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NATIONALISM AND REGIONALISM IN CENTRAL ASIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA (I)

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НАЦИОНАЛИЗМ И РЕГИОНАЛИЗМ В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ И ЮГО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ АЗИИ (I часть)

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Nationalism and regionalism are the leading trends in today's global politics which constitute the core of the contemporary political agenda in different parts of the world. It is academically interesting and of practical use to explore the links between these two phenomena. This paper considers these linkages in two case studies: Southeast Asia and Central Asia. This research paper is a comparative exercise based on the fundamental assumption that the regions concerned have some similarities and differences which should be studied in order to make some academic generalizations and draw positive political and policy lessons. The research hypothesizes that some lessons can be learned by the Central Asian elite from a case study of Southeast Asia where nationalism and regionalism have been a mutually beneficial process and reinforcing force.

Национализм и регионализм являются основными трендами в глобальной политике и составляют суть современной политической повести в разных частях мира. Академически познавательным и практически значимым является изучение связи между этими двумя феноменами. В данной статье эти связи прослеживаются на примере двух регионов: Юго-Восточная Азия и Центральная Азия. Сравнительный анализ основывается на предположении, что эти регионы имеют некоторые схожие и отличные черты, которые следует изучить с целью академических обобщений и обмена опытом принятия и реализации политических решений. Гипотеза статьи в том, что политические элиты Центральной Азии могут научиться многому на примере Юго-Восточной Азии, где национализм и регионализм протекали во взаимно-поддерживающем русле и усиливали друг друга.

The paper first considers the nationalism and regionalism in Southeast Asia by identifying their juncture points. The second part of the paper portrays national and regional processes in Central Asia while identifying key factors which shape these processes. The final part of the paper presents some thoughts on what could be emulated in Central Asia based on the experiences of Southeast Asia and why this would be beneficial.

Definitions

The key concepts of the paper such as nationalism and regionalism have a western origin, and for Asia these are "imported" concepts. This is said not to engage into a debate on the West-centric nature of International Relations and the dominating discursive power of the West, but to note that this paper is an effort to contextualize the western ideas of nationalism and regionalism and their interplay with regard to these two Asian regions. It appears more relevant to reflect on the appropriateness of the nation-state as the main unit of world politics and the economy in the age of accelerating globalization and increasing transnational challenges. In addition, one should not disregard the fact that in most cases 'nation' and 'state' do not fully coincide in practice in the developing countries, and as a result such inconsistencies can trigger political and social discontent within these countries.

The concepts of 'nation' and 'state' are closely interlinked with another term - nationalism. As defined by Alonso "nationalism is partly an effect of the totalizing and homogenizing projects of state formation;" this definition directly links both state and nation formation processes.' The definition of 'nationalism' given by Anthony Smith brings one more important and complex component into the overall picture - identity. For Smith nationalism is "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential "nation."" It is known that one can attain and maintain two types of identity": civic and ethnic. The latter is an identity that appears by birth, while the former is to be attained and maintained by law. The formation of civic national identity is credited to the process of state formation, since the citizenship is the link between a state and its people. Thus, nationalism is understood as the principle that is applied to build a nation-state, while ethnic nationalism is "partly an effect of the particularizing projects of state formation ...with differential privileges and prerogatives within a political community."[1]

There is a variety of definitions of regionalism, and this variety is explained by the existence of the various types and forms of regionalism. In essence, regionalism means a "set of policies whereby state and non-state actors cooperate and coordinate strategies within a given region."™ Another important characteristic of regionalism is related to the great variety of regions which exist in the political and economic landscape. The important classification of regions is based on different levels. In general, scholars identify three levels of regionalism: "macro-regions are considered to be world regions or international regions. Below macro- regions are sub-regions, and their 'sub' prefix indicates that they can only make sense and must be understood in relation to macro-regions. Micro-regions exist between the 'national' and 'local' levels."ᵛ Thus, we can and should differentiate between regionalism, sub-regionalism and micro-regionalism. The first two cases of regionalism are studied by international relations scholars, while micro-regions are most often studied by scholars focusing on sub- national issues. However, the recent developments in the world have made such divisions less relevant, and the growing need for an interdisciplinary approach in understanding the complexities of all kinds of

regionalism is now evident. This need is directly linked with the dramatic changes at the global level where we observe the increasing role of non-state and transnational actors.

Central Asia is located in the heart of the Eurasian continent, and widely recognized as a region at the crossroads of civilizations (Western/Christian, Islamic, Chinese, etc.). Since 1993 Central Asia is defined as a group of five states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan." Previously, during the Soviet period, the region was called Middle Asia and Kazakhstan. From the historical and geographic viewpoints, the term "Central Asia" has been used in wider terms and includes the bordering territories of Southern Siberia, Mongolia, Tibet, Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan), Afghanistan, and the northern parts of Iran and India."[1] In its pre-independence history, Central Asia was a part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union and had undergone tremendous political, social and economic transformations. As a result, the current five post-Soviet states of Central Asia remain strongly dependent on the post-Soviet space.

The combination of the political and geographical definitions of Southeast Asia has resulted in a total of 11 states, 10 of which are member-states of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). The eleven states are Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and East Timor (the only non-member of ASEAN). Historically, Southeast Asia is closely linked to Northeast Asia and has been a part of the broader region of East Asia. Some'scholars, when it comes to analyzing regional cooperation in East Asia, differentiate between such areas as Northeast Asia (China, Japan, the Korean peninsula, Taiwan, Mongolia and the Russian Far East), Southeast Asia (the ten ASEAN member-states) and East Asia (ASEAN+3 and some other countries of Northeast Asia or Asia Pacific)."

The analysis below is based on the understanding that both Central Asia and Southeast Asia are cases of sub-regionalism. This implies that although they may have a certain degree of regional autonomy, they remain strongly linked and dependent on the politics and processes which take place in the broader region (including the post-Soviet space and East Asia correspondingly).

Nationalism and regionalism in Southeast Asia

There are two opposing views on the relationship between nationalism and regionalism. The first view is related to the European Union's integration or "pooling sovereignty"" which grants more authority to the supra-national bodies at the expense of "national sovereignty." The other view is that regionalism can be employed not to weaken but to strengthen national sovereignty. We refer to Southeast Asian regionalism as a good example of the latter. Some scholars directly state that "ASEAN...has been carefully constructed to create a shield of solidarity against anything and anyone who threatens the national interests and sovereignty of its members."" Both cases make perfect sense if viewed through the prism of their historical paths. European nation-states have been strengthened and consolidated

through centuries of war and peace. This is true at least according to the thesis developed by Dr. Charles Tilly when he argued that "war made the state, and the state made war."" By the end of World War II, the Western Europe nation-states as constitutive units and actors of regionalism were eager to construct an effective system of regional cooperation and integration. The case of Southeast Asia is blatantly different, since almost all the states of the region were colonies and did not have an extended period of independent development in the form of nation-states. Another great idea which can be borrowed from Tilly is his insight on the "coincidence of war making, state making and capital accumulation." The connection between a state's ability to have the only legitimate right for violence and duty to protect its people and the ability to accumulate capital is crucial for understanding the processes of nation-state building in the regional context of Southeast Asia.

In the early years of ASEAN - the 1960s and 1970s - most of the security threats and concerns were internal, and the nation-states of Southeast Asia were weak. "The newly independent member states were new political entities with 'weak' state structures" lacking a close congruence between ethnic groups and territorial boundaries and "an equally problematic lack of strong regime legitimacy."*" The power relations among the Southeast Asian states were also not easily understood. For example, the relations between Thailand and Cambodia, despite their many cultural links, were complicated because of "border disputes and various questions relating to the Gulf of Siam; the large number of Cambodian refugees who fled to Thailand after the fall of Phnom Pen; the difficulties of regularizing trade across a border where smuggling" was prevalent; "the occurrence of armed incidents in December 1975 and thereafter."""" In addition to the internal tensions among the regional states, the attitudes of the ASEAN members in the early years towards the outside powers varied a great deal.""

In the overall difficult context as portrayed above, the ability to create conditions for reaching a "comfort level" for a safe dialogue with each other was crucial. The leadership of the Southeast Asian states needed to reduce the possibility of intra-regional conflicts; and the principle of non-intervention into the internal affairs of each other envisioned in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia adopted in 1976 was a critical step in assuring such a "comfort level" for sub-regional confidence-building.™ The principle of non-interference served as a basis for the development of the so-called ASEAN way, "an informal and incremental approach to cooperation through lengthy consultation and dialogue."""

The second important component of ASEAN's success in strengthening the nation-states' development was the creation of a platform for a dialogue with any and all external powers. It was manifested in the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration adopted in Malaysia on 27 November 1971 where Southeast Asia announced their "Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers.""™ The second idea, stated in the

same Declaration, concerned the need to "make concerted efforts to broaden the areas of cooperation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship."™" Thus, the neutralist stance of the region coupled with the readiness to cooperate paved the way for attaining regional stability and for moving along the way of regional economic development.

These two regional arrangements allowed for focusing on greater economic cooperation. In addition, global economic changes and forces were also leading towards improved economic cooperation in Southeast Asia and East Asia in general. Global TNCs were looking for new markets and places for production and investment. At that, it has to be pointed out that economic cooperation was of secondary importance and that political-diplomatic cooperation was the primary dimension in Southeast Asia. Scholars usually mention two reasons for the resulting political intraregional rapprochement: 1) the end of the policy of *Konfrontasi* with the replacement of Sukarno by Suharto in Indonesia and 2) the anti-communist sentiments of the five ASEAN founding states.*'" It is necessary to stress the importance of the *political leadership factor*. The change of leaders in Indonesia, the perception of Communism as a common threat, the ability to understand that the region has a future only when and if there is a united stance among the regional states; all of this was detrimental to Southeast Asian nationalism and regionalism.

The ASEAN leaders understand that in order to preserve peace and political stability within their respective countries as well as in the region, they have had to talk to each other and had to make sure that internal rivalries would be held in check in the interest of the common good, and any disagreements could be solved. They understand that to develop young nation-states into strong states, it is essential to stay away from the subordination to any external forces. A real solution was found in 1967 with the creation of ASEAN although it happened after a number of unsuccessful attempts at regional institution-building such as SEATO (1954), ASA (1962) and MAPHILDO (1963). The leaders of the ASEAN states were interested personally in the success of ASEAN since as Amitav Acharya suggests, "ASEAN's primary concern has been with regime survival,"[1] and ASEAN continues to play a role in maintaining "strong authoritarian states."""" It shows that the motivation of the leaders is decisive in shaping the success or failure of regional cooperation initiatives especially within the realities of authoritarian states.

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[1] Amitav Acharya, "Southeast Asia's Democratic Movement," *Asian Survey,* Vol. 34, No. 3 (1999), pp. 418-432.
Johan Saravanamuttu, "Emergent Civil Society in ASEAN: Antinomies of Discourse and Practice," in Amitav Acharya, B. Michael Frolic and Richard Stubbs, eds. *Democracy, Human Rights, and Civil Society in South East Asia,* Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 2001, p. 93.

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