Globalization and National Unity: Southeast Asian Nation-States in a Globalizing Epoch

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Abstract: There is no doubt that we are in a time of intense globalization which is not a "win-win game" from which all ethnic groups can benefit equitably. According to hyper-globalists, the forces of globalization potentially diminish the capacity of national governance and have the capacity to increase ethnic conflicts. But how applicable are these claims to Southeast Asian nation-states? This paper looks at how the forces of globalization condition and generate inter-ethnic incompatibilities and in what ways the on-going secessionist activists in Southeast Asia have been exploiting the process to intensify and facilitate their anti-government movements. The major challenge for nation-states to maintain their vulnerable national unity is that modern ethno-national separatist movements have developed with evolving dynamics and changing targets, stressing principally "autonomy option" which they have consistently ruled out. Focusing on the emerging internationalization-oriented tactics pursued by separatist parties to ethnic conflicts, the paper sheds new light on a prevailing paradox: not only do the leading subnational groups want to secede, but even those who remain lagged behind also want to do so due mainly to a sense of discrimination or complex. Additionally, even if the mobilized ethnic minorities can be benefited from economic integration as much as they expect, this eventually brings about challenges to national unity as rising standards of living may lead to increased further expectations.

Keywords: Southeast Asia, globalization, national unity, nation-state, ethnic conflict

I. INTRODUCTION
        The relationship between national unity and globalization has generated a lively debate since the end of the Cold War, when the contemporary wave of globalization began to dominate worldwide. The intense process of today globalization has resulted in much contestation about the consequences of this process in nation-states. Some proponents like Scholte (2005), Kacowicz (1998), and Axline (1996) argue that national unity can be strengthened through globalization. They further contend that increased transworld relations and non-territorialism have intensified the interpenetration of languages, customs and other "purported hallmarks of 'unique' national character" (Scholte 2005). In addition, neo-liberal globalization coupled with advanced communications has contributed to narrowing the huge development gap between subnational groups within a nation-sate. This is because economic integration, followed by the process of industrialization, will bring more possible opportunities to obtain wealth locally, foster social equality, increasingly improve the rights of subnational groups in developing countries, hereby, inter-ethnic tensions are more inclined to decompress.
        The problem, however, is that neo-liberal globalization is not a "win-win game" from which all ethnic groups benefit equitably. Instead, it is a severe competition between subnational groups within a country and beyond over interests in every sphere of human society, from the economic to cultural. According to Weiss (2000), Ohmae (1995) and other hyper-globalists, neo-liberal globalization is bringing about the demise of the sovereign nation-state since it potentially undermines the ability of governments to control their respective economies and societies. Furthermore, some agree that globalization has weakened the states economically and culturally. Indeed, the persistence or resurgence of ethnic conflicts is known as a response to the transnational or supranational logic of economic globalization. In relation to cultural identity, violence or secession is "the only method to preserve traditions and values" against the interpenetration and assimilation from outside. More importantly, globalization does not guarantee that ethnic groups' interests will be realized as they are expecting. In that case, they are more likely to turn to extreme political views and action against the central government that denies them the opportunity to realize their ambitions (Brown et al. 2001; Baylis et al. 2004).
        From this respect, in view of controversial consequences of globalization and nation-states' ethnic solidarity, several questions are due: to what extent do the forces of globalization condition secessionism and challenge national unity in nation-states? In what ways have ethnic movements used neo-liberalist tendency to

intensify their claims and facilitate their activities against the central government? And to what extent does the greater integration into supranational organizations further intensify inter-ethnic frictions in nation-states?

This paper aims to firstly examine the consequences of neo-liberal globalization – the outstanding impacts that potentially undermine a nation-state's unity. It also looks at how ethno-nationalist activists have fully exploited the process to facilitate and strengthen their anti-governmental movement, hereby, the paper contributes to facilitating awareness of the emerging issues and take appropriate action to minimize the challenges posed by globalization in order to maintain national unity and inter-ethnic solidarity. Besides, the study further aims to contribute data to assist tomorrow research work relevant to globalization and national unity. In the following sections, it firstly presents an understanding of globalization and its major critiques, followed by an overview of secession and its application to nation-states. The paper concludes with a critical assessment of the relationship between globalization, particularly neo-liberalism, and national unity.

II. GLOBALIZATION: CONCEPT AND CRITIQUES
2.1 Overview of Globalization
Globalization is variously defined in the literature. Skeptics do not regard this as evidence of *globalization* if that term means something more than simply international interdependence, or *internationalization*, i.e. linkages between countries. Some analysts, like Hirst and Thompson (1996), are less discriminating and simply regard the words "global" and "international" as synonyms to be used interchangeably. What, then, distinguishes the concept of *globalization* from notions of *internationalization* or interdependence? In other words, what is *globalization*?

Different scholars conceptualize globalization in different ways; however, according to Baylis et al (2004), Oman (1994) and Friedman (2005), globalization simply refers to the process of increasing interconnectedness between societies such that events in one part of the world quickly come to have significance for peoples and societies in other parts of today global world.

Globalization is not a novel phenomenon. Indeed, this phenomenon has occurred in three distinct waves. The first wave, known as the Age of Discovery and elongated from 1450s through 1850s, globalization was decisively shaped by European expansion and conquest. The second wave (1850-1945) evidenced a major expansion in the spread and entrenchment of European Empires. The contemporary globalization (1960 on) has been known as the third one, marking a new epoch in human affairs. Today globalization is the result of advances in communication, transportation, and information technologies (Baylis et al. 2004; Tabb 2008).

Over last a few decades, the sheer scale and scope of global interconnectedness has become increasingly evident, albeit to varying degrees, in all sectors of human social activity, including economic, military, legal, ecological, cultural, and social domains. Among them the extremely increased worldwide economic integration across the world's major economic regions and beyond within an emerging global market economy has notified that we are actually in a time of intense globalization. This global tendency is called "neo-liberal globalization" which is one of the four aspects of globalization (Baylis et al. 2004). Neo-liberal globalization is conceptualized as a process of forming a "*laisser-faire* world economy" which reduces the role of the state in the economy such as through the dismantling of trade tariffs and barriers, the deregulation and opening of the financial sector to foreign investors, and the privatization of state enterprises (Baylis et al. 2004; Scholte 2005; Friedman 2005). To be sure, large-scale globalization and widespread economic liberalization have concurrently transpired in the past quarter-century. Take agricultural sector as an example. Average tariff rates for non-agricultural products have fallen to record low levels. Moreover, this wave of neo-liberalism has often played a significant (albeit not necessary) facilitating role in respect of contemporary globalization. Consequently, globalization and liberalization may "become the same thing" (Scholte 2005). In this respect, this paper thus prefers to use these interchangeable terms of "globalization", "neo-liberal globalization", and "neo-liberalism" as synonyms.

2.2 Critiques
Negative impacts induced by the process of neo-liberal globalization as conditions for social fragmentation and inter-ethnic tensions have been emerging in recent times in nation-states. The following subsections appear to discuss several major critiques of the process.

2.2.1 *Cultural "bulldozing" and coca-colonization*
Getting involved in the neo-liberal globalizing world results in challenges to traditional culture in developing nation-states. According to Hardin (2004), industrializing economy requires "a national language and universal literacy." This means ethnic minorities have to bend their own culture into the national mound, which in turn may lead to make their traditional languages, religions, and customs, etc. become buried in oblivion rapidly. In addition, economic integration is bringing about "a cultural tsunami of Western products and materialism" in these economies (Baylis et al. 2004). Right after the Cold War, the growing presence of

Coca Cola advertisements, followed by McDonald, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and Pizza Hut can be seen worldwide, including communist countries. The Western cultural influence is out-breaking through the use of such products and advertising.

At the local level, ethnic minority groups in turn may seek to regain or preserve their own unique cultural identity against "Western secular, materialist values" and cultural homogeneity by which they perceive their civilization to be inferior, insecure, or stagnant. In this case conflict may be inevitable.

2.2.2   *Economic integration and social fragmentation*

The defense of culture or identity is not the only primary motivation for ethnic conflicts and secessionist movements. Many see economic aspects as the crucial motivating factor in the use of violence to effect political change (Baylis et al. 2004). Although neo-liberal globalization provides access to a world market for goods and services, it does not benefit all of individuals. Instead, not only does it create more opportunities for national economic growth, but also induces intolerable social pressures. The increased influence of the global North or "economic core", which dominates international economic institutions (i.e. World Bank), sets exchange rates, and determines fiscal policies, has provoked leaders of underdeveloped nation-states to make political decisions to deregulate or privatize industries to be competitive globally. In many cases, those decisions may lead to significant social and economic upheaval. If ethnic minorities perceive the state breaks its social contract with them, they may shift their loyalties to negative activities, such as secession or even terrorism (Weiss 2000; Baylis et al. 2004).

In addition, critics in what is often called "anti-neoliberalist globalization movement" contend that a laisser-faire world economy produces greater poverty, inequality, conflict, cultural destruction or "cultural bulldozing", ecological damage, and democratic deficits rather than a richer, more innovative and tolerant world per se (Weiss 2000; Friedman 2005). At the local level, as a result, increasing socio-economic inequality coupled with intensified gap between subnational groups fueled by neo-liberal globalization are more inclined to be a stimulus for social fragmentation.

These claims are quite applicable to what are taking place in some Southeast Asian nation-states such as Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia and Philippines indeed. Since the end of the Cold War, the wave of globalization have penetrated into these states and resulted in both an increase in economic efficiency which significantly contributes to reduce ethnic poverty, and rising demands on democracy and human rights among ethnic minorities. By the early 2000s, however, the region has also witnessed the resurgence of ethno-nationalist movements with evolving dynamics and changing targets. Particularly, many anti-government and non-government organizations have been established, taking full advantage of the outbreak of global social networks and mass media as well as of the swelling ethnic middle class in their respective countries whose expectations on economic benefits and political involvement increase more and more, in order to intensify their own anti-government activities and influences in the world politics.

Consequently, both political position and audience of these organizations have quickly increased as they become more and more well known. Some of them are also recognized by the Unrepresentative Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) as non-government organizations representing the "voiceless ethnic minorities" in nation-states. In addition, in some neo-liberalizing societies, anti-government organizations have rapidly shifted away from armed struggle movements as they were in the past towards using non-violent measures and the application of international laws, including organizing protests for liberal democracy, human rights, ethnic self-determination, etc. Such tactics strongly focus on the emerging inter-ethnic inequality resulted from economic integration and industrialization in developing countries in order to arouse ethnic hatred and stimulate ethno-nationalism against the leading ethnic groups.

The key dynamic of contemporary Southeast Asian secessionist movements seems to have been shifted. Take the Moro Muslims movement in Mindanao (Southern Philippines) and the Pattani Malay Muslims movement in the Deep South Thailand as examples. Initially, these movements were basically irredentist movements, seeking to claim to territory over where they call "fatherland". Since mid-2000, both the Moro and Pattani Muslims have begun to focus more on seeking to gain autonomy within these host states by calling for an autonomous local polity accompanied by administrative decentralization, greater grass-roots liberal democracy, human rights, and ethnic self-determination (Quang and Oishi 2015; Druce 2015). The recent troubled situation of ethnic conflict in the Deep South Thailand, for instance, reflect the fact that under the intensive pressure to compete with the leading subnational group, if expectations posed by ethnic movements are not accepted by the central government of host state, they may turn to violent conflicts as the "last" way to protect and realize what they want.

III. SECESSION AND ITS APPLICATION TO CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIA

Secession is derived from the Latin term "secession," referring to the act of withdrawing from the sovereign state and the establishment of a newly independent state beside the original state. According to Buchanan (2007), secession distinguishes itself from other ways in which "separation" or "state-breaking" can occur. In what might be called secession in the classic sense, a group in a portion of the territory of a state attempts to create a new state there; secessionists attempt to exit, leaving behind the original state in reduced form. Second, there is irredentist secession, wherein the attempt is not to create a new state, but to merge the seceding territory with a neighboring state that is historically implicated. This typically occurs when the majority in the seceding area is of the same ethno-national as that which is predominant in the neighboring state (Pavkovic 2003; Buchanan 2007).

Recent years have witnessed many violent conflicts in South and Southeast Asia which have posed enormous challenges to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states in which they are located. Several types of ethnic conflict and secession in decolonized countries can be identified, including "ethno-nationalist" (e.g. Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea) and "communal" (the Philippines, Thailand, Myanmar, Pakistan, etc.). Many cases of ethnic incompatibility in Southeast Asia, e.g. Pattani Malay Muslims (Thailand), Moro Muslims (Philippines), Maluku and West Papua Insurgencies (Indonesia), etc., may be categorized to as the irredentist secession with ethno-nationalist in nature.

Causes and dynamics of ethnic tensions which lead to secession vary from country to country, including weak states, political, economic, cultural, and religious contradictions. However, some agree that "ancient hatreds" – the feelings of hostility of one ethnic group towards another one based on past historical experience, are the root cause for many cases of ethnic conflicts (Brown 1996). Though the past can never be fully constructed as it really was, it can strongly influence the perception of the present. Indeed, memories with missing convincing data or narratives full with myths or exaggerations are commonly used by inferior groups to glorify their own past and traditional identity. The result is that when they feel both resentment and fear at the same time, they will probably mobilize to "protect" themselves. Political elites usually take advantage of such unverifiable memories to propaganda and attract supporters to their sides as well as to demonize their "enemy" group(s). This explains why the historical hatreds are turned over again and again in many ethnic conflicts. Again, the case of recent inter-ethnic resentment in Southern Thailand appears to be a prime example for ethnic contradiction emanated from historical hatreds (Quang and Oishi 2015).

Nevertheless, in today's epoch of global economic integration, historical animus is no longer a dominant source that causes ethnic tensions. Instead, the economic inequality between subnational groups is believed to become more and more important in ethnic claims of autonomy or secession. Indeed, historical grievances are now only used in order to arouse inter-ethnic hatreds and incite ultra-subnationalism while economic disparity is main reason behind causing a separatist movement. Examples for this include the Free Aceh Movement (Indonesia) and the 2014 Venetian Independence Referendum Movement (Italy). Both the Acehnese and Venetian residents assist that their territory will be "top-rich state" if they successfully secede from Indonesia and Italy respectively. The core reason causing the Acehnese people's strain toward the recognition of their identity and autonomy is because they control an area of Aceh province that is very rich in natural resources (oil and gas), while in Venice City – the richest city in North Italy, the Veneto residents no longer want to send their "hard-won tax revenues" southwards to the rest of Italy because they hold that they have been squandered so much for sharing financial burden with the Rome government and other lower developed areas in the country (Roberts 2014; Squires 2014).

The stories of Aceh and Venice virtually reveal that under the process of neo-liberal globalization, economic interest of particular community is always given top priority. Thus, the more intensive globalization is, the more severe inter-ethnic clash of economic interests become. Accordingly, it is worth observing that together with historical grievances, inter-ethnic economic inequality is an emerging root causing modern ethnic tensions. Not only do leading subnational groups want to secede, but even underdeveloped groups also want to do so. This is because the inter-ethnic development gap resulted from economic disparity often generates a sense of discrimination as well as of a complex of inferior ethnic minorities about their situation. Weaker subnational groups, as a result, will be more likely to turn to extreme ethno-nationalist views and violent action against other superior groups as the only way to protect their own interests and ethno-national pride as well. In some Southeast Asian societies, ethnic minorities who find difficult to catch up with the established groups have begun to follow exiled anti-government organizations in order to raise their voice and interest.

IV. NATIONAL UNITY IN GLOBALIZING WORLD POLITICS: FORMATION OF ETHNIC TENSION

In today globalizing era of information and communications technology (ICT), the secessionist activists have successfully exploited the outbreak of mass media and global internet connections in order for them to create media manipulation by producing ample historical tales, propaganda images, and documents that

favor their political targets and rouse up the insurgent ethnic group's hatred and resentment toward the dominant one. Given to using these facilities is obviously a prudent and deliberate step of the anti-government movements in an effort to tempt minor communities to mobilize as well as to raise awareness and concern among the international public on what the sub-nationalists usually call "human rights violations". This is actually a new and effective means of struggle enabling the activists to reach much wider audience while at the same time attracting more financial supports from donors who have sympathy for the inferior peoples and may be available to align with them.

On the other hand, inter-ethnic tension is also emanated from land revoking policies and resettlement programs implemented by the central governments. Numerous large-scale land disputes and stand-offs between local ethnic minorities and the governments over ancestral domain have erupted in recent years. Also, the number of incidents appears to have increased since Southeast Asian economies began pursuing the open-door and outward-looking policies to intensify efforts to negotiate free trade agreements (FTAs) and joint supranational organizations with the West. Conflicts over land clearance and compensation have driven a significant wedge between ethnic farmers and the central government over the past a few decades. To maintain strong economic growth, the government must provide revoked land for new development projects while appeasing the villagers. In some Southeast Asian countries, after the government approves a project, district-level officials have the authority to use coercive measures to clear a site if its users refuse to hand over the land and relocate with given cost. As a result, there have been a string of cases of forced evictions, often with the use of military forces in some villages (Donovan 2012; Hiebert and Phuong 2012). This problematic situation obviously makes the ethnic grievance toward the central government among the ethnic minorities become more and more boisterous.

Furthermore, given to living within closed traditional villages has generated difficulties to integration of some ethnic minorities, especially those who still remain strongly depend on old-fashioned traditions and customs as Engelbert (1994) put it,

"*Among the Khmer, upward mobility is less appreciated in comparison with moral values delivered by the Buddhist education ... They do not strive for admission in* [national] *universities ... They are not interested in competing with the* [leading subnational group]*, they do not like to be schooled together with them.*"

This remained way of life will virtually lead them to a more isolated context in an integrated economy of the host countries, where the pressure to compete internationally posed by the global interconnectedness will result in both an increase in economic efficiency, and an investment environment that encourages skilled workers and the acquisition of new technology, and requires more and more agricultural land revoked for industrial projects, followed by urbanization inevitably.

The above-discussed issues highlight a fact that there has been a rapid shift away from historical grievances-driven conflict toward incompatibilities-based one, and that the inter-ethnic tension in today's Southeast Asia is no longer constrained by how fast and effectively the national reconciliation could progress; instead, a modern ethno-nationalist movement is more focusing its targets on seeking autonomy, economic rivalry and keeping ethnic identity alive than pursuing irredentist claim which is definitely not supported by the ASEAN Way of conflict management due to its principles of non-interference and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. By doing so, the subnational activists have made vibrancy and seem to be noticed more widely. In addition, the current moderating situations of ethnic mobility in Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar and Indonesia also reflect the new means of struggle adopted by the ethno-nationalist movements – i.e. non-violent conflict – with an international dimension. The exiled leaders of secessionist organizations and activists, on the one hand, promote their cause internationally by organizing conferences on ethnic affairs, demonstrations for ethnic minority rights and liberal democracy under the guise of membership of the controversial UNPO in some Western countries. On the other hand, they fully exploit the substantial support from domestic anti-governmental activists to develop their base of operation in the country, working as a leading organization representing the local ethnic groups politically (Ponniah 2013; Mengleng 2014).

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper observes in what ways and to what degree the forces of globalization have impacted on the national unity of Southeast Asian nation-states whose ethnic reconciliation and solidarity are actually vulnerable by nature. With troubled situations of the region's contemporary ethnic conflicts in mind, this paper has clarified that societal changes associated with the intensified spread of "exotic culture" posed by the process of neo-liberalism appear to overwhelm the identity and traditional values of minority groups. Under the process of industrialization and global economic integration, ethnic minorities have to face the intense cultural assimilation and penetration from the dominant ethnic groups and the West, bending their ancestral culture into the national mainstream. Thereby, in an attempt to preserve their threatened identity and values, they distinguish themselves from despised "other". At the local level, this cultural friction is potentially translated into conflicts along ethnic lines to safeguard identity.

In relation to economic explanations, neo-liberal globalization may increase the development gap – i.e. economic disparity and incompatibility – between subnational groups, especially between dominant groups and ethnic minorities. This results in ethnic resentment and inter-ethnic competition over resources and rights. Paradoxically, however, even though the ethnic minorities can be benefited from economic integration, this eventually brings about challenges to national unity. This is because rising standards of living and greater access to educational opportunities associated with globalization may lead to increased expectations. If those expectations are not accepted by the central governments, they can turn to secessionist action to protect and realize their own ambitions.

Finally, I agree that it is inaccurate to suggest that globalization in general, neo-liberal globalization in particular, is "responsible" for the demise of nation-state's unity, but technologies associated with global interconnectedness within present-day global society have been exploited by secessionists. In particular, modern technologies such as social networks and mass media, etc. have improved and facilitated the ability of secessionist groups to work together, share information, propagandize and enlarge the scope of activities, and reach out to concerned audience much more easily and quickly. Accordingly, it can be seen that the national unity can be challenged much more than ever in today's globalizing epoch.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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TOÀN CẦU HÓA VÀ ĐOÀN KẾT DÂN TỘC: QUỐC GIA DÂN TỘC ĐÔNG NAM Á TRONG KỶ NGUYÊN TOÀN CẦU

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Tóm tắt:
Bài báo này đánh giá tác động của xu thế toàn cầu hóa trong việc tạo điều kiện hình thành các xung đột dân tộc và bằng cách nào các nhà hoạt động ly khai ở các quốc gia dân tộc tận dụng quá trình toàn cầu hóa để tăng cường phong trào chống chính phủ của họ. Thách thức lớn nhất cho các quốc gia dân tộc Đông Nam Á trong việc duy trì tinh thần đoàn kết dân tộc vốn mong manh chính là xu hướng biến đổi về động cơ lẫn mục tiêu đấu tranh của các phong trao dân tộc – chuyển từ đấu tranh ly khai hoặc phục hồi lãnh thổ sang lựa chọn "tự trị". Việc phân tích tác động của toàn cầu hóa đến xu hướng đấu tranh dân tộc cũng cho thấy thực tế trớ trêu rằng không chỉ những dân tộc thịnh vượng hơn muốn ly khai mà những dân tộc kém phát triển cũng có xu hướng tương tự do "mặc cảm dân tộc". Thêm vào đó, ngay cả khi các dân tộc thiểu số được hưởng lợi như họ mong đợi từ quá trình hội nhập kinh tế, điều này rốt cuộc cũng tạo ra thách thức bởi gia tăng mức sống, cơ hội học tập và tiếp cận xu thế toàn cầu sẽ tất yếu đưa đến những yêu sách lớn hơn, nhất là về chính trị.
Từ khóa: toàn cầu hóa, chủ nghĩa ly khai, xung đột dân tộc, xung đột ở Đông Nam Á, quốc gia dân tộc