nations, and that a nation could be the basis of both new and old states, has been an exhilarating one for at least two generations of Asian leaders. How to relate this notion of nation with the state and with nationalism is what makes the range of experiences in the 40 'nations' of the Asia Pacific region particularly varied. There is obviously no one definition of nationalism that fits all the countries. There are also many varieties of ethnic groups in each of them. Some groups form the majority peoples and control their own nation-states, others are not strong enough to form states of their own, while yet others, although small and relatively weak, nevertheless deeply resent being subordinate in any way to dominant majorities.

The nation-state is an object of loyalty that people are willing to die for.

The acceptance of the nation-state as an object of loyalty that people are willing to die for is one of the central facts in the world today. Whether there is a world order based on the balance of power, or a world yet to find a basis for a new order, strong doses of

nationalism provoke the defense of cultural and other differences within each state and these differences may spill over to neighboring states. It is not surprising that ethnicity, or as Walker Connor calls it, ethnonationalism, has grown in significance during recent decades (Connor 1987; Nichols & Singh 1996).

The relationship between nationalism and ethnicity was rooted in European history, but it is one which has become no less important for the diverse and huge region of the Pacific Rim. Given the differences there of history and geography, there is a need to focus on conditions that highlight the region's complexity. The three statements that follow are brief and familiar, but they have longer-term validity that are likely to survive the test of insecurity in the region, most notably the financial crisis in parts of East and Southeast Asia. They are as follows:

Firstly, nationalism tends to be a powerful force for homogeneity. Ethnicity can survive, but only through internal negotiation and consensus

or, if necessary, by confronting the possibility of civil war, and by being prepared to invite external intervention.

Secondly, the state serves the dominant group that seeks to define the nation but, depending on what the power relations are within the state, could also be used to protect the minority societies and cultures within its jurisdiction that refuse to die out.

Thirdly, there are two faces of ethnicity peculiar to this region. They are the multi-ethnic model of the United States and the so-called 'Overseas Chinese' networks. They offer challenges to more conventional ideas about nation-states and deserve special attention.

With these statements in the background, will the possible development of a new regionalism in the Asia Pacific modify or aggravate the various forms of nationalism found among its members?

IMPORTANCE OF ETHNICITY

It is not necessary to canvas the range and variety of the innumerable efforts to define ethnicity and distinguish it from ideas of nationality and race (Glazer & Moynihan 1975; Smith 1986; Brass 1980, 1985). At the same time, differences in time and space matter enormously, and never more so than in a region consisting of so many countries with such varied historical experiences. In order to place ethnicity in the context of nationalist homogeneity, we need to ask how long ago state formation had begun; how long and how many ethnic groups have lived together under one or more governments and cultures; how Us and Them ideas were managed across borders; also the size of the dominant and subordinate groups and whether they spread over large areas or were confined to small spaces. In choosing a comparative approach toward ethnicity problems to bring out what each country considers important (Kunstadter 1967; LeBar et al. 1964; Howard 1989; Harrell 1995; Thernstrom 1980; Jupp 1984; and for European comparisons, Tilly 1975), the classifications that follow will highlight features peculiar to the region and aspects of sub-regional relationships.

To place ethnicity in the context of nationalist homogeneity, we need to ask how Us and Them ideas were managed across borders.

In most languages, it is difficult to distinguish between what is national and what is ethnic (Tan 1988), for example, *minzu* and *zhongzu* (in Chinese and some East Asian languages); and *bangsa* and *suku* (in Bahasa Indonesia and Malaysia). It has taken several decades to recognize the usefulness of defining such terms accurately and consistently. And there are still problems of applying definitions derived from European and American conditions to various parts of Asia where the cultural assumptions are different. Here, only a broad distinction will be made. Nation refers to dominant groups who have their own political nationalism and control what is internationally recognized as a nation-state. The word ethnicity shall be confined to describing distinctive cultural minorities who demand their respective places within each state. In addition, terms like 'societies' and 'types of societies' will refer here to groups of countries that have cultural and historical features in common beyond official boundaries. These societies are distinguished from 'states', from countries with central governments that can determine developments within their borders.

As for nationalism in the region, this is a modern phenomenon. It has largely been a response to imperialism and colonialism and has borrowed its essential features from the West as an appropriate defense against western expansion (Emerson 1960). As in Europe and in the colonial states which Europeans had established, nationalism preceded and helped to create nation-states. But, in some cases, it has also been the product of the nation-building pressures of newly established states, having been aroused and inspired after borders have been drawn or redrawn. Nationalism is still being digested in many parts of the world but, with a few exceptions, the borders of most new nation-states have been surprisingly stable. For this, the much maligned United Nations deserves some credit. If nothing else, the fact that it functions with vested interest in the supremacy of nation-states has helped the region to confirm its postcolonial borders (Boutros Boutros-Ghali 1995).

Given that background, four major types of societies in our region can be distinguished by their positions concerning ethnic minorities. If each of them could be represented by a parallel type of state that reflected the social and cultural mix of the respective societies, comparisons between them would have been easier. But there are at the same time at least two distinct

kinds of states and there is a considerable mismatch with the four societies identified here.

The four kinds of societies are, not surprisingly, products of vastly disparate historical developments and are spatially quite separate. These are: (a) the closed societies of East Asia; (b) the more open ones of Southeast Asia; (c) the island societies of the Pacific, and; (d) the modern migrant states of the Eastern and Southern Pacific Rim.

The first, those in Northeast Asia, include China, Japan and Korea. They are closed societies which can be said to have evolved incipient or proto-nationalism. They were closed despite the ready acceptance by all of them of a religion that could be called universalist — Buddhism. Interestingly, they remained relatively closed during this century, whether they adopted an aggressive nationalist ideology (as with Japan), or a revolutionary and internationalist one (as with China). The revolutionary slogans of China did modify the extreme forms of nationalist rhetoric. But eventually, socialist ideals failed to overcome their deep-rooted history as Neo-Confucian or partly Confucian societies, the tenets of which formed the moral foundations for disciplined and closed development (Hoston 1994).

The Han majority in China use the word *minzu*, first used by the Japanese, to translate the European idea of nation, to delineate nationhood and nationalism, not only for the Han people on the mainland, but also for those in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. But the same two characters are also used in *shaoshu minzu*, that is, ethnic minorities. The Koreans (Chosen in the north and Hankuk in the south); together with the Japanese, also use the term in similar ways. But there the similarities end. China was a continental empire that defined itself in civilizational terms. It has not only been historically multi-ethnic, but multi-ethnic on a grand scale. Its premodern proto-nationalism has been largely among the Han majority and not shared by ethnic Tibetans, Turks and Mongols, peoples who roamed over extensive areas through the centuries and still occupy them. Nor was the proto-national sense of identity shared by the scores of minority tribal kingdoms scattered throughout the former

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empire (Chiao & Tapp 1989). China is the one country that has known ethnicity in all its forms far longer than it has experienced the pangs of nationalism. It is not an accident that the People's Republic adopted the Stalinist definition of 'nationality' to describe the fifty-five minorities within the country's borders (Dreyer 1976; Mackerras 1994). Unfortunately, this has caused confusion in usage. Thus, despite the vast differences in size of population and territory covered, it would be more accurate, and consistent with experiences elsewhere, not to refer to them as 'nationalities' but to speak only of ethnic minorities.

The Chinese situation concerning minorities is in sharp contrast to those of Korea and Japan. In Korea, there had been historical differences between the Silla, Paekche and the Koguryo peoples which might have once been ethnic or sub-ethnic, but both the present Korean states are primarily homogeneous and consist of those people who had successfully defended themselves against various kinds of Chinese, Mongols, Manchus and Japanese over the past 2,000 years. They do not now include the ethnic Korean minorities north of the Yalu river who are Chinese citizens, nor the small minorities now settled in Japan and the United States. The division into two Koreas since 1945 has been purely political and ideological, and there is certainly no ethnic issue that divides their peoples.

Japan is almost as homogeneous as Korea, with the Ainu minority largely assimilated as well as small numbers of Koreans and Chinese over the centuries. In modern times, the Korean minority is large enough to be significant, but it does not pose a problem to Japan's nationalism. Indeed, the Japanese experience of militant nationalism was uniquely free from internal ethnic problems and therefore all the more feared by its neighbors.

Vietnam has some of the above characteristics largely because it was so deeply influenced by Chinese civilization and especially by the centuries of defense against the Ming and Qing empires. It is the classic case of a country caught between its modern and premodern history. Its people could have become a permanent part of the Chinese empire, as did first the tribal kingdoms or chiefdoms of Guangxi and Guangdong, and later also those of Yunnan and Guizhou, but Vietnam

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freed itself and developed both a proto-nationalist and imperial consciousness toward its own minorities rather like the way China did (FitzGerald 1972). The French invasions of the 19th century took its three component parts (Tongking, Annam and Cochin-china) out of the Chinese orbit and gave it a chance to belong to the new region of Southeast Asia. It is not certain whether, by joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), Vietnam will now move away from its closed past to a possibly more open future among nations that had not lived directly under the Chinese shadow.

The second group are the more open societies largely in Southeast Asia. These societies are loosely structured (Steinberg 1987). They are relatively open, certainly more open than those of the first group. Those like Thailand, Laos and Myanmar had ethnic minorities from the start, but they resolved to build their nations within the borders drawn by, or with the agreement of, China and the imperial powers of France and Britain. Of particular interest are the peoples related to the Thais who form the Lao majority in their own state of Laos, the Shan minorities in Myanmar, and the Tai and Zhuang minorities in China. They will test to the utmost the traditional borderless openness against the narrowing interests of the modern nation-states that Thailand, Myanmar and Laos have now become (Wijeyewardene 1990; Keyes 1989).

Historic Cambodia was a special case. As the remains of an ancient empire, it had been the target of Thai and Vietnamese expansion for centuries. With the help of the French, it survived and accepted its reduced national identity with relief. It once had a large Chinese minority, but today the significant ethnic minority consists of the settlers from Vietnam. They are more likely now to pose a problem of management rather than one that threatens the country's national integrity (Chandler 1983).

Thailand is more open than the others on the mainland of Southeast Asia, partly because it stretches south down the peninsula, and links up with the variety of Malay peoples who have developed their commonality through open trade, migration and settlement among the thousands of islands of the archipelago. The societies that these people evolved had become distinctive in the framework of an exceptional 'freedom of the seas'. Through their maritime empires, they laid the foundations for a dispersed Malay identity (Wolters 1982; Hall 1984). But new national groupings

emerged after the interventions of imperial Spain, Netherlands and Britain, namely, five of the nations of the Asean region: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Brunei. Most extraordinarily, but reflecting the underlying openness of these societies, Singapore has a majority of people (of Chinese and Indian descent) who originate from outside the region altogether (Chew 1987). In each of these societies, ethnicity is clearly of great importance, especially in the countries which still have to consolidate their positions as nation-states (Nagata 1979; Anderson 1983).

The third group takes us beyond Southeast Asia into the Pacific Ocean. The Polynesians and Micronesians have been subject to more outside influences than the Melanesians, but their societies are narrowly structured in comparison with those of the Malay archipelago. Most of them are still struggling to make their island micro-states viable and manageable, and find it difficult to avoid a high degree of dependency on developed neighbors like the United States, Australia and New Zealand (Howard 1989). The largest state, Papua New Guinea, has the natural resources to become independent. Like Fiji, but unlike most of the other South Pacific states, it does have serious ethnic tensions. In Melanesia, even minor ethnic and sub-ethnic differences could arouse strong emotions. Few in this third group can claim to have the preconditions for a nation-state.

The fourth group of societies are really offshoots of western Europe and include some of the wealthiest and well-developed in the Pacific Rim. Their peoples brought the experience of nation-states with them and have little difficulty creating equivalent forms of the state in the region. Theirs are the migrant states produced by European expansion during the past five centuries, but they too can be divided into four modern sub-forms of the nation-state.

The first consists of Australia and New Zealand and they have some relationships in common. They are closely tied to the island nations of the South Pacific and share some of their ethnicity problems. Australia, being much closer to Southeast and East Asia, has a more complex 'Asianizing' challenge to face than New Zealand. It had uniquely bitter relations with its aboriginal peoples; it then developed more sophisticated ways of dealing with later migrants from various continents, especially those from the Pacific Rim; and it is deeply involved with the new nations of East and Southeast Asia to its north (Encel 1981). Thus, while its newfound national-

ism remains rooted in British values and loyalties, the nationalism is moderate and committed to a multiculturalism much influenced by the US model (Freeman & Jupp 1992).

The second sub-form is worth mentioning here but has as yet little direct influence on the region. It is found in Siberian Russia where the ethnic mix is quite different from any other part of the Pacific Rim (Jukes 1973; Stephan & Chichkanov 1986). In this case, the current sense of being a nation is still subsumed under a Russia that is too distant to have an impact beyond the immediate neighborhood of Japan, China and the two Koreas.

The remaining two are to be found on the Eastern shores of the Pacific. The Spanish conquistadors arrived earlier and spread northwards and southwards from the Caribbean to Mexico and Chile (Liss 1975; Lockhart 1968). But it was the English-speakers who built the strongest and most consciously multi-ethnic nation in the world today, the United States (Bailyn 1986). Together with Canadian provinces, its western states are perceived by some Asian Pacific nations as the ultimate model for modern economic and technological development. Their influence as examples, both positive and negative, of how to handle ethnicity in larger nation-states remains strong. No study of the East Asian region can afford to neglect that fact.

Although both the Spanish and English-speaking groups were expansions of European societies that displaced indigenous 'kingdoms' and tribal societies, they have been so successfully grafted to the new lands they had conquered that their societies are now fully formed nation-states. But they have not become either a single English-language or one Spanish-language state, nor have they used a common religion to forge a single state. The two that are English-language based are, although strong bearers of Christian cultures, essentially secular. The 11 Spanish-speaking states on the Eastern Pacific Rim are even better examples of something that would seem quite impossible in most of the Old World of Europe where the tendency to divide by language and religion is still strong (Lynch 1973).

**Will ethnic concerns dominate
the task of nation-building
if the new Asia Pacific region
should come into being?**

The different ways in which the concept of ethnicity is used in each of the four kinds of societies outlined above reflect many variables. They illustrate the nature and history of the cultures that dominate the new nation. They point to different stages of political development and modernization, and the varying influence of western social sciences and legal doctrines. They are influenced by the economic roles and functions of each ethnic group within the country or territory. The question is, to what extent will these ethnic concerns dominate the task of nation-building and nation-maintenance if the new Asia Pacific region should come into being? Will the efforts at regionalism help or obstruct the long-term evolution of the national identities of each of the new nation-states? Will they exacerbate or temper the excesses of nationalism, especially that of the enthusiastic political leaders who expect to develop perfect nation-states in their lifetime?

POWER OF THE STATE

THE four types of societies found among the 40 states in the region emerged out of different political backgrounds but reflect the social and cultural mix of their populations. They were the products of earlier empires, kingdoms, tribes and tribal federations. Their peoples related themselves to their rulers as feudal lords, subjects and slaves, even as tribute-bearing guests. These traditional relationships were fluid; their religions overlapped; most political borders were temporary and movable; and, wherever possible, peoples were captured or conquered while some subjects changed their allegiances by 'voting' with their feet.

Modern states are rarely passive where the ethnic variety of their populations is concerned. Most states can exercise predominant power to determine and shape the kind of society they want to have. In the region, there is a mismatch because there are only two kinds of states for four types of societies where ethnic minorities are concerned. Their main characteristics derive from the way they answer major questions about ethnicity, notably, how indigenous ethnic groups who have long lived within their borders are to be treated, and how new ethnic formations — either establishing themselves because of in-migration or because of the assertion of ethnic identity by hitherto sub-ethnic groups — are to be dealt with. The two kinds of state are thus distinguishable as follows: the historical state, which sees its minorities as rooted in time and whose problems are largely

managerial; and the postcolonial state, where the immediate task is nation-building and minorities have eventually to be integrated.

The Historical State. The historical state is normally one with a background of imperial claims over several ethnic groups. These are divided into firstly, those which have given legal recognition to ethnic minorities and allowed political representation for their organizations, and secondly, those which do not seem to need to do so.

For example, the former would include the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand. These have always had minority peoples within their historic borders, and have accepted that their modern polities have to allow for their legitimate positions within their respective states. The Chinese use of 'nationalities' to legitimize ethnic differences may not be regarded as scientific by anthropologists, but the political significance of the term lies in the way it affirms the ethnicity inherited from historical relationships between the Han people and their neighbors. Vietnam has treated its minorities in a similar way, only the scale is different (Van 1993). It does not have the kind of ethnic territories like Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Guangxi and Yunnan that China has, each of which is larger than, or as large as, the whole of Vietnam. Two other states built on historic kingdoms, like Myanmar and Thailand, resisted legal definitions that they believed would encourage separatism. But they, too, have now recognized the rights of such minorities within their borders (LeBar et al. 1964; Wijeyewardene 1990).

The latter kind of historical state includes Japan and North and South Korea. For them, ethnic minorities have not been significant for centuries and are not likely to be so in the future. The Japanese nation-state has already proved its potency (Storry 1979). If the Koreans achieve unity one day, the ingredients for another powerful nation-state rooted deeply in history are clearly there.

Two small historic kingdoms, Cambodia and Laos, may be placed in this group, though Laos does have a significant number of small ethnic minorities (Hsieh 1995). The two countries have survived so far, but they could have succumbed to expanding empires nearby and their peoples could have become the ethnic minorities of larger modern states had events in the 19th century taken a different turn. They are reminders that even his-

torical states without any large minority group within their borders may have to depend on favorable circumstances to secure its territorial integrity and ultimately rise to future nationhood.

The Postcolonial State. The second group of states are the new nation-states, which have been given shape and form by colonial and anticolonial experiences. They can be further divided into two: the largely indigenous nation-states created after the post-World War II series of decolonizations, and those created earlier out of European settler colonies.

Of the former, the more recent are the states of Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. There are at least three varieties of these: the large multi-ethnic if not multi-national countries; the smaller ones with complex ethnic problems; and the relatively homogeneous states with negligible ethnic differences among their populations.

The best and largest example of the first is obviously Indonesia (Anderson 1983). With borders drawn up by Dutch political and economic interests, it has survived several attempts to disaggregate its territories and, as a political entity, it is one of the most remarkable success stories in the postwar world. Within one generation, the idea of an Indonesian nation (fol-

lowing Benedict Anderson) had almost become a national community that most people in the country could imagine. There are indeed areas that do not readily see themselves as Indonesian and some still believe that the nation-state is far from secure. Only time will tell if that shows nothing more than a lack of faith in the profound

nation-building process that President Sukarno and his colleagues had started.

Smaller but belonging to a similar multi-ethnic category would be Malaysia and the Philippines. They are both aggregations of indigenous kingdoms and tribal groups that have been brought together by external powers and have, after independence, found enough in common so far to serve as the basic units of new nations. They both have immigrant minorities, but the proportions are very different. Being almost half the population of Malaysia, immigrants have posed serious problems of form and

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nature to the nation-building process (Nagata 1979). In the Philippines, the dominance of the Catholic Church and centuries of intermarriage between migrants and the indigenous peoples have reduced the threats to national integration. The challenge of local ethnicity in the form of Muslim secessionists in the south, however, has proved to be a more serious problem than Marxist-Maoist revolutionaries (Steinberg 1994).

A second variant of the postcolonial nation-state consists of smaller states which have populations with strong ethnic identities. Singapore and Fiji are obvious examples. But we should include Papua New Guinea here because, although large in territorial extent, its population is not much greater than that of Singapore. (The French colonies of Tahiti and New Caledonia, would potentially belong to this group if and when the French allow them their independence.)

The question of ethnicity in the three independent countries, however, has created totally different issues for the respective nation-states. Singapore represents one extreme, where the immigrants form the majority and seek a new kind of nationality for everyone within the country (Benjamin 1976; Chan & Evers 1978). Fiji, on the other hand, has faced problems arising from a finely balanced political polarization along ethnic lines. The leaders of the indigenous population had to resort to military force in order to prevent their politicians of migrant origins from coming to power (Lal 1986). As for Papua New Guinea, it lies at the other extreme of not having a dominant ethnic or sub-ethnic group. Thus the state machinery is open to control by unpredictable and uncertain permutations of multi-ethnic interests (Premdas & Pokawin 1980).

The third variation consists of states which are relatively homogeneous, where ethnic minorities are insignificant or where indigenous control of the state is unlikely ever to be challenged by immigrants. They are Brunei, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga and Western Samoa. Their problems of survival as states would have little to do with ethnic issues.

The latter group of postcolonial nation-states, in contrast, are all well-established within stable borders. These were formed out of European settler colonies which, after independence, opened themselves to large-scale immigration. The two models that have had, and still have, the greatest influence on how states which are multi-ethnic in nature might be redefined as neo-national are the English-language states of the United States,

Canada, Australia and New Zealand and the Spanish-language states of Latin America, perhaps best represented on the Pacific Rim by Mexico and Peru. The latter have sunk particularly deep roots in the new continent by minimizing their ethnic questions through having a single dominant language and religion. There remain ethnic tensions arising from indigenous reactions against those of European stock, but the issues are more conventionally political and economic, focused sharply on class and ideology (Keen & Wasserman 1980; Meyer & Sherman 1987). For the region, however, their experiences have little that others would easily learn from.

In sharp contrast, the English-language migrant states have expanded the concept of the nation-state much further than anyone expected in the 19th century. Here the defining event was the independence of the American colonies. The ideals of the Enlightenment carried to the New World and reinterpreted through the large influx of migrants and slaves made the First New Nation (Lipset 1964). For more than a century, a great faith in the 'melting pot' syndrome fed the hope that the state would be founded on a new nation created out of peoples of varied origins. The realization that the 'melting pot' did not eliminate ethnicity and, in any case, did not meet the highest principles set out in the US Constitution came slowly (Glazer & Moynihan 1963). But when it came, no one could stop its inexorable progress toward the most revolutionary kind of nation-state ever conceived. Directly or indirectly, it helped other anticolonial peoples find their place in the new world of nation-states. The US example set new standards of ethnic consciousness for the world. For better or for worse, it offers itself as a model

of the future multi-ethnic state formed out of building blocks of the many ethnic groups that have sought their fortunes there.

The nations and states of the region bring out the common theme that nationalism tends towards a quest for homogeneity. The forces of ethnicity are obviously a threat to that homogeneity, and that is generally unacceptable to strong majorities.

If the nation-state in its common form today continues to develop, the dominant peoples will be tempted to use the state to eliminate differences by force, if necessary by civil war. This

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in turn could persuade the ethnic minorities to defend themselves with external help. Unless a state is imbued with ideals of legal process and minority rights, unless it seeks to resolve differences by negotiation and consensus, it will subordinate the finer points of effective government to the vagaries of a powerful but unpredictable nationalism.

TWO FACES OF ETHNICITY

THERE are two major challenges to the common narrowly defined nation-states today. They are the highly refined US model of multi-ethnicity, and the currently overdrawn picture of 'Overseas Chinese' networks.

The US Model. A brief history of the US experience with immigrant ethnicity has already been outlined. The worldwide impact of that experience, however, is yet to be fully appreciated, especially on the western side of the Pacific. It had begun a generation ago when anticolonial nationalists learned to admire the American war of independence. They studied how a people overthrew their colonial masters or 'imperialists', and gained their freedom. American support for anticolonial movements on the one hand, and for anticommunism during the Cold War period on the other, had persuaded many national leaders to depend on US investment aid and technical training. But when it came to the nation-building process, the model was less clear. The optimistic view current at the time was that, whatever the multi-ethnic difficulties, the 'melting pot' approach would ensure eventual nationhood as *negara bangsa*, or versions of the idea of *minguo*, both translating the idea of a nation-state (Tan 1988). Many still hold to this belief.

Others, however, were skeptical that policies devised to deal with migrant ethnicities could apply to the mix of essentially localized and territorial ethnicities in most of the new nations in Asia. Yet others were more impatient and hard-headed. They observed that the 'melting pot', even if it was relevant, took too long. There were European models which defined nations more simply and quickly, either with the examples of the national upsurge of Germany and Italy or with the redefining of national borders on linguistic and religious lines in Central and Eastern Europe. Recent events in the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, suggest that the older European nation-state examples are seriously flawed

and, if chosen as models, would encourage secessionism and would be dangerously destabilizing.

But the American ideal itself lost some of its appeal for nationalists when the 'melting pot' for migrant ethnicities could not handle Black Power and other ethnic conflicts within the US itself (Sowell 1983). US policymakers and scholars had been forced to reexamine their assumptions. There followed more than 30 years of research on ethnicity which has given the world many new concepts about where ethnicity fits into national unity. Various features of civil rights and multiculturalism have emerged to replace the earlier hope for a permanently sacred and undivided nation which nationalists had hoped to create. As a result, the US stands for much more than the righteous ideology of human rights and democracy. It is the prime example of a mature but modern nation-state coming to terms with its multi-ethnicity and some very demanding aspects of national multiculturalism.

How will other countries around the Pacific Rim see this? Already we have heard Japanese leaders comment on the weakening of the US because it lacks the quality of a homogeneous nation, even because it seems to favor forms of miscegenation. Other countries in the region, however, recognize it for what it is, the first great migrant state. Many of their peoples have joined the throngs of immigrants seeking to benefit from the nation that accommodates their varied hopes for ethnic and cultural maintenance.

At the same time, there is a genuine bafflement about how to respond to the radical model that appears to threaten nationalist aspirations for homogeneity. The fact is, the US is a superpower and superpowers, like em-

pires, are what they are — large and strong — by being expansive, inclusive and multi-ethnic. No narrow nationalism has ever succeeded in producing great empires. The difference, however, between a traditional empire and a modern superpower lies in that the superpower seeks to be a nation-state as well, that is, a self-declared multi-

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ethnic nation-state. Can the US as the sole superpower sustain this? It is probably still too early to tell. We have only had one other superpower, the Soviet Union. That may have collapsed because of the ideological dogma-

tism of its communism, but some would say that it disintegrated because of the weight of its multi-ethnicity (Conquest 1986; Rezun 1992). Whether an open capitalist economy like the US can provide an answer to longer-term ethnic problems of other nation-states or not is difficult to predict.

All on the Pacific Rim would admit that the US as a superpower is crucial to the region. They welcome its active involvement and may even acknowledge the idealism that inspires most of its nationals. But how relevant is the multi-ethnic model for the other members? Does it represent a higher civilization that the world would aspire to eventually? Or is it ultimately too fragile an ideal, an impossible goal for smaller new nation-states, or so unique that it is not applicable to most of the multi-ethnic states that have been produced at different stages, and by different forces, of history?

It is obvious that the sole superpower faces many dilemmas, one of which is whether it should project its multi-ethnic ideals actively abroad or whether it should conserve and defend its own values and leave it to other nations to pick and choose which parts might suit their own developments. Given the variety of ethnic mixes and methods of management of ethnic tensions in the region, it is far from clear that the US model will be embraced by many countries. Nevertheless, the continued US presence in Asia will ensure that the new nations will scrutinize the US experience with concern. The US model is likely to remain strikingly different. The multi-ethnic experiments it conducts could warn others about what not to do, or it could have a moderating effect on the kinds of extreme nationalism that some nation-building efforts might generate.

The Chinese Diaspora. The second challenge to the region is posed by the ubiquitous Chinese overseas. Concentrated largely in Southeast Asia, they have also had an impact on the development of North America and Oceania (Chen 1980; Wickberg 1982). They have received media and scholarly attention of late as the entrepreneurs who have speeded up the economic development of the People's Republic of China. Much of this credit is misdirected, because the bulk of the investments that have made a difference to China have come really from Hong Kong and Taiwan. The Chinese of these two territories, what might be called the two other legs of 'Greater China' (the third being the mainland of South China), are decidedly not part of the diaspora of ethnic minorities (Wang 1993).

The Chinese diaspora, of course, has had a disproportionate influence on the economies of Southeast Asia (Mackie 1988). This is an important fact, but perhaps more central to our subject today is the Chinese contribution to the ethnic mixes of the region and what their presence does to nationalism and the nation-state. The Chinese had first come as merchants, then as coolies and more recently as entrepreneurs and professionals. Over the centuries, they have learned to live outside China with kings and courtiers, tribal chieftains, business competitors, colonial officials, western and Japanese capitalists, and anticolonial if not antforeign nationalists (Purcell 1980; Wang 1959). They have known how to work and live with other ethnic groups before the arrival of the nation-state.

In a way totally different from the US model, these migrants form significant minorities in various indigenous states. They have settled down and become future nationals of these new states. This contrasts with the situation in North America and Australasia where most of the Chinese are still recent migrants seeking to compete with earlier migrants. In Southeast Asia, their long presence and positive contributions to the various national economies, and the way they have confounded those who had expected them to be a fifth column for China, provides support for the viability of the new states of the region.

The response to local nationalism in Southeast Asia has depended on the legal and economic position the Chinese were placed in. Where there are opportunities for upward social mobility, the tendency is for them to divide into at least three broad groups: the increasingly larger numbers who identify fulsomely with the new state; those who prefer to focus their attention on their own acculturated ethnic community; and the few who remain committed to a Chinese cultural identity. These proportions, of course, vary from country to country. For example, in areas (whether districts, islands or countries) where there are small numbers of Chinese, those who still retain a Chinese identity after more than one or two generations are relatively few. Where the Chinese are numerous, they are more likely to develop their own distinct local characteristics, retaining essential features of their Chinese culture, but recognizably different from the people of Greater China (Wang 1991).

This response is different from that found among Chinese who had migrated to the larger migrant states. For most of this century, Chinese

emigrants to North America and Australasia included many who admired the economic and technological achievements of the West. Where they were not actively discriminated against, they were willing to let their children identify with, and even assimilate. Material success and education in western schools removed many of the old cultural barriers (Chen 1980). Today, the drawing power of the West still remains strong. The number of Chinese heading in that direction will continue to increase as long as China is poor and those countries would have them.

Nevertheless, Chinese ethnicity is complicated by the picture of a resurgent China on the one hand and the success of entrepreneurial capitalism on the other. It has certainly encouraged a revival of speculation about the role of ethnic Chinese on the Pacific Rim. The question is a multi-dimensional one. Globalization of the world economy and the opening of the PRC have changed the ground rules for ethnicity. Business networking among ethnic Chinese around the world has grown on a scale hitherto unknown. This has expanded the economic role of such Chinese and revived interest in their future position with regards to China.

In the Chinese diaspora, we find thus a composite picture of both a vigorous migrant ethnicity in new nations and a multi-faceted response to external opportunity. In both ways, it could be a multiple boost to the vision of regionalism in the Asia Pacific, or a source of sufficient anxiety among proponents of nation-states to dilute that vision. It certainly is a good example of how recent Pacific Rim developments have brought questions of ethnicity and nationalism to a new level. The Chinese who have left an historic state are adapting to nation-states which are coming to grips with multi-ethnicity on a regional, if not global, scale.

What can the regionalism being sought for the Asia Pacific do for the new kinds of nationalism? The two challenges posed by complex issues of ethnicity outlined above point to some answers.

With the US postcolonial migrant state model, we can have a nationalism that approaches the question institutionally and ideologically. On the institutional side, the nationalism is built upon an advanced civil society and an open legal and political system. The system explicitly guarantees

Globalization of the world economy and the opening up of China have changed the ground rules for ethnicity.

civil rights and consciously protects minorities. In addition, the US has an ideology that draws its inspiration from science, humanism and liberal interpretations of the Christian faith. By this I mean all policy assumptions cannot depart far from these basic tenets. Beyond that, there is also the confident belief in the creative features of capitalism, in technological innovation, in leading the information revolution, and in the nation's ability to provide a consistent behavioral example to the world. The values produced thus through trial, error, negotiation and consensus are regarded as binding and worthy of great national sacrifices.

The fate of Chinese nationalism among the Chinese diaspora points to another direction. Here an ancient and powerful people accept that, away from home, they face choices which would either return them to Chinese nationalism or lead them to accept a new postcolonial nationalism dominated by others. Apart from practical considerations, the dictates of business, culture and politics have persuaded most of them to choose the latter. As migrants in Southeast Asian indigenous states, their part in nation-building is then determined as a matter of policy and primarily a managerial matter for the new governments. For such countries, a minimal institutional commitment to minority rights is necessary, but they will not need any ideological position that might be described as politically correct in the US model. It would be enough if the new nation-states are realistic and pragmatic about the global capitalist economy and the international politics of the region.

Three assertions were made at the beginning of this essay. The following can be added to them by way of a conclusion:

The nation-state is an appropriate goal for modernity and development. But, nationalism in such a variety of states would have to ease its quest for homogeneity if they want stability and economic growth. They would have to be content with gradual nation-building through cooperation and with a commitment to negotiation and consensus within — and perhaps to interdependence in — the region.

The state would serve its dominant ethnic majority but, given the pressures of rapid economic development and increasing regional networking by political and business leaders alike, it is likely to behave moderately and seek national evolution over longer periods of time. In some cases, the state may be a nation-state only in name.

Both examples of the US model and the Chinese diaspora reinforce the need for countries in the region to be expansive and generous in seeking national solutions to progress and prosperity and not press for immediate and narrowly defined goals.

Finally, the Asia Pacific Economic Forum does offer the region an opportunity to start afresh and avoid being dogged by old problems in new disguises. But the multiple types of states and numerous ethnic groups there suggest that we should not depend too much on projections of imagined futures. Everything about the region points to the need to cultivate a sense of history if we are to avoid making the mistakes that have destroyed communities elsewhere in the world.

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