Nationalism in Southeast Asia
‘If the people are with us’

Nicholas Tarling
Nationalism in Southeast Asia seeks a definition of nationalism through examining its role in the history of Southeast Asia, a region rarely included in general books on the topic. By developing such a definition and testing it out, Nicholas Tarling hopes at the same time to make a contribution to Southeast Asian historiography and to limit its ‘ghettoisation’.

The state-building of the colonial phase is seen as a directed process with unexpected outcomes: it helped to create and to provoke opposition that took the form of ‘nationalist’ movements. Tarling goes on to consider the role of nationalism in the ‘nation-building’ of the postcolonial phase, and its relationship both with the democratic aspirations associated with the winning of independence and with the authoritarianism of the closing decades of the twentieth century.

Finally, Tarling offers comment on the ‘new nationalisms’ that authoritarianism has helped to provoke, and their prospects, as well as those of the nation-states, in the current phase of globalisation.

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‘If the people are with us’

Nicholas Tarling
For Tony Reid
‘If the people are with us we can be assured that if we do not triumph today, we shall do so tomorrow or in the future.’

Apolinario Mabini
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Part I

Definitions and chronologies

‘The political utility of the national idea is not matched by its analytical clarity.’

James Mayall
Absurdly ambitious, this book has two main purposes. One is to seek an encompassing definition of ‘nationalism’. That is, of course, not a new task, though a heavy one, and there have been many attempts at it. The novelty of the present attempt lies – though Antlov and Tonnessson have tried to test the existing theory against ‘non-European uses’1 – in its focus on Southeast Asia. The study of nationalism in that region is again not new, and one of the countries in the region has stimulated, in Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, a major contemporary work on the subject. Attempts to study ‘nationalism’ or ‘nationalisms’ in the region as a whole have been fewer and largely confined to general histories. Yet, as Anderson says, it offers ‘those with comparative historical interests special advantages, since it includes territories colonized by almost all the “white” imperial powers ... as well as uncolonized Siam’.2 It presents a variety of experiences and, therefore, a variety of tests for definitions of ‘nationalism’. And those experiences have rather rarely been incorporated in the more general works on nationalism, which have concentrated, first of all, on the European experience, and second, so far as the colonial and post-colonial phases are concerned, on the Indian subcontinent and Africa. At least the book may avoid one of the faults Tom Nairn finds in the theorising about nationalism – ‘a tendency to treat the subject in a one-nation or one-state frame of reference’ – and perhaps the other, a related tendency ‘to take nationalist ideology far too literally and seriously’.3

Juxtaposing the possible definitions of the phenomenon with a variety of experiences in a region rarely explored in the general works that deal with it should prove a worthwhile venture, not only from an historiographical point of view, but from a still wider perspective. A world in which ‘globalisation’ has at the very least speeded up is still a world of states, and the states are conceived as nations. A clearer understanding of nationalism – and more apt applications of the term – must be of wider benefit in understanding that world, if not predicting its future.

The second purpose mirrors the first. If studying Southeast Asia may help us understand nationalism better, that may at the same time contribute to a better understanding of Southeast Asia itself. One means by
which this may be achieved is by bringing the study of the region into the mainstream of historical study. The practice of treating Southeast Asia as a region had political origins, yet has proved to have historiographical value. But, as with any regional study, it runs the risk of ghettoisation, particularly perhaps when the region has never been the focus of mainstream study. ‘Area studies can very rapidly become parochial’, as Sanjay Subramanyan says.\(^4\) There can be losses as well as gains, as Vic Lieberman has argued. Are there not useful comparisons to be made, he asks, between Vietnam and Japan in the seventeenth century, or between them and France?\(^5\)

At the same time, pursuing a definition of nationalism may contribute to the continued study of Southeast Asia through comparative study of its own diversity. That diversity has challenged historians who have attempted to write the history of the region. How are they to bind their work together? Some have tried to take diversity itself as a theme. Others have juxtaposed a series of narratives or picked a range of topics. A mixture of such strategies has also been attractive, based, more or less explicitly, on a comparative approach. ‘The obvious danger of comparative history is . . . to push comparison too far.’\(^6\) But it has been helpful in explaining the distinctive histories of the various parts of the region, the distinctive features of their societies, religions, and political structures. A useful definition of nationalism makes for a sharper use of the comparative method and thus for a better understanding of the nationalism of its component parts.

The structure of the book reflects its rationale. In the first part, the author seeks to lay the groundwork for the subsequent analysis. First of all, he reviews some of the more important definitions and usages of ‘nationalism’ – both popular and scholarly – and offers a favoured but not final definition of his own. Second, he offers, partly in order to sustain that definition, a generalised schema of the stages in the development of nationalism. Third, he supports both by some account of the spread of nationalism in Europe and beyond. Finally, he offers a brief account of the Southeast Asian region and its component parts up to the point when nationalism began to appear. In subsequent chapters he deals with the colonial states, the Japanese interregnum, the gaining of independence, the nation-states and separatist movements. A final chapter deals with the historiography of the subject.

Few who talk of nationalism or evoke it attempt to define it, and even academic writers often avoid or evade the task. Able to adopt no such strategy, the present writer looks with understanding on the latter, and turns with gratitude to those who have tried. They may not agree with what he has made of their work, but it has enabled him to reach a position that he finds useful and hopes that others will find acceptable. It should not on the one hand be regarded as ruling out other definitions. But on the other hand it should not be seen merely as a device for opening the discussion.
Can nationalism have different origins at different times or in different places? Can it serve or be put to different purposes – and yet still be the same thing? The answer to all those questions must be yes, but it might be added: only if you can find a compendious definition, or will accept a very vague one. The author hopes to find a third way, in a concept or form of words, with which it is both possible and necessary to associate a timetable and a geography. Such a concept, so sustained, may be able to cast light on the past and the present and facilitate discussion of the future.

Nations, like states, are a ‘contingency’, as Ernest Gellner tells us. He thus invites us to see them as a product of historical change, emerging in particular circumstances, being perhaps discarded in others. The same must be true of nationalism, whether or not you accept his definition of the way in which it is associated with the nation. In both lies one part of a definition or form of words, a sense of community, emerging or created, perhaps replacing or degrading an earlier sense of community, perhaps to be followed by yet a different one. Robert Wiebe’s suggestion is helpful, though for our purposes too limited as it stands. Nationalism, he writes, was a solution to a nineteenth century problem: ‘How could people sort themselves in societies where the traditional ways no longer worked?’

One respect in which it is too limited is in its reference to the nineteenth century. Some, indeed, would have us discern it, well before the late eighteenth century, when J.G. Herder first used the word. ‘Nationalism as we understand it is not older than the second half of the eighteenth century’, wrote Hans Kohn in a classic work, further hedging his bets by adding that it had ‘roots’ deep in the past. K.R. Minogue found something of a gap in its history between 1650 and 1750. Then from the middle of the eighteenth century, he adds in another metaphor, ‘the story warms up, never to grow cold again’. More recently, Adrian Hastings has urged us to look back to fourteenth century England, to Wyclif and the gospels ‘written in Englische’. In The Myth of Nations, Patrick Geary suggests that ‘nation’ was a bond in medieval Europe, but not the most significant one.

That is one line of approach. But there is some value, too, in Kohn’s caution. The meaning of the word ‘nation’ – and thus any correlatives, nationality, nationhood, nationalism – has changed over time and continues to change, like that of many other words. There is some risk that in choosing a time, we are choosing a meaning, and vice versa. But it was in the later eighteenth century that a nationalism emerged that we can recognise and that began, as Kohn put it, to ‘spread into the farthest corners of the earth’.

Indeed it is impossible to apply Wiebe’s notion only to nineteenth century problems. It is in fact useful for the twentieth too. It points at once to a current sense of community, and also to a sense of its inadequacy in the face of change, its failure to satisfy, a sense, it may be added, that members may come to feel or be encouraged or even compelled to feel. It also suggests that nationalism fills the gap, or, it might be added,
that people are persuaded that it fills the gap. Men transfer to the nation ‘the political loyalty which they previously gave to some other structure’.\footnote{15} It was a shift that Karl Deutsch sought to capture in his term ‘social mobilisation’.\footnote{16} It could be said that it was preceded by or overlapped with a ‘demobilisation’, or by what W. Kornhauser calls ‘atomisation’.\footnote{17}

Not all agree that the gap need be so deep or the transfer so complete. ‘Instead of looking upon his kinship group, village, or ethnic identity as being the ultimate source of status and highest form of loyalty, an individual begins to find possibilities of being loyal to a community called the nation without compromising the sense of loyalty to family or village.’\footnote{18} Nor, after all, should we conceive even the family to be unchangingly or invariably strong as, suspecting its decline, we tend to think. In Minahasa the keluarga (nuclear family) is weaker than Indonesian slogans suggest: children are frequently fostered and sleep in houses other than their parents’.\footnote{19}

It is also necessary to recognise that the sources of change may be varied. Though the Marxist/Marxisant emphases in historical interpretation are still strong, and it may be desirable to watch for them, it is perhaps still acceptable to see economic change as ‘most basic’.\footnote{20} But war, conquest, imperial rule may have subjected societies to change, too. Disruptions are created, as Breuilly argues, by ‘the development of capitalism and new sorts of capitalism’ in Europe, and by ‘the traumatic experience of colonialism’.\footnote{21} Nor need it be a matter of imperial rule, as the cases of Japan, Turkey, and China indicate. ‘The destructive effect of European administrative methods – whether applied by European officials, as in India and Burma, or by native ones, as in the Ottoman Empire – was greatly magnified by the increasing involvement of these traditional societies with the world economy.’\footnote{22}

Nationalism is not an automatic result. ‘More than a sentiment, nationalism is a political program which has its goal not merely to praise, or defend, or strengthen a nation, but actively to construct one, casting its human raw material into a fundamentally new form’,\footnote{23} often though it may claim it is antique, ‘natural’. The ‘new’ community, such as it is, may have, or seek to acquire, a number of things that its members hold in common, and that also distinguish them from others. Those may include language, history, ethnicity, religion, or, more likely, constructions of them that emphasise commonality: not necessarily, but preferably, all of these. They may also include symbols and sentiments, songs and stories, if not histories, that serve to unify and inspire.

So far the word ‘state’ has not been brought into the discussion. Some authorities think it has a more or less necessary connection with the ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’. The nation is a ‘community of sentiment, which could find its expression only in a state of its own, and which thus normally strives to create one’, Max Weber wrote.\footnote{24} Nationalism, Gellner goes a bit further, is ‘primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent’.\footnote{25} There is, however,
no necessary connection between the two concepts. It is useful indeed conceptually to hold them apart so that we can better see and appraise the ways in which they have come or been brought together. ‘[N]ationalism cannot be understood when the meanings of these two terms are not kept distinct’, as Michael Hechter writes. Nowadays, indeed, we use the words almost interchangeably. That was not always so.

Increasingly nations and their leaders sought their own states, but though there are now many states, there are many more that might be created if Gellner’s principle was applied. Nationalism is even so widely seen as the inspiration of ‘nationalist movements’ assumed to be aiming at political independence. That indeed is the most common context for discussions of nationalism. But, unlike some writers, the present author will not stop there. Independent states surely continue to promote nationalism, in domestic even more than in foreign policy. In recent times, indeed, independent statehood has often preceded the creation of the nation. Nationalism has been used to homogenise the populations of new states, aiding people to ‘sort themselves’ or making them do so, creating ‘state-nations’. Nationalism is not only a sense of community but a way of organising the state.

Intended or otherwise, there is an ambiguity in Wiebe’s question. Might it not also be asking how people could ‘sort themselves’ into societies? The changes under way in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries affected state as well as community, though keeping the two apart is conceptually helpful. The ‘most basic’, perhaps, were economic, but industrialisation was new even in its British homeland. What was changing was the intensity of the rivalry among the European states, in itself not new, but gaining new dimensions. To survive, to defend your frontiers, to beat your neighbours, to seize their colonies or prevent their seizing yours, to damage their trade, you needed to be more efficient, to use your resources, including your human resources, more effectively. Those demands produced change, precipitating both the American revolution and the French. They evoked the concept of popular sovereignty and the notion of the nation in arms. Mobilising citizens was a major change, more literal than Deutsch implies. Nationalism may have been Herder’s coinage. The nation was invented or reinvented by the state itself, or by revolutionaries opposed to the current form of the state.

‘The nature and the history of nationalism are partly explained by the process of clash and collaboration within the body-politic, but also by the processes of clash and collaboration between bodies-politic.’ It seems helpful to consider two kinds of change. One is the kind that affects members of a society and encourages them to question its traditions and structures. But there is another kind, which may not derive entirely from the same ‘most basic’ source, but which may occur at the same time. That is the shifting distribution of power among states, which induces them to seek new sources of power, not only by acquiring wealth and possessions
overseas, but, even more commonly, by utilising their domestic resources more thoroughly and more competitively.

‘The haphazard multiplicity of political units in late medieval Europe became in the early modern epoch an organised and interconnected state-system’, ‘highly integrated yet extremely diversified’, as Perry Anderson puts it,29 an ‘anarchy’, as Buzan calls it, in the strict sense of lacking central or overarching government.30 The treaty of Westphalia of 1648 sought in a measure to regulate a system peculiar to Europe by elevating ‘reason of state’ above the ‘crusading’ spirit.31 Inter-state competition within a system was not a new process in the eighteenth century, when the Anglo–French struggle of the eighteenth century took it to new heights.

It also created new precedents and examples. The ideological concepts of nationalism were ‘foreign to the inmost nature of Absolutism’.32 Under the pressure of internal change, but also inter-state rivalry, however, the two came together. Nationalism and modern nationality were born of ‘the fusion of a certain state of mind with a given political form’, that of the modern centralised sovereign state. ‘The state of mind, the idea of nationalism, imbued the form with a new content and meaning; the form provided the idea with implements for the organized expression of its manifestations and aspirations.’33 The appropriation of the national idea by the state – ‘a particularly zealous creator of nationalism’34 – was bound to cause emulation: survival might be in question. But it could also cause revolution. Were there not merely better ways of organising the state, but better ways of organising the relationships among states? Some existing states reorganised themselves. Others were challenged and overthrown, in Europe and beyond, or more or less gracefully ‘transferred power’. Nationalism, as Breuilly says, could provide ‘a way of giving up power’.35 The culmination was a world of nation-states, though few were truly what that phrase suggested they should be, and some question the future not only of individual nation-states, but of the system itself.

‘And one day nations will dissolve, perhaps for another communal identity, presumably a superior one.’36 But, as John Dunn puts it, ‘[e]ven at its most ideologically pretentious the species has not yet conceived a practical form in which to transcend the nation-state.’37 It continued ‘to define the primary space in which political argument takes place’, John Mayall wrote in 1990. ‘The competing ideas, of a world market dominated by multi-national corporations to which we owe loyalty, or international proletarian solidarity, are equally implausible’.38 They were equal in another way. Though they professed themselves deadly enemies, they had, as John Gray argues, ‘a remarkably similar view of the world’, with their economic determinism, their belief in the withering away of past identities, their ‘quasi religious faith that a radiant future is near at hand’.39 The nation-state world may nevertheless be temporary as well as incomplete. It may, like the imperialism discussed in the previous volume (Imperialism in South-
east Asia, Routledge, 2000), be a ‘passing’ phase, but it can scarcely be so ‘fleeting’ a one.

Meanwhile we should surely regard it as a means by which the world and its peoples have handled and handle change both within societies and among them, recognise that we have no better system, and try to make it work better. It is a means of fending off anarchy, of creating some kind of order in the world. ‘[W]hat we are, and the way we think and speak, has a degree of stability and commonality without which ordinary human existence would be unimaginable.’40 It becomes ‘banal’, to borrow Michael Billig’s term,41 but it can be dangerous. Yet it also provides not only for competition and comparison with other ‘nations’: more importantly it accepts that they, too, banally enough, exist. That idea was, after all, implicit in the thinking of early nationalists. ‘The nation is the God-appointed instrument for the welfare of the human race’, Mazzini claimed, ‘and in this alone its moral essence lies. . . . Fatherlands are but workshops of humanity.’42 The sense of nation sees others as ‘foreign’, but not necessarily non-human. Nationalism is a ‘system of ideas, values and norms, an image of the world and society’, Eugen Lemberg put it.43 ‘[I]t is always supposed that a nation exists in the global community of nations. That is to say, there are other nations who have other essences and interests dissimilar to ours, competing with us or even antagonistic to us.’44 The recognition can, however, also be a means of finding commonalities, including but extending beyond the concept of the nation-state itself.

The idea of popular sovereignty – developed by John Locke and others – restrained the fear of anarchy that some felt would follow the end of absolutism.45 Then it was necessary to develop forms and practices, if not laws, in ‘international’ relations – the word coined by Jeremy Bentham46 – that would restrain anarchy among states, building on and beyond the inter-state concepts of the Westphalia system. Until we have a better idea, we should retain one that, for all its deficiencies and contradictions, is better than none. Better, too, than the alternative Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri offer. In their view the contemporary nation-state serves ‘various functions: political mediation with respect to the global hegemonic powers, bargaining with respect to the transnational corporations, and redistribution of income according to biopolitical needs within their own territories’.47 Even if they did no more and no better, perhaps they should not be abandoned for a ‘counter-Empire . . . a new global vision, a new way of living in the world’.48

For the current system to work even as well as it does, it must mean something, not merely to nationalist leaders and state rulers, but to the individuals who follow them, those they govern. As an ideology, nationalism was weak, but emotionally it was, or could be made to be, strong. ‘The emotional charge that individuals invest in their land, language, symbols and beliefs while building up their identity, facilitates the spread of nationalism’.49 ‘For each of us . . . a “nation” (but not only a nation) can

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provide a conceptual framework that allows us to comprehend our existence, as belonging within a continuity in time and a community in space.\textsuperscript{50}

It need not be the only framework – genealogy may place the individual in time, being a staff member at the University of Auckland may put us in our place – and much will depend, not only for us, but for others, on the emphasis we are allowed or encouraged to put on the various frameworks. But it is privileged. ‘Nationalism is more than a feeling of identity; it is more than an interpretation, or theory, of the world; it is also a way of being within the world of nations.’\textsuperscript{51} It is a way of recognising similarity, but also difference.

The nation is a way of describing and organising human societies and their interrelationships, developed through history, starting in Europe and spread throughout the world. Nationalism is associated with its creation and maintenance. Neither is necessarily associated with the state, but both have become so.

For Elie Kedourie, nationalism is a ‘doctrine’ invented in the early nineteenth century, asserting that humanity is naturally divided into nations, known by ascertainable characteristics, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government. Naturalised in the political rhetoric of the West, those propositions have been taken over for the use of the world. They are ‘thought to be self-evident’. But, as he adds, ‘what now seems natural once was unfamiliar, needing argument, persuasion, evidences of many kinds; what seems simple and transparent is really obscure and contrived, the outcome of circumstances now forgotten and preoccupations now academic’.\textsuperscript{52}

Perhaps, however, the preoccupations are not merely ‘academic’, and practical purpose may prompt albeit selective attempts to consider historical circumstances. For argument, persuasion and evidence are still needed, if not to sustain established nation-states in which the doctrine is ‘banal’, then to create and affirm those that are less firmly established, or not yet established at all, taking advantage of the ‘banality’ of the doctrine in the world of states as a whole, its examples, pressures, expectations. There is, of course, a substantial literature on ‘nation-building’, while what newly independent states engage in is routinely so described.

The distinction Jim Schiller makes between state formation and state-building is a useful one, as this author has argued elsewhere. State-building is a directed activity, designed to increase the power of the state by securing for it more resources, material or spiritual, or reducing the power of its opponents. State formation he sees as the consequence of such activities, but also of the activities and responses of others, ‘capricious outcomes’ rather than intended results.\textsuperscript{53}

Currently, we characteristically use ‘nation-building’ more or less as a synonym for ‘state-building’.\textsuperscript{54} Yet, as Gellner says, though nation and state are both a ‘contingency’, they are not ‘the same contingency’,\textsuperscript{55} and they
should conceptually be kept apart. The fact that we ‘banally’ run them
together is an argument for doing so. It may also be useful to do so.

It is possible to ‘build’ a nation without building a state, though the
extent to which it has been or may be sought or secured has varied over
time. It is also – even more? – possible for a nation to be ‘formed’, though
its aspirations and achievements in respect of creating a state will also vary.
Building a state without building or maintaining a ‘nation’ is conceptually
possible, and has been attempted in the past, but it is no longer possible
in practice. Imperial powers created colonial states, but they faced nation-
alist movements that they had helped to create, usually more capriciously
than deliberately, seeing them sometimes as potential collaborators but
more often as rivals. To the extent that a nation has not been ‘formed’, a
sovereign state will have to ‘build’ one. ‘The traditional state impinged so
slightly on the lives of most ordinary people, except in times of crisis, that
it did not disrupt or inflame local ethnic patterns unduly.’ It ‘did not need
to turn its people into a nation, it hardly wanted to do so. . . . The modern
state has necessarily to do so, to attempt to turn its people into a nation,
that is to a state in which the sense of its history, its law, education system
are consciously shared.’{56}

The attempt may also, however, have ‘capricious’ outcomes, and run
up against other national formations or provoke other nation-builders or
nation-state builders within the frontiers. The results may include a more
or less permanent contention, if not a conflict; or a compromise, more or
less formal, in which the nation-state abates the ‘ethnic’ element in its
national claim and emphasises the ‘civic’, allowing de facto or de jure the
retention in, it hopes, a non-challenging way, of other identities. Other
approaches include the constitutional, the provision of local or regional
autonomy, even of a federal structure, and the ‘consociational’, elite
cooperation. But their own historical experience or that of others
might lead nation-state builders to question them, particularly the federal
‘solution’. Might it not be merely a step towards further nation formation?
Will it only survive if the sense of a common nationality is already wide-
spread?

Studying the recent history of Southeast Asia may suggest the need to
consider distinguishing not only nation and state but also regime. If only,
again, because they are so readily confounded, taken as synonyms, it may
be useful, as well as conceptually possible, to keep them apart. Regimes
are likely to be ‘built’, rather than formed, but they may themselves have
‘capricious outcomes’, if not indeed, at times at least, capricious inten-
tions, as in the case of the Marcoses and the latter days of Suharto. Often
pragmatic, combining the short-term aim of staying in power with the
long-term aim of staying in power longer, they may or may not be nation-
or state-building. Their impact will partly depend on the coincidence of
their endeavours to build a regime with the aspiration or need to build a
state and nation. Will they develop or relegate or destroy the institutions
of the state? Will they simply evoke popular feeling or will they encourage popular involvement and the emergence of ‘civil society’? Their staying power may hold a state together for a substantial period and by that means promote nation formation. That may still leave a lot undone. And in some cases their endeavours may be counterproductive.

A further distinction may be made. The word ‘regime’ can be used in more than one way. It may describe the way rulers use or relegate the forms of government, as, for example, with ‘the Marcos regime’ or ‘the Suharto regime’. The phrase William Case borrows from Higley and Burton may be relevant: regimes are ‘basic patterns in the organisation, exercise and transfer’ of state positions and power. The word may also be used for the form of government itself, ‘the constitutional regime’, ‘the absolutist regime’. Of the Thai state in the 1970s Chai-anan Samudavanija writes that it had ‘a regime but no political system’. Buzan has distinguished state and power: a strong state may be a weak power; a strong power, a comparatively weak state. It is also possible to distinguish state and nation from regime – a regime may be strong and a state weak – and regime from form of government. With limited aims and concerned only with its own lifespan, a regime may not take a long-term view of the state, the nation, or even the form of government.

The present volume takes advantage of the license Muthiah Alagappa has offered. He equates regime and political system: it is ‘the type of government’. ‘Government refers to the actual exercise of political power within the framework of the regime.’ The distinction, he admits, is made with relative ease in advanced democratic states. ‘[T]he low level of institutionalization in most developing states make such distinctions more difficult but not impossible.’ Commonly, however, ‘the two institutions are “fused: a change in government brings about a change in regime as well”.’ The present volume uses ‘regime’ for the government of the day. That does not all mean, however, that it is not concerned with the type of government. On the contrary.

Implicit in the concept of popular sovereignty is a democratic form of politics, but in most countries, East and West, it has taken a long while to make it explicit. In postcolonial countries, there is not only some way to go, but some question as to whether it is the right route to follow, and the question provides a topic for international discussion, advice and action, as well. The question is not only a moral one for a world made up of states that claim legitimacy on the basis of popular sovereignty. It is also a practical one. A democratic system – which allows not only for participation in state political activities, but also permits and encourages, as an essential complement and counterpart, involvement in a range of non-state associations – may after all be the means of assuaging, if not dispersing, the tension between the claims of the nation-state and those who find it difficult wholly to accept them but cannot create their own. But it requires what the greatest of nineteenth century Filipino nationalists prescribed,
not only ‘economia’, the husbanding of resources, but also ‘transigencia’, ‘give and take’.61

Sovereign states have constitutions setting out the form of government. In most cases, they are written, though in the few cases where they are not a collection of laws, practices and understandings stand for and are to be regarded as a constitution. The ‘new’ states in Southeast Asia, as elsewhere, generally acknowledged the people as the source of power, and wrote in provisions for parliaments and elections. Even where there are written constitutions, however, practices and understanding, conventions of behaviour, count. Older states established them over long periods and with great difficulty and cost. New states may in some cases have larger resources – not necessarily an advantage – but they have less time.

Amid unprecedented change at home – and high expectations – and pressures from abroad – money, advice, example, security threats – it must have seemed that Southeast Asian leaders had little choice, and it is perhaps not surprising that they gave preference to regime-building, rather than state-building, or undermined rather than implemented the commitments of the constitutions, and that at times they focused on fortune and family at risk even to the regime narrowly conceived. Such a reflection prompts, however, another comment. The discussion so far has dealt largely in terms of economic, social and political change, of state and nation and regime, of ideology, community and movement. But it has also accepted that changes are also made to happen and that people choose or are made to choose to accept them. The author seeks to adopt the approach to history brilliantly deployed by the late F.H. Hinsley in his approach to the origins of wars.62

In analysing them, Hinsley believed, we should utilise a distinction between the ‘impersonal’ and the ‘man-made’ factors, between ‘circumstances’ and ‘conditions’ on the one hand and the actions that were taken in such circumstances and conditions on the other. It is not, however, a matter only of listing ‘causes’ under two headings. The more crucial task is to bring them together again in some kind of synthesis. There are circumstances under which a war might break out, Hinsley argued. There are also decisions taken in those circumstances which determine whether it breaks out. The notion – though obviously only a starting point – may be useful, not only in interpreting major ‘events’ like the wars of 1914 and 1939/41, but also in interpreting the historical course of states, nations, regimes, and forms of government.

Words ‘slip, slide, perish’, T.S. Eliot reminded us in *Burnt Norton*: more commonly, their meaning does. ‘Natio in ordinary speech’, as Kedourie tells us, ‘originally meant a group of men belonging together by similarity of birth, larger than a family, but smaller than a clan or a people. Thus one spoke of the *Populus Romanus* and not of the *natio romanorum*.’
Medieval universities were divided into ‘nations’, indicating the provenance of students. At Paris there were four: France, the speakers of Romance languages; Picardy, the Netherlanders; Normandy, those from northeastern Europe; and Germany, which included the English. The medieval University of Aberdeen contained the four ‘nations’ of Mar, Buchan, Murray and Angus.

Later the word came to have a political meaning, but still not the one with which we sense a familiarity. The Hungarian ‘nation’ with which the Habsburg ruler came to terms in 1711, comprised the barons, prelates and nobles of Hungary, not the mass of the people: those who counted, not those whom state or ‘national’ censuses might later count. The word was used more comprehensively by the French revolutionaries. For them sovereignty resided essentially in the nation, and by that they meant more than king and aristocrats. They called each other ‘Citizens’, not subjects (nor comrades, nor consumers). The sense of community persisted, but now it was much wider, though also potentially narrower.

What has the word now come to mean? The suggestions the author advances have to be juxtaposed with the definitions and categorisations which others – historians, sociologists, political scientists – have worked on and to which he is often indebted. ‘A nation is a group of people who feel themselves to be bound together by ties of history, culture and common ancestry’, James Kellas suggests. ‘Nations have “objective” characteristics which may include a territory, a language, a religion, or common descent (though not all of these are always present), and “subjective” characteristics, essentially a people’s awareness of its nationality and affection for it. In the last resort it is “the supreme loyalty” for people who are prepared to die for their nation.’ Nationalism, he goes on, ‘is both an ideology and a form of behaviour. The ideology of nationalism builds on people’s awareness of a nation (national self-consciousness) to give a set of attitudes and a programme of action. These may be cultural, economic or political.’ The political aspect ‘is seen most clearly in the demand for national self-determination… All types of nationalism seek a political expression for the nation, most strongly in independent statehood. Nationalists may settle for less, however’, at least for a time.

Now, Anthony Smith writes, ‘the nation, the national state and nationalism have come to occupy the commanding heights of political allegiance and political identity’. The world is divided into territorial states, ‘sets of autonomous, public institutions with a legitimate monopoly of coercion and extraction in a given territory, and sovereignty in relation to those outside its borders’. It is ‘similarly divided’ into nations, ‘named populations possessing an historic territory, shared myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members, which are legitimised by the principles of nationalism’. A few small phrases in this must attract attention: ‘similarly divided’, for example; ‘legitimised’. Is there a tautology here? Nationalism itself can
be defined, Smith continues, perhaps raising fewer queries, ‘as an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential “nation”’.66

Smith, who has devoted a lifetime to the subject, raises larger queries when he attaches history to definition. The fact that the word ‘nation’ slipped and slid, at least until the French revolution, does not preclude finding earlier evidence of nationalism. Yet Smith hankers perhaps too much after an element of what is called ‘primordialism’, implying that the nation has always existed, or ‘perennialism’, implying the existence of immemorial ethnic communities, updated by the incidence of nationalism. He does not indeed accept what Rupert Emerson called the ‘Sleeping Beauty’ tale,67 that nations slumber and are awakened, or are submerged, then rescued. And, indeed, as Minogue sardonically asks, ‘[w]ould Sleeping Beauty live happily ever afterwards? . . . Hordes of such fierce maidens filled the world, quarrelling over the lands they wished to absorb.’68

With all its limitations, Smith nevertheless suggests, cultural primordialism exposes

the weakness of instrumentalist historical accounts; their exaggerated belief in the powers of elite manipulation of the masses; their failure to take seriously the symbolic aspects of nationalism; their ethnocentric bias, with the West as the norm and pressure group politics as the model; and their blindness to the roles of both the sacred and ethnicity in kindling mass fervor and self-sacrifice.69

Smith criticises a ‘perennialism’ that identifies ethnicity and nationhood and overstresses continuity – but it has, he thinks, the merit of ‘bringing us up against the fundamental issues in the elucidation of the role of nations and nationalism in history’; and perennialists are ‘right to point to the premodern continuities of at least some nations and to the recurrence, in different historical epochs, of a kind of collective cultural identity that may resemble . . . but not be identical with the modern nation’.70

Those Smith calls the ‘constructionists’ – who think that nationalism creates nations, and conceive of an elite that ‘imagines’ or ‘invents’ the nation and represents it to the majority – downplay ‘the emotional depth of loyalties to historical nations and nationalism’. He admits the possibility that nationalists ‘appropriate’ the past, but he prefers an ‘ethnosymbolist’ approach, and offers the suggestion that ethnies flourished alongside other collectivities in the ancient and medieval age of empires, city-states and kingdoms. Kingdoms, Smith says, perhaps not very logically, tended to be formed round ‘ethnic cores’ – English, French, Castilian, Swedish. The approach allows us, he argues, ‘to avoid a retrospective nationalism while doing justice to the widespread presence and significance of collective cultural identities in premodern epochs’.71
Some of the most powerful accounts of nationalism that have been advanced contribute to an analysis of what in Hinsley’s terms might be seen as the conditions or circumstances in which nationalism emerges. Ernest Gellner connects it with the emergence of modern industrial society. One of the ‘essential concomitants’ of such a society is ‘[t]he kind of cultural homogeneity demanded by nationalism’. Nationalism does not impose homogeneity; ‘it is rather that a homogeneity imposed by objective, inescapable imperative eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism’. Slightly contradictorily, he argued that the theory claims ‘that if an industrial economy is established in a culturally heterogeneous society (or if it even casts its advance shadow on it), then tensions result which will engender nationalism’.

His interpretation seems useful only for some states. Nationalism has existed in non-industrial states, as Guibernau points out: Gellner is more useful for Western Europe than China. He pays too little attention to state formation, she suggests: it is possible to think of other reasons, besides the demands of a modern industrial society, for the advance in literacy. John A. Hall rather differs. ‘[N]ationalist sentiments’ were in place in France and Britain ‘before the emergence of industry’. Gellner is better on China. Functionalism cannot be correct, Hall says: it ‘takes a consequence as a cause’. But Gellner is not a mere functionalist. He explains his ‘third stage’ better than the earlier stages, the phase in which postcolonial states ‘copied’ others.

‘[N]ationalism precedes and institutes Gellner’s mass education systems, rather than the other way round.’ ‘[N]ationalism is still figuring in the account as an explanans, not as a successfully accounted explainandum.’ Gellner has, as Charles Taylor puts it, defined ‘some of the very important stakes in the nationalist struggle. . . . But the original energy fueling these struggles remains to be understood.’ Nationalism, too, emerges in ‘all kinds of economic milieux’, as Smith puts it, and not just the industrial. Gellner’s explanation is lacking here, too: ‘it seems to have trouble explaining the rise of nationalism in preindustrial societies’. Yet, if we were to draw in the sense of human aspiration, which Gellner only implies, his explanation may gain conviction. We should then be thinking of an aspiration to modernity.

In a book on nationalism in Southeast Asia, the work of Ben Anderson – a ‘constructionist’ – deserves special attention: it draws so much on his Indonesian expertise, Tonnesson and Antlov indeed suggesting that it ‘could hardly have been written by someone with a background in the study of China or other Confucian societies’. His concept of the nation as an ‘imagined community’, however, transcends a merely regional or one-country historiography. Some, indeed, are inclined to misread him, taking ‘imagined’ as a synonym for ‘invented’. ‘It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives
the image of their communion." Sometimes he almost seems to misread himself. But he does say of Gellner that he is ‘so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates “invention” to “fabrication” and “falsity”, rather than to “imagining” and “creation”.’ It is a community ‘because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal relationship’.84

Why have so many died for ‘such limited imaginings’?85 The search for an answer leads Anderson to discuss the erosion of religious certainties, the decline of dynastic realms that derived their legitimacy from divinity, and the emergence of a changed perception of time. And ‘print-capitalism . . . made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways’. It created print-languages, ‘unified fields of exchange and communications below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars’. He goes on to discuss the blueprint: the ‘model’ of a nation became available to others through print-capitalism.86

The analysis is subtle. Yet it seems to have misled others, if not the author himself. Like Gellner, though with a different focus, Anderson appears to explain the existence and functioning of nations better than their creation or origin. It is, however, just that creation or origin that his readers, if not on occasion the author himself, have tended to take him as explaining. What is ‘imagined’ in his theory is the lateral sense of relationship with others in a community in which they cannot for the most part be known. It recalls Kohn’s nationalism: ‘our identification with the life and aspirations of uncounted millions whom we shall never know, with a territory which we shall never visit in its entirety . . . qualitatively different from the love of family or of home surroundings. It is qualitatively akin to the love of humanity or of the whole world.’87 But for many readers at least ‘imagined’ stands in for ‘invented’. Though at times he may obscure the distinction, the author is, however, normally quite clear about it. Essential to sensing a national allegiance is the capacity to ‘imagine’ a relationship with others who feel the same way, with those who are living, or indeed with those who may be conceived as having thought or be going to think the same way, those who have died or are yet to be born. That process differs from the process or processes that have produced the perception in each particular case that there is such a community. That indeed may be ‘imagined’ rather in the sense of ‘invented’, conjured up, enjoined on the basis of a range of factors, historical legacy, ‘ethnicity’, established state frontiers, antagonism to or models from other communities.

Under the conditions Anderson describes – the decline of other kinds of community and certainty ‘under the impact of economic change, “discoveries” (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications’88 – it was necessary to imagine a new kind of community. In each case, it might be said, the communities had also to be
'invented'. That might be more or less novel. But even if a dynastic realm had left a framework behind, it had to be reconceived, so that within it people could see themselves not as subjects but as citizens, in a relationship not with a divine sovereign but with the sovereign people. It was also possible, if not necessary, for the leadership of the community to promote the ascendancy of one language as a means of consolidating the lateral relationship, even if it might mean the elimination or relegation of other languages or their reduction to or continuance of non-print status. If a state were created, that seemed still more feasible, if not more desirable, though assimilation might enhance tension within a frontier, if not also between states.

Anderson may be seen, like Gellner, as discussing conditions that made the nation possible. Though he is unwilling to define it, he sees nationalism, it seems, as an aspiration to create a nation and to promote the sense of its imagined community. Of the latter, if not the former, he offers numerous examples. Indeed, if he is outlining conditions which make a nation possible, he has to admit, more or less explicitly, the ‘human factors’ that are part of ‘nationalism’ and part of the process of ‘imagining’ the nation, however that is interpreted. It is indeed a strength of his analysis that it permits, implicitly or explicitly, a role for human decision.

Even so, his analysis bears a relationship not only with Gellner but, perhaps closer, with the ‘functional definition of nationality’ that Karl Deutsch offered. ‘[W]hat counts is not the presence or absence of any single factor, but merely the presence of sufficient communication facilities with enough complementarity to produce the overall result. . . . Membership in a people essentially consists in wide complementarity of social communication.’ A secondary basis is ‘the complementarity of acquired social and economic preferences which involve the mobility of goods and persons’, the preference for things or persons of ‘one’s own kind’. A third factor made those alignments more important: ‘the rise of industrialism and the modern market economy which offer economic and psychological rewards for successful group alignments to tense and insecure individuals’.89

If Anderson seems often to have Indonesia too much in mind, Deutsch seems to be particularly concerned with East and Central Europe, with the fate of the old Austria-Hungary. Definitions and explanations need to encompass both, and may be more useful, even in other cases, if they do. Both run the risk of functionalism, Deutsch more than Anderson, Gellner more than either. It is not, he says, that the media facilitate the spread of nationalism. The core message is ‘that the language and style of the transmissions is important, that only he who can understand them, or can acquire such comprehension, is included in a moral and economic community, and that he who does not and cannot is excluded. . . . What is actually said matters little.’90 The idea of nationalism is the product of the
newspaper, Gabriel told us.\textsuperscript{91} But such functionalism surely goes too far and says too little.

A developed system of internal communications, John Breuilly points out, ‘can as often lead to an increase in internal conflict as to an increase in solidarity’, and such might be expressed in other than nationalist terms. Perhaps he has lost some of the subtlety in the arguments advanced by Deutsch, who, focusing on Austria-Hungary, could hardly be unaware of such possibilities. Breuilly’s general criticism has, however, some validity. Communications theory begs the question, he says. ‘It can tell us something about the conditions under which nationalist views might be diffused among a given population and how different groups might be mobilised for action by a nationalist movement. But that does not answer the crucial question of how and why such doctrines are both produced and enthusiastically received.’\textsuperscript{92} His own answer – an instrumentalist’s – is itself perhaps too limited. ‘I emphasise the central and autonomous role of politics as essential to an understanding of nationalism . . . the modern state in its various forms offers the key to an understanding of nationalism’. He sees it as ‘essentially an attempt to obtain state power’.\textsuperscript{93} That, though too reductionist, is at least a corrective to excessive functionalism. It points to the actions and human beings, even though it limits the range of their ideas and aspirations.

Kenneth Minogue does something similar, though in a different way. A nation, he suggests, ‘consists of all those people who have been persuaded that they share the national grievance’. That suggests the significance of politics, of the need, moreover, to persuade. His focus on ‘grievance’ may, however, be too narrow. Nationalism is ‘a political movement depending on a feeling of collective grievance against foreigners’. As a result of the growth of urbanisation, the spread of literacy, a sense of social crisis, people ask: ‘What is happening to us? The nationalist answer is clear: Our nation is struggling to be born: it is fighting for independence against its enemies.’\textsuperscript{94} The definition and explanation perhaps raise more questions than they answer, but they are at least important questions. How is it, for example, that people come to seem ‘foreign’? How adequately can ‘grievance’ sustain a nationalist movement?

Eric Hobsbawm is the mother of ‘invention’. The study of ‘invented traditions’ – those with a largely factitious continuity with the past\textsuperscript{95} – is, he claims, ‘highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the “nation”, with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest. All these rest on exercises in social engineering which are often deliberate and always innovative, if only because historical novelty implies innovation’. ‘We should not be misled by a curious, but understandable, paradox: modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel . . . and the opposite of “constructed”.’ But the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the ‘“invention of tradition”’.\textsuperscript{96}
In his later work, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Hobsbawm adopts a similar, if less insistent, stance.

Like most serious students, I do not regard the ‘nation’ as a primary nor as an unchanging social entity. It belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period. It is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the ‘nation-state’, and it is pointless to discuss nation and nationality except insofar as both relate to it.

Hobsbawm invokes Gellner. With him, he ‘would stress the element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations. . . . Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round.’

In the last sentence, it seems, Hobsbawm in a sense errs. For, while ‘invention’ plays an important part in the creation of nations and nation-states, nations and states do, once created, promote nationalism. Indeed much of the rest of Hobsbawm’s later book gives an account of that process. His approach is in fact a compendious one. Nor is it simply Eurocentric. The concept of ‘invention’ is indeed valuable for explaining the application of nationalism and the concepts of the nation and the nation-state to other parts of the world, in particular Asia and Africa, Anderson’s Indonesia included. There, indeed, it was harder than in many parts of Europe to conceive of the past in terms of the nation.

Nationalism Gellner connected ‘not so much with industrialisation or modernisation as such, but with its uneven diffusion’. Nations and nationalism were modern phenomena, Smith suggests, ‘products of the jagged and uneven spread of capitalism resulting from the activities of imperialism in the “periphery” as it incorporated successive areas of the world, often with great violence, into the capitalist world-system’. The result of ‘massive imperialist intrusions’ after 1800 was ‘a sense of abject helplessness on the part of the elites in the subjugated peripheries’. They possessed neither wealth nor skills nor military might; what could they oppose to the power of imperialism? . . . The only resource left to the elites in this unequal struggle was numbers, the sheer mass of their native populations. Therefore, they had to appeal to the people for support. They had to invite them into history and write the invitation card in the language and culture of the masses. . . . That is why nationalism is always a profoundly militant, cross-class, populist movement, and why it has found in cultural Romanticism a unifying vehicle for its social and political goals.

There are two ideas here, useful, but only if modified. First, ‘imperialism’, as the author’s earlier volume suggests, provides only a part of the
explanation of ‘incorporation’, not all. The statement seems, moreover, to
slip from using it as a general description of an historical process to using
it as a description of formal colonial rule. Second, it rather assumes that
mobilising the people was done on the basis of ‘nationalism’. In fact, of
course, ‘the language and culture of the masses’ was generally not one but
many and at best in an oblique relationship with the nationalism that
elites might articulate.

Back in 1963, David Brown points out, Clifford Geertz wrote of the ‘stulti-
fying aura of conceptual ambiguity’ surrounding the subject of national-
ism.100 Even in 1995 Dunn referred to an ‘unsteady mixture [of ideas] . . .
unsuitable for clear analytical thought’.101 But if it is not the product
of clear analytical thought, that does not make it unsuitable for examination
by clear analytical thought, though a ‘clear’ ideology may be an easier
subject to tackle. We need, Brown suggests – resorting to metaphor, that
last refuge of historical minds – ‘a map of the terrain’.102 Though he thus
begins unhelpfully, his map proves a useful guide, offering another pro-
jection to set alongside Smith’s.

‘The aim’, he writes,
is to offer clarification by disentangling three conceptual languages,
which each generate distinct stories as to the nature of contemporary
nationalist politics. The first story explains such politics as the asser-
tion of the natural primordial rights of ethnic nations against
contemporary multi-ethnic states; the second sees contemporary
nations as in the process of being transformed by situational changes
in the structure of the global economy; and the third sees assertions
of nationalism as arising out of the search for new myths of certainty,
constructed to resolve the insecurities and anxieties engendered by
modernisation and globalisation.103

Though Brown is writing of ‘contemporary’ nationalism, his insights are
surely valid for the whole period since the later eighteenth century, in
which indeed ‘modernisation’ and ‘globalisation’ – though not then so
named – were at work.

The three conceptual languages, Brown continues, see nationalism as
an instinct in the case of primordialism, as an interest in the case of situ-
tionalism, and as an ideology in the case of constructivism. Of the three,
he suggests that the third ‘might be preferred because it seems to answer
some of the unresolved questions raised by the other approaches’104 It is
also an approach consistent with the one the present author is attempting
to combine with a general chronology and a more detailed Southeast
Asian history.

‘Primordialist approaches depict the nation as based upon a natural,
organic community, which defines the identity of its members, who feel
an innate and emotionally powerful attachment to it. Natural nations have natural rights to self-determination.’ Primordialism ‘explains the conflict and violence which characterises much of modern nationalist politics as arising from the discontinuity between the boundaries which deserve and seek political autonomy, and those of the modern states’. The fact that those states are called ‘nations’ is regarded as either a mistake or ‘a politically motivated trick’. The way is open for new claims to self-determination on the one hand, for within-state assertions of ethnic dominance on the other, for ‘multicultural’ states, but also for ethnic cleansing. The prominence of these ideas in the literature of the second half of the twentieth century is not surprising, given the emergence of nation-states throughout the world. But they are relevant to the discussion of Europe and of earlier decades.

Primordialists recognise that ‘the complex and opaque histories of contemporary national communities mean that we cannot show the factual truth of their claims to common ancestry’, Brown writes. Most, he suggests, would accept Walker Connor’s formulation that the nation is ‘a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related. It is the largest group that can command a person’s loyalty because of felt kinship ties.’

The present author accepts the formulation, but suggests that it rather gives the game away. For one may be made to feel what is felt. That will be easier, perhaps, if it has a basis in reality. If, for example, a state has a long, continuous history, it is possible, even likely, that its people will have a greater sense of unity, or be more readily persuaded that they have, be they British or Vietnamese, and that on that it will be easier to build or construct a sense of national community, particularly with the advantage of better communications and print-capitalism. Smith’s hankering after an element of primordialism or perennialism would be better replaced by the ‘constructivist’ appropriation, and by saying some have an easier task of appropriation than others. The same may apply to Hobsbawm’s invention of proto-nationalism. Rather, one should see the situation as one which makes the nationalist task easier or harder. Can a non-Whig historian in any case accept the notion of proto-ness?

Brown supports his argument, not only by logic but by example. Studying Ghanaian politics, he found ‘that the idea of an Ewe ethnic community was a twentieth-century phenomenon’. In the 1969 election, ‘it seemed more likely that it was rational self-interest, rather then primordial ethnic bias, which dictated voting behaviour’. That leads Brown to discuss his second language for telling the ‘story’, ‘situationalism’. That, as he puts it, ‘explains ethnic and national identities, not as natural instinctual ties to organic communities, but rather as resources employed by groups of individuals for the pursuit of their common interests’.

‘[I]ndividuals do in fact identify in varying degrees and in varying situations, with a wide range of groupings based on affiliations of, for example, ideology, occupation, class, gender or locality; as well as on affili-
ations of ethnicity and nationalism.’ In the eyes of situationalists, the latter have no ‘innate priority’ over other affiliations, though they may offer ‘particular utility’ since they can be presented as ‘natural’ and lend themselves to identification and mobilisation. They seek to explain both ‘the rise of modern nation-states’ and ‘the contemporary upsurge of nationalist contention’ by seeing them ‘as arising fundamentally out of interest-based responses to changes in the structure of the global economy’.109

Writers like Gellner and Anderson are not ‘consistently or solely situationist in focus’. There is, however, a situationalist core to their arguments. It is explicit, Brown suggests, in Gellner who ‘argues that the industrialisation process, which was uneven in impact and emerged in particular centres, required new autonomous and efficient political units to replace the decentralised and weak medieval empires of Europe’. Anderson ‘located the core precondition for the emergence of modern nation-states in the development of “print-capitalism” which facilitated the spread of a common vernacular language and literature, so that the modern nation could develop as a new imagined community’.110

The situationalists explain the spread of the nation-state beyond Western Europe, Brown tells us, ‘partly in terms of the global spread of industrialisation and commerce, and partly as a political reaction to colonialism’. Situationalists understand

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\text{[s]uch nationalism \ldots as the new sense of community engendered by social and economic interactions within the new states, and also as the reactive communities engendered by unequal interactions with the West. Nationalism \ldots became a resource which new political elites could employ to mobilise support for themselves.111}
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One criticism that Brown considers arises from ‘the attempt to incorporate both structuralist and rational-choice elements into the situationalist approach’. The choices may not be ‘rational’.

If we were to accept that mobilising elites sometimes either deliberately or unwillingly act as inventors of lies rather than as communicators of the situation, and that followers sometimes accept these lies even in the face of countervailing evidence, then the core assumptions of situationalism – that nationalist politics can be understood in terms of functional and rational responses to situational changes – would appear to be called into question.

But, as he goes on to argue, the fact that a choice may not be ‘rational’ does not deny the insights of situationalism.112

What indeed is ‘rational’, the present author would add, is surely a relative matter. Some people seed clouds, others pray for rain, yet others do both. Unable themselves to take part in the ‘politics’ of the
great tradition, peasants resort to small deeds, but also assume millennialist stances. And even if we have a shared notion of what is ‘rational’, we may be presented with or perceive a range of arguments within that rationality. The ‘situationalist’ argument remains valuable even without the element of ‘rational’ choice. An element of choice must nevertheless remain. The situationalists have described conditions or preconditions in which human beings think – though of their thinking we know and can know little – and act – and of their actions we can and do know considerably more. That the situation may tempt a leadership to ‘lie’ or their followers to believe their ‘lies’ is part of the analysis, too. But so also is their yielding to or rejecting the temptation.

Brown’s third language, that of ‘constructivism’, more or less takes up this position. ‘Constructivist approaches suggest that national identity is constructed on the basis of institutional or ideological frameworks which offer simple and indeed simplistic formulas of identity, and diagnoses of contemporary problems, to otherwise confused or insecure individuals.’ Primordialists argue that the sense of national consciousness must be innate, deriving from the fact that ‘nations are based on real substantive groups which are natural organic entities preceding social interactions’. Situationalists accept that they are real substantive groups, but they are formed, in their view, ‘as a result of social interactions and gain power from their utility in the defence and pursuit of crucial “way of life” interests common to those involved’. Constructivists, by contrast, begin by denying that nations are real substantive entities, ‘suggesting that the perception by those involved that they are real should be understood as a form of ideological consciousness which filters reality, rather than reflects it’.113

Nationalism offers individuals a sense of identity. ‘[S]uch a sense of identity might be neither rationally chosen nor innately given, but constructed largely unconsciously or intuitively as a category of understanding.’ Brown suggests depicting nationalism ‘as one of several psychological mechanisms which individuals employ to provide simple formulas for locating themselves in relation to others’, ‘one of several formulas which solve problems relating to my feelings of isolation by defining me as a member of one distinct community demarcated from other such communities’.114

Why is it so powerful a formula?

First, nationalism is particularly able to offer individuals the ideological myths of ancestry, kinship, permanence and home, which promise a sense of identity, security and moral authority to individuals faced with the complexities and uncertainties of modernity. Second, individuals are most likely to need this form of ideological support if their face-to-face communities and authority structures of family and locality are being attenuated or disrupted by various aspects of the ‘modernisation’ process.115
Drawing on psychoanalysis helps to explain the first of those propositions.

[I]t is the family and home which provide the unconscious models employed by individuals who seek relief from insecurity in a sense of identification with community. Nationalism, more than other identity constructions, is able to portray itself as the family, in all its symbolism of ancestors, forefathers, national character, homeland, and fatherland.

It combines ‘the myth of common ancestry and the myth of homeland community’. It is also

particularly useful in employing psychological myths as the basis for political ideology. . . . In asserting the uniqueness and permanence of the national community; the emotional and physical security provided within the homeland; and the right of the moral community to self-determination, nationalism thereby translates the psychological needs of individuals into the public-rights claims of the authentic community, thus raising the insecure individual to the status of proud nation.116

Brown recognises that nationalism is only one avenue of mobilisation and one source of security, though in his view the most powerful. An historical approach might qualify his view in two ways. First, mobilisation is likely to take place over time rather than instantaneously. It will take time for an elite to persuade the masses, or for them to see, that it is the answer to their problems. Other felt communities may be embraced on the way or permanently, in particular those provided by religion. Second, more generally, a more intense religious attachment, if not ‘fundamentalism’, provides another response to the disruption that change brings to community and personality. That may intertwine with nationalism, not only in nationalist movements, but in nation-states.

What are the sources of individual insecurity? They may be found in ‘social, economic, and political processes . . . not always clearly comprehensible to those affected, and thence not so amenable to more rational solutions’. Among them are ‘the breakdown of pre-modern social structures and the rise of competitive individualism’. That may lead, as in Germany between the wars, to ‘a retreat from freedom into a fundamentally irrational identification with a unique community’.117 But that kind of response is fed, not only by capitalism, but by political repression, which, in Benner’s words, ‘encourages irrational behaviour because it doesn’t allow people to make their own considered choices out of a range of policy options. Where people have scant control over their own destinies, they feel helpless’.118
The reference to repression is relevant to colonial rule, it may be observed. Colonial rulers were not equally repressive, but they seldom provided positive forms of identity that were readily attractive. They might find collaborators among the elite, though some of those rationalised their action, if not by sheer pragmatism, then by a belief that they were acquiring knowledge and experience that their community needed in the future. Peasants, by contrast, had long followed their own rationales. What they faced was not so much a new level of government repression as a new level of government activity.

In industrialised societies, Brown continues, increased social mobility and ‘individualistic cultures associated with modernity’ have ‘apparently’ weakened the nuclear family and the sense of local community. But in addition ‘[c]olonialism frequently disrupted local rural communities through the introduction of education and the related migration of youths to urban areas in search of employment’.119 That, indeed, had earlier precedents in industrialised societies, it might be added.

As Brown’s remarks imply – and it is worth again emphasising – the sense of community is no simple matter, nor a locus of abrupt change. The family may be weakened, but it is not displaced. The sense of local community can be combined with a sense of national community. Indeed, the former is often a proxy for the latter. One may think of a particular ‘home’ that stands for the ‘homeland’ of our imagined community.

Brown offers instances from Southeast Asia as well as from Europe, Burmans as well as Basques.

When functioning kinship and locality communities are weakened, either by economic forces or by political interventions, one result is to disrupt social cohesion so as to make anomic people susceptible to visions of harmony and unity embodied either in nostalgic myths of an ideal past, or Utopian dreams of an ideal future. The other frequent impact is to dislocate the authority structure of such communities so that incumbent or aspiring elites lose both their power and their authority and thus begin to search for new ways to re-establish authority.... [N]ationalism becomes an attractive ideological formula since it can provide both ideological legitimacy to elites in search of authority, and visions of community to masses in search of social cohesion.120

Brown also recurs to his Ewe studies, pointing out – as in his Burma discussion – that nationalisms can produce ‘new situations of conflict and rivalry’, both within nationalist movements – ‘with competing elites promoting different visions of nationhood’ – and between or among different nationalisms.121 In a sense, perhaps, they replicate the earlier struggles of the imperial era as they face the construction and management of an independent state in the post-imperial era.
In his second chapter Brown points to the common elements in the three approaches he has outlined. All either stress or at least imply or leave the way open for the initiative of an elite. Those who adopt a modernist approach see the nation-state as ‘the social, cultural and political unit appropriate for modernisation and industrialisation’, but also recognise ‘that this functional fit is facilitated by the push of political elites promulgating ideological myths and symbols of nationhood’. Even Smith, Brown points out, accepts that, while there is a continuity between ethnic and nation, myths will be chosen and manipulated.122 There is, Brown argues, a tension between two visions of the national community, the ‘civic’ and the ‘ethnocultural’, but nationalisms combine them, and the tension has been meliorated by the emphasis nationalist elites have placed on equitable development.123

Disparity between promise and performance breeds disillusionment and tends to expose the tension between the civic and the ethnocultural visions. State elites may react by attempting ‘to reengineer a stronger national identity’. Ethnic minorities believe they are marginalised, cheated by civic nationalism, and resort to ethnic. The two visions of nationalism, not longer combining, come openly to clash. ‘[I]ndividuals experiencing social disruption and anomie begin to search for a new imagined community.’ Hence the concepts of multiculturalism; but ‘[i]t is unclear whether they promise to resolve the nationalist problem by finally disengaging the civic and ethnocultural visions, or by ensuring the continued ambiguity between the two’.124

Brown’s analysis has been so extensively expounded because it seems so convincingly to deal with the questions raised by the attempts of others. The present author will continue gratefully to use its insights, applying them to the nationalist experience of Southeast Asia through the period since the late eighteenth century. He values it, in particular, because its ‘constructivism’ leaves room for the activities of elites and masses, for individuals. They have to make choices within whatever range of options they perceive to be available, seeking help, following examples, using resources, in their endeavour to build nations, states or regimes. The chronological approach extends the concept but also sustains and strengthens it.

The present author will want to pay attention to the endeavours of colonial and imperial rulers as well as to nationalists and their followers. They provided a context within which worldwide economic changes made their impact on Southeast Asian societies. They shaped nationalism and the options available to nationalists, providing the rudiments of a nation-state by establishing a ‘colonial state’, a concept that came to seem oxymoronic, if it was not always so. They provided role models for government and ‘development’. They provided education, which continually escaped the constraints they set on it. They provided an opposition, too, in contending
with which the nationalists found an element of unity which did not necessarily survive their success.

Indeed Minogue’s emphasis on foreign oppression is, though important, only part of the story. Those who were ‘foreign’ or came to seem ‘foreign’ were constructive not only in a negative sense – by providing an object of hatred or a source of common suffering – but also in a positive way. In part that was indeed unintended, ‘capricious’: nations grew, aspirations formed, as a result of ‘formation’ rather than ‘building’. Merely extending to the colonies practices common in the metropolis – education and training, the census, railways, the telegraph, for example – made the territories at first projections of the imperial state, and then something more. Some imperial rulers indeed came to foster or at least to attempt to co-opt the nationalism that found support.

The present author also thinks that he may add to the ‘story’ by placing the nationalist movements, not only in a regional context, but in an international context. Both offer the prospects of a comparative approach, and, though he will particularly focus on the former, both are essential. Globalisation is new perhaps only in its intensity. Nationalism has been shaped by international movements, including Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Marxism, by inter-state rivalry and conflict, by example and assistance. The political fortunes of the independent nation-states were affected by Cold War rivalries and the economic prospects both by those rivalries and the global economic trends since 1945. A chronology that charts the development of nationalism – in attempted amplification of a definition – must place each movement in time and circumstance.

The historian will point out that over the whole period – but particularly since the 1820s – the concept of history itself changed. It first insisted on the need to secure ‘objectivity’ and conceived that it might be found in the study of sources that would tell us how things really had been. At the very same time – somewhat paradoxically – nationalism also told people how things had been: there was a tension between the two. The tension re-emerged with colonial nationalism and the creation of ex-colonial states. Builders of nation, state and regime needed a legitimating past. But was it a legitimate one? And could one answer that even as well as before, when ‘objective’ history seemed to some itself no longer a valid concept?
In the previous chapter the author searched for a compendious definition of nationalism. That his sources helped him to find in a sense of community. Its origins would lie at once in the decay or diminution of the sense of belonging to other forms of community or in the sense that, without being displaced, they were no longer adequate on their own, no longer offered sufficient security, sufficient assurance; and in the availability of alternative options and models. The older forms of community would be disrupted by economic or political forces, by economic change, by imperial takeover. But, perhaps at the same time, there would be glimpses of an alternative, possibly provided through those forces, and more generally through the increasing globalisation of communications and the evidence that a world of nations was emerging. The outcome could be the creation of an independent state. But that was not the end of the matter. Nationalism both worked to sustain the independent state and provoked opposition to it, and that also took place in an ‘international’ context. The states were ruled as nations, but other nations or would-be nations aspired to independence, too, replicating the earlier process, but amid an advancing globalisation that in some ways at least wished to by-pass the current nation-states and amid a communications revolution that gave ‘minorities’ new opportunities. The author added that, like other historical events, the emergence of nationalism and the nation-state cannot be satisfactorily explained simply as a matter of process. The decisions men took in given circumstances are part of the story.

The purpose of the present chapter is to consider ways in which the tentative definition of nationalism may be validated or amplified by placing it more fully in historical and geographical contexts. Surveying its general development since the later eighteenth century, even briefly, may help to sustain or qualify the definition. It may also help in considering the attempts that have been made to offer taxonomies and typologies of nationalisms and schema for the development of nationalist movements. They may be distinguished by timing, not merely by character, and compared within different chronological frameworks. Advancing the definition in these ways should also facilitate attempts subsequently to apply it to
Southeast Asia, testing both its validity and its value by employing it in attempts to understand and interpret its recent past. For that, however, some albeit brief account will be needed of the more remote past of the region.

‘If nationalism became theoretically central to western political thinking in the nineteenth century, it existed as a powerful reality in some places long before that’, writes Adrian Hastings. ‘English nationalism of a sort was present already in the fourteenth century in the long wars with France and still more in the sixteenth and seventeenth.’ In some measure he endorses Liah Greenfeld’s notion. The English nation was ‘the first nation in the world (and the only one, with the possible exception of Holland, for about two hundred years)’. ‘The birth of the English nation was not the birth of a nation, it was the birth of the nations, the birth of nationalism. England is where the process originated.’ ‘The England that emerged from the civic and military trials of the mid-seventeenth century was a nation.”

That argument she intensified in *The Spirit of Capitalism*. Nationalism she sees as ‘the preponderant vision of society’ in the England of Elizabeth I, ‘effectively transforming social consciousness by 1600’. That, and the values associated with it, promoted a modern economy. It is ‘the original, English, nationalism, to which we owe the forward aspiration of modern economy and its insatiable yearning for ever greater power’. By contrast, she is now clear that the Dutch Republic was ‘not a nation’. The Dutch ‘saw the world differently’. Unlike the English, they passed no navigation acts. They apparently ‘viewed economic growth and economic and social health as entirely separate and possibly contrary objectives’.3

The better interpretation would surely ground England’s ‘modernity’ not in national rivalry but in state rivalry. The navigation acts were after all directed against the Dutch, who had no need of such measures. Though contemporaries at times used the word ‘nation’, their concern was with the survival of the state in the inter-state struggles of the seventeenth century. In competition with the Dutch, furthermore, the English state reformed its state finances, paradoxically by utilising what George Downing had learned from the Dutch. Parliamentary authority underwrote loans with the authority of the state, not just the monarch. The system was consolidated by the Dutch invasion of 1688–9 and the creation of the Bank of England on the model of the Bank of Amsterdam. It was in this way, not through the nationalist spirit, that England, and later Britain, dramatically enhanced its power. The next century was marked by its contests with the French monarchy. Among them, it may be, we shall have a better chance of finding the ‘root’ of nationalism.

In what became the United States the founding documents allow us to trace the shift from the reference to the ‘people’ in 1776 to the reference to the ‘nation’ in 1789. But what prompted the declaration about the ‘people’ and their rights? One source was the intensification of
Anglo–French rivalry and its extension to the Americas in the Seven Years War. Britain was victorious, but it needed to keep an army in America, and that needed to be paid for. The colonists would have to be taxed, George Grenville told Jared Ingersoll and his fellow agents. Being taxed by a parliament in which the colonies were not represented would, they thought, lay ‘a foundation . . . for mutual jealousy and ill will’. What was to be done? asked Grenville. If the colonies sent representatives to parliament in London, they would be in a minority. ‘What then? Shall no steps be taken and must we and America be two distinct kingdoms and that now immediately, or must America be defended entirely by us, and be themselves quite excused or be left to do just what they please to do?’ Steps were taken, the colonies rebelled, the French intervened, the first British empire came to an end, a new state was established that saw itself as a nation. No doubt a sense of community had been forming among the colonists. It was the crisis in their relations with the imperial government prompted by war and taxation without representation that led them to claim independence and, in conditions of conflict, set about state-building and, under Alexander Hamilton’s guidance, industry-building.

The struggle with Britain – not yet industrialised, but commercially successful – put a strain on the structure of the French state, too. The Anglophobia of the second Hundred Years War stimulated the cult of the nation. As David A. Bell has pointed out, it also provoked a confrontation between Louis XV and his parlements. Louis told them that they did not represent ‘the organ of the Nation, the protector of the Nation’s liberty, interests and rights’. On the contrary, ‘the rights and interests of the Nation, which some would make a body separate from the monarch, are necessarily joined with mine and rest only in my hands.’ The monarchy had, however, to attempt reform. ‘The reasons . . . lay in international relations and the threat to the country posed by other powers.’ The Assembly of Notables in 1787 provided the opposition that the government’s measures stirred up with an opportunity to come together, but also to compromise. No solution was, however, found, and the Estates-General was summoned. It transformed itself into a ‘National Assembly’, and claimed that the nation was the source of sovereignty. ‘France became the title of a country not a king.’ ‘Each people is independent and sovereign’, ran the declaration of 1795. ‘This sovereignty is inalienable.’

‘Monarchy is all a bubble’, Tom Paine claimed. But turning the inhabitants of France into Frenchmen, subjects into citizens, did not happen overnight: the ‘nation’ was but partially formed. ‘We have revolutionized the government, the laws, the habits, the customs, commerce, and thought’, Barère told the Committee of Public Safety in 1794; ‘let us also revolutionize the language which is their daily instrument.’ ‘Citizens! the language of a free people ought to be one and the same for all.’ In face of opposition at home, the new government acted in revolutionary ways, making ‘a dramatic further advance towards the modern structure of
government and society’. The opposition it faced and provoked abroad was a challenge but also an opportunity. The government had to mobilise the citizens, calling for ‘the nation in arms’. In turn that offered both threat and example to other states.

The reaction in other parts of Europe was also ambiguous, though the Germans were not quite alone in their ‘disgrace’, as Fichte said in the addresses to the German Nation he delivered at the university of Berlin in the years that followed Prussia’s defeat at Jena. The ‘disgrace’ lay in their being ‘the only nation which, as soon as foreign arms ruled over us, started ourselves to abuse our governments, our rulers, whom we had flattered before in a disgusting manner, as if we had merely been awaiting this moment’. Prussian reformers argued that they had to respond, end feudalism, arm the people. But, possessing many states but not a state, Germans also reacted against the French by creating a romantic nationalism of their own. Herder had thought it part of God’s plan that humankind experienced the world in groups, peoples, of which language and culture were authentic expressions. ‘Every nation has its centre of happiness within itself’. In face of the Jacobins and the new Charlemagne, German intellectuals evoked the Volksgeist, a nationalism without as yet as state, ‘more attuned to the conditions of stateless people or to outright rejection of existing states as non-national’. Securing a state followed. But Britain – now the first industrial power – was in mind, as well as France, even more than France. ‘This English–French “dual revolution” impinged on the rest of Europe like a tidal wave.’

The Germans secured a nation-state in part as a result of war, in part as a result of nation formation through the creation of infrastructure, in part as a result of industrialisation, even more, perhaps, as a result of the aspiration to industrialise, to follow Britain’s example. Learning from his experience of Hamiltonian economics in the US, Friedrich List had argued that free trade served the interest of Britain, now the leading industrial power. Through it, he thought, it would become ‘one immense manufacturing city. Asia, Africa, and Australia would be civilized by England, and covered with new states modeled after the English fashion. . . . It would not require many centuries before people of this English world would think and speak of the Germans and French in the same tone as we speak at present of Asiatic nations.’ He advocated the customs union and the railway building that provided Gemany’s ‘iron’. At others’ expense, Bismarck provided the ‘blood’, first in the war with Austria (1866), and then in the war with France (1870).

Italy secured national unity in part with the help of Napoleon III in 1859, in part, too, as a result of Austria’s defeat at Prussia’s hands. ‘We have made Italy; now we have to make Italians.’ France lost Alsace-Lorraine. It was in the light of that dispute that Ernest Renan gave his famous lecture, ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un nation?’ (1882). As against Treitschke’s ethno-linguistic criteria, he argued that the nation was a spiritual and
political principle, a product of circumstances, but not a mere construct, ‘a culmination of a long past of endeavours’, a solidarity of sacrifice, summarised in the present by ‘consent’, ‘a daily plebiscite’.21

Latin American revolutionaries had secured independence from Spain, partly as a result of the Napoleonic war, partly as a result of British and US diplomacy. But no one, even in the 1870s, thought that the nation-state was to be universal, even in Europe. Mazzini’s ‘ideal Europe’ of 1857 had only 11 nations (and no Ireland).22 The constraints were dropped in the 1880–1914 phase, with Central and Eastern Europe in mind. The idea of ‘self-determination’ took hold and was reinforced by World War I, which saw the intervention of the US, the breakup of the old European empires, and the Bolshevik revolution. Wilson produced his 14 points and Lenin his commitment to the backward and colonial countries and, temporarily, to bourgeois nationalism. The new international organisation was a League of Nations. In the war national feeling, until now ‘something high and beautiful’, became, the great Danish composer Carl Nielsen thought, ‘a kind of spiritual syphilis, which has eaten up the brain and grins out through the empty eye sockets in crazed hate’.23 But it was nevertheless treated as the basis of the peace settlement.

The British empire presented itself as the British Commonwealth of Nations, standing, as Smuts put it, not ‘for unity, standardisation, or assimilation, or denationalisation’, but for ‘a fuller, a richer, and more various life among all the nations that compose it’.24 Britain began to extend that promise to India, which played an important role in the war, and the Burmans, then under the Indian government, demanded that they should not be left behind. Many of the other colonies and dependencies acquired in the previous century remained under Britain, France, the US, and Japan. Yet increasingly a world of states was emerging from a world of empires, and increasingly it was conceived as a world of nation-states. World War II speeded up the process, both by dislodging the Southeast Asian empires and by the involvement of the US and the Soviet Union, rivals that both opposed ‘imperialism’. Postwar, with varying degrees of struggle, what were called ‘nationalist movements’, even though no nations might yet exist, secured independence for states almost always within the boundaries created by the imperial powers. Their success was marked by diplomatic recognition and by entry into the international body, now called the United Nations.

The idea of the nation-state triumphed, but not nationalism. The world of nations was ‘a hotchpotch of bizarrely shaped and sized entities’, as Billig puts it. ‘[T]he boundary-consciousness of nationalism has itself known no boundaries in its historical triumph’, he says.25 But his statements, true enough in one sense, underplay another. Some nationalisms triumphed, not others, and not all could. They were placed within boundaries. Boundaries were easy to change in the imperial period, much more difficult, almost impossible, to change in a world of nation-states. Once
nation-states have filled the world, they cannot readily allow the process to continue. ‘No new state is anxious to support any challenge to other new states for fear this could rebound on itself.’ Instead of being an ordering process, nationalism would become, once more, a disordering one.

That had been apparent in Europe in the 1920s. The Aland islanders, mostly Swedish in language and culture, wished to be part of Sweden, rather than continue to be part of the now-independent Finland. ‘The answer can only be in the negative’, the committee of rapporteurs told the League of Nations Council. ‘To concede to minorities either of language or religion, or to any fractions of a population, the right of withdrawing from the community to which they belong, because it is their wish or their good pleasure, would be to destroy order and stability within states and to inaugurate anarchy in international life.’

Writing in 1931 Carlton Hayes had wondered whether nationalism in Asia would lead whither nationalism in Europe had led. ‘If in Europe the acquisition of sovereign national independence has been followed ever faster . . . by the rise of a proud intolerant imperialist nationalism, how soon will the same phenomenon occur in Asia?’ In the event – once the ‘sudden rampage’ of the Japanese had been brought to an end – ‘nations’ have largely accepted the boundaries of the imperial era. National self-determination ‘has conquered the world for the people by legitimising the state and only the state, which claims to speak in their name; and it has elevated and institutionalised the progressive view of human affairs by attempting to freeze the political map in a way which has never previously been attempted’.

UN Resolution 1514 (XV) [1960] supported the right of self-determination of ‘all peoples’ [Article 2]. But it added that ‘[a]ny attempt at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the United Nations’. Self-determination was directed against the imperial powers, not their successors. In that case uti possidetis prevailed. An International Court of Justice report on the Mali–Burkina Faso frontier case resonates beyond Africa. Uti possidetis at first sight conflicts with self-determination. ‘In fact, however, the maintenance of the territorial status quo in Africa is often seen as the wisest course, to preserve what has been achieved by peoples who have struggled for their independence, and to avoid a disruption which would deprive the continent of the gains achieved by much sacrifice.’

In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as Christie points out, there is a consensus against exploiting separatism in neighbouring states: ‘an awareness that most if not all the states of Southeast Asia are vulnerable to regional discontents and separatist impulses, and that a policy of tit-for-tat provocations could rapidly lead to the unravelling of the stability of the whole region.’ If stability is to be secured, however, the counterpart has to be, if not assimilation, accommodation.
Rarely have minorities willingly sought independence, it may be added: more often they have been provoked into seeking it. ‘Nationalists paid attention to one another, then proceeded to copy one another. Hence, when a movement arrived – that is, what characteristics predominated in the nationalist causes around it – had a great deal to do with the kind of movement it would be.’ The idea may be extended in two ways. Timing is indeed significant, but not only in relation to other nationalist movements. Nationalist movements, even a brief general account has made apparent, acquire some of their characteristics in relation to other contexts as well. They are promoted by the Anglo–French struggles, by the prospect of industrialisation, by World War I, by the anti-colonialism both of the US and the Soviet Union, by the emergence of international bodies, by the growing ‘banality’ of nationalism as the means of ordering a world of states. At the same time, indeed, they might be inspired by other nationalist movements, or receive moral or material support from them. ‘A colonized people is not alone’, Fanon declared. ‘In spite of all that colonialism can do, its frontiers remain open to new ideas and echoes from the world outside.’ Dien Bien Phu was not only a Vietnamese victory.

The idea is extended by recognising that nationalism also operated within a ‘domestic’ context, within, that is, the boundaries that it helped to shape or that it inherited. It was a means of organising state ‘communities’ that made up the world ‘community’. Much, as Wiebe implies, might be borrowed, and that could include not merely the current conceptualisation of nationalism and the structuring of a movement. It would also include, or aspire to include, the technology currently available: industrialisation, itself passing through various phases; transport, including rail, road, and air; the media, print, film, radio, television, electronics. When you ‘arrived’ – or hoped to arrive – would help to determine what use you could make or try to make of these; and that would indeed help – along with other external factors – to determine where you would arrive, at independence or beyond, or short of it. Twentieth century nationalisms, as Anderson puts it, had ‘a profoundly modular character. They can, and do draw on more than a century and a half of human experience and three earlier models of nationalism’, official, popular, and citizen-republican. ‘Nationalism is one country learning from another – sometimes without discrimination’, Minogue observes.

The alleged avatar, England/Britain, had organised itself with unprecedented effect as a state, rather than a nation. It borrowed its fiscal structure from a republic, though remaining a monarchy. It built up a system that linked taxation and representation so closely that the Americans had to break away. With these structures it defeated the states whose rivalry had helped to prompt their creation, and then built upon its security an albeit temporary industrial primacy. Later nation-states were not the result of the same process, nor of one that extended over so long a period.
There was, it might be said, almost too much to borrow, and too little time to do it in. Postcolonial states often emerged with comparatively little conflict, inheriting frontiers but comparatively little else from their colonial predecessors. The rivalry that had bound state and nation together in Europe does not exist. There millions had died for their nation. ‘But . . . would the state expect its citizens to die for the sake of achieving a statistical target of “economic growth”?\textsuperscript{37}

Even so expanded, Wiebe’s suggestion also, of course, has limits. If there was a larger external context, there was an internal one as well. Geography played a role as well as timing. It was the interaction between the external and internal factors that gave nationalism what can be conceived in generic terms as its particular case histories. What did nationalism or nationalist movements have to work on? Within the territories concerned there might already be a sense of unity that some might, with Hobsbawm, risk terming ‘proto-nationalist’. The state might have retained its political independence. It might have lost it to an imperial colonial or protecting power, and nationalism would be affected by what it did, what happened, whether that was planned or not, whether it provided a target for nationalist opposition or an encouragement or both, whether it survived anti-imperialist shifts in world or metropolitan opinion or foreign invasion. In all cases, too, nationalism would face existing diversity and difference, increased by economic and political change and the mixture of confusion and aspiration they created.

Given such qualifications, it is still possible to consider a typology like that offered by John A. Hall, who suggests that there have been three great ages of nationalism, marked off by the Latin American revolution, by Versailles, by decolonisation, and now, perhaps, a fourth, with the breakup of the Soviet Union,\textsuperscript{38} a concept that might be endorsed without accepting, perhaps, the exclusion of German and Italian ‘unification’. But it may, and perhaps should, also be combined with a schema that would describe the stages through which a nationalist movement might pass or in which nationalism might be variously deployed. It would not prescribe that nationalism or nationalist movements should follow all the stages or proceed at the same pace or in the same way through any one of them. But the notion would further complement the author’s definition by helping to ascertain what is common and what is distinctive among such movements and so judge and perhaps enhance the extent to which it is valid.

Miroslav Hroch offers something of a precedent. In his study of Central and Eastern Europe, he offers two tasks for the comparative method: ‘the interpretation of the causal relations, the study of the general characteristics, and the social determinants, of the national movement considered as a process’; and ‘the characterisation of the position a particular phenomenon (or historical process) occupies within the broad stream of
historical development . . . especially important as a corrective to the study of the history of an individual nation or region.’ He then distinguishes between applying the method diachronically – vertically, along the chronological axis – and synchronically – horizontally, treating different countries at the same time. He notes ‘the asynchrony sometimes manifested by historical development’ and suggests that the possibility of making ‘a synchronic comparison according to analogous historical situations. If we can establish that the objects of comparison pass through the same stages of development, we can compare these analogous stages, even if from the standpoint of absolute chronology they occurred at different times.’

Hroch himself focused on Central and Eastern Europe in the period marked off in Hall’s phasing by ‘Versailles’. Around 1800, he suggests there were seven established nation-states in Europe, and 20 non-dominant ethnic groups. Sooner or later, some members of the latter ‘started to focus on their own ethnicity and to conceive of their group as a potential nation’. There were three groups of demands: development or improvement of a national culture, based on language; creation of a complete social structure, including their own educated elites; achievement of civil rights and ‘some degree of self-administration’. The demand for self-determination emerged late in most cases. ‘The relative priority and timing of each of these sets of demands varied and we can use them as suitable criteria for a typological differentiation of national movements.’

Hroch also distinguishes three structural phases between the starting point and the conclusion, which he depicts as ‘the achievement of all attributes of a fully formed nation’. In Phase A activists devote themselves to scholarly inquiry, with no political goals. In Phase B ‘patriots’ try to win over as many as possible to ‘the project of creating a future nation’. Phase C is a mass movement.

Phase B, he adds, began in the West under conditions provided by constitutional regimes and civil society, in the East under absolutist regimes, Austrian, Russian, Turkish. Seeking participation began at the local and regional level, only possible after 1860 in Austria and after 1905 in Russia, when constitutional regimes were introduced. It was not an end in itself, not merely designed to secure jobs, but designed to establish secondary schools, pursue social demands, acquire autonomy. Few, says Hroch, sought independence. Theories of nationalism which define national goals as a struggle for independence do not accord with the facts, he adds. Only Lithuania sought independence in 1905.

His aim – to study ‘the process of formation of a modern nation out of a small, oppressed nationality’ – and his categorisations – though embedded in Marxism – may have broader relevance, for example to a discussion of nationalism and national movements in European empires overseas. But if they can usefully be abstracted from their geographical placement, they risk being too time-bound. Few sought independence at that time,
but after Versailles, as he recognises, they did. The loss of independence in World War II was seen as a tragedy, and the collapse of the Soviet Union became a fourth age of nationalism. An independent nation-state is not a necessary result of nationalism, but it came to be seen to be so. Only in more recent decades – as the borders of nation-states jointly filled the frontiers of the world – did that become once more a doubtful prospect, a fourth age providing an exception to prove a rule.

Hroch’s three stages, says Billig, are not enough. ‘There are no further stages to describe what happens once the nation-state is established. It is as if nationalism suddenly disappears.’ He is arguing his case for the ‘banality’ of nationalism[s] that surrounds us all, consciously in sport, less consciously in other fields, the product, we might say, both of ‘building’ and ‘formation’. But Hroch also leaves out those new – and not so new – nation-states that have, Italian-style, to create a nation for the state, covered, perhaps, in the third of Minogue’s three stages, ‘stirrings’, struggle for independence, and ‘consolidation’. There are, too, those regimes that seek to use it as a means of boosting their authority and guaranteeing their survival. ‘[E]xpansionist nationalism can also be stoked up to fuel the expansionist imperialism of a powerful nation-state.’ And there have been regimes which seemed to find it difficult to maintain control. The Pan-Germans thought the Kaiser’s government was too moderate. ‘Few governments, even before 1914, were as chauvinist as the nationalist ultras who urged them on.’ Two other possible phases might be added. If the nation is in Eugen Weber’s phrase ‘a work-in-progress’, a reverse process, Hastings suggests, is possible: ‘Scottish nationhood may have existed, then declined in the degree of its reality, but now be advancing once more.’ Finally – perhaps – there is ‘diapora nationalism’, now filling part of the contested space between the nation-state and ‘globalisation’.

In introducing his account of the rise of nationalism in Vietnam – ‘a word’, as he says, ‘widely used but poorly defined’ – William J. Duiker describes the ‘working definition’ he has used: in fact a definition combined with a phasing. Nationalism is – ‘like most manifestations of group feeling’ – ‘the result of a gradual process which begins with a primitive awareness of shared destiny and of ethnic or cultural distinctiveness. Only gradually does national consciousness expand into an awareness of the modern concept of nationhood, rooted in the mass of the population.’ Through the process ‘a people become conscious of themselves as a separate national identity in the modern world . . . willing to transfer their primary loyalty from the village, or the region, or the monarch, to the nation-state’.

In the process, Duiker suggests, there are three stages. ‘In the early stages, the sense of nationality is often primitive, and patriotic movements might be labeled protonationalist.’ ‘[M]odern nationalism’ begins when ‘the elite leadership of such movements becomes increasingly sophistic-
ated about the nature of the world beyond the borders’. ‘Mature nationalism makes its appearance when a substantial portion of the local community begins to be aware of its society as a definable national community in the world, as a body of citizens linked together by a common destiny, and not simply as the patrimony of a ruler or of an aristocratic class’.50

Stage by stage, a people becomes conscious of a sense of community as a nation, and of its position as a nation among nations, in what is becoming a world of nation-states. Duiker’s suggestion encompasses the shift in loyalties and identities that has to occur. It distinguishes the articulation of those loyalties among the elite and among the masses. It points out that nationalism distinguishes one community from another. It implies, though without directly arguing, that the general aspiration of nationalists is to independence in a world of nation-states. In all these ways it is useful, though, as he insists, incomplete, a ‘working definition’.

The present author would want to alter the description of the first phase, useful as it is. While accepting that the Vietnamese had, as a result of their long struggle with, and also borrowing from, neighbouring China, ‘a distinctly “national” ethnic spirit, more self-conscious, and more passionate, than that found virtually anywhere else in Southeast Asia’,51 he argues, as in the case of Hobsbawn, against the concept of proto-nationalism, both on general historiographical and particular historical grounds. Nationalism must be conceived as a modern movement. But clearly some leaders will, as a result of earlier history, be better able than others to develop a sense of national community.

The activities of the elite – and indeed its formation and its objectives – also require additional analysis. Deutsch drew on the work of Robert Lamb on the American revolutionaries – who were to create a new state (though their heirs are now talking of a First Nation) – and it has a wider relevance.

To form a new American nation-state separate from Britain, a new national elite had to come together, and it in turn had to organize the political, economic and social institutions of a new nation. This process was generated by the Revolutionary war, and channelled by the Continental Congress which first brought together in Philadelphia in 1774 representatives of the elites from all thirteen of the original colonies.52

It also had to win support. That, of course, was made easier by the conflict with the imperial power, and by other longer-term factors, such as a common language, though one shared with the colonial power. For later nationalist elites that further part of the process might be more intractable. In some cases, the elite found support not so much through a wider acceptance of their nationalist ideals as through their partial coincidence with concepts held by the mass of ‘the people’, sustained, in
some cases, by religion, often with a millennialist content, and through the working of more traditional ties, such as those between patron and client. ‘Modernising’ the relationship was a continuing process, helped or hindered by the colonial power and the changes it intentionally or unintentionally brought about. In some cases, indeed, state independence was delivered before the process was far advanced.

The ‘working definition’ is, however, strong enough to facilitate Hroch’s attempt to have it both ways, to facilitate comparison despite asynchrony. It is helpful in regard to Southeast Asia, not only in respect of comparing the nationalist movements there, but in comparing them with nationalist movements elsewhere. The appropriation of the past, evident, for example, among Frantisek Palacky and the Czech intellectuals, is paralleled in Indonesia and Cambodia, though often aided by the work of European scholars. Moderate, even collaborationist, forms of nationalism were evident in Cochin-China as in the Philippines. Nervousness about the masses was a feature of Rizal’s thinking. Asynchrony even so reminds us that there may be ‘borrowings’ or ‘imitations’. For some Indonesians at the end of World War II and after, the ‘corporatist’ approach of the Germans was more attractive than the ‘liberal’ approach of the French. The Burmans often alluded to the example of the Irish Free State. Inter-war Thai nationalism borrowed from German.

The Thai state was of course independent. In most cases the attitude of the ruling power is again part of the story in both the second and third stages of the Duiker schema: not only helping to create the conditions under which nationalism might emerge and the borders within which it might act, but shaping the development of the movement by affording or denying opportunities to collaborate or participate or resorting to repression. ‘[A] nation was born’, as the Indonesian journal Tempo put it, ‘because of our efforts to give meaning to the fruit of history that fell into the garden of our experience.’

Significant, too, is the attitude of other external powers. They offer examples. Will they do more? Will they help to sustain a colonial regime, if not by direct intervention, then at least, say, by denying sanctuary to its opponents or even arresting them? Or will they intervene to overthrow it, intentionally or otherwise thereby offering the nationalists new opportunities, if also new challenges? In this respect nationalisms in Southeast Asia, at least as the twentieth century advanced, found themselves in a broader international context than those of nineteenth century Europe. In general, information about other parts of the world was now far more widely diffused, and that contributed to the creation of ‘public opinion’ on international affairs, within countries, but also among them, so that it became possible to speak of ‘world opinion’. Heavily inflected by national interest, that opinion was at the same time bound to recognise the wider applicability of the national concept with which it had grown up. The emergence of ‘international’ organisations pointed the same way.
So, too, did two other changes apparently, but not in fact, at odds. First, as more nation-states secured independence, more still were likely to do so: not only did it come to seem the norm; they could in a measure support each other. Second, two super-states appeared, the US and the Soviet Union, who became rivals. Their rivalry was, however, expressed in part by competing for the allegiance of lesser states. That gave nationalists yet more leverage, though it also complicated their task. For after the revolution of 1917 Russian internationalism was associated with social revolution, and with an ideology that at least envisaged the ultimate withering-away of the state, though it could also, at least temporarily, use or be used by nationalism. Working with that internationalism could thus divide nationalists as well as help them. It could also complicate their relationships with others: with the colonial rulers, with their neighbours, with the US.

The final comment Duiker prompts is a reminder. So much of Western history, and of the modern history of Southeast Asia, is taken up by the nation-state, and nationalism is now so banal within and among states, that it is hard to conceive of a world in which nationalism and the nation-state did not exist, but allegiance was given to king or priest, to patron or clan, and identity so found. It is hard also to do justice to those who seem to us to act against a ‘national’ interest, or in ways that seem to take no account of it, accepting ‘alien’ rule or serving in ‘foreign’ forces. Yet it is essential to avoid the temptation of the Whig historian. If there is no nation, there can be no disloyalty to a nation. If there is no sense of nationality, the apparent ease with which imperial governments could rule becomes easier to explain.

Whatever the role of foreign commercial enterprise or Western imperialism in the creation of nationalism in Southeast Asia, its story cannot of course start there. Even if an earlier phase cannot be qualified in terms of ‘proto-nationalism’, the descendants of the aggregations of people then drawn together might come to constitute a nationalist movement and become citizens of a nation-state. The states formed in pre-nationalist times might become the stuff of nationalist legend or the basis of a ‘national history’, of greater or lesser persuasiveness or strength. Their story might become one of ‘national heroes’ or heroines, even though those had themselves no thought of nation. An intervening period of colonial subjection would not diminish the power of that concept: rather the reverse. It could be elided or played down. It could also be made much of: a period of common suffering, itself creating a sense of community. Nor, of course, could nationalism or the nation-state be unaffected by their economic, social and religious inheritance. They could not but combine ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’.

Herman Kulke suggests three phases or levels in state formation in Southeast Asia: the local, the regional, and the ‘imperial’. ‘Very generally speaking, the first step always had to be the successful establishment and
consolidation of a solid local power within a limited territory.’ That he characterises as ‘chieftaincy’. Next might come the conquest of one or more neighbouring nuclear areas, incorporated not by administrative unification, but by the establishment of more or less regular tributary patterns. That formed the somewhat precarious ‘early kingdoms’ of Southeast Asia. From the early ninth century a small number of what Kulke calls ‘imperial’ kingdoms, or what the present author prefers to call super-kingsdoms, emerged, which unified two or even several core areas of former early kingdoms. But they, too, were fragile, challenged by their attempts to secure sufficient resources, in material but above all in manpower – in short supply in the region until a century ago – to ensure the continued retention of their acquisitions. The characteristic form is often described, as by Kulke, in terms borrowed from Europe, tributary and vassal. Oliver Wolters used the image of the ‘mandala’. ‘Mandalas would expand and contract in concertina-like fashion. Each one contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and try to build up their own networks of vassals.’

Such a concept suggests another semi-chronological phasing of history, one more special to Southeast Asia with the advantage, once more, that it facilitates both ordering and comparing. The author accepts it and extends it. Subsequent phases might include that of the ‘early’ Europeans, the Portuguese and the Dutch, whose commercial activities were driven by the state, and the Spaniards, who created a state; the phase in which ‘colonial states’ emerged; and the current phase, inaugurated by the securing of ‘independence’ in the years following the Japanese invasion. The last two phases – in which the sequence is convergent with phases in the typology of nationalism – will be covered in subsequent chapters.

Historians dispute the nature of the first state that appears in their accounts of the Southeast Asian region. Funan was ‘less likely a dominant empire than the largest and most aggressive of a number of principalities’, Ian Mabbett writes. Of these there were, he adds, ‘quite a few’, including the states of the Cham peoples to the east and to the west ‘a string of coastal city-states extending round the Gulf of Siam and down the Malay Peninsula’. Into this pattern the Khmers, who lived on the fringes of the forest or in clearings within it, were drawn.

Khmer kingdoms appear in the seventh and eighth centuries, known to us by inscriptions, and from the Chinese records. The latter speak of a state called Chen-la, though again historians differ over its nature: a single state or just one among contending principalities? Out of this Angkor, a Khmer empire or super-kingdom, was built up, ‘a constellation of communities sustained by stretches of water’, though the process is unclear. ‘Unification was an irregular and fitful process, not a once-for-all achievement; but in the end it came to be embodied in the Khmer state that survives today.’ Those who look back on it see Jayavarman II
(r. 790–c.835) as starting the pan-Khmer regime. Suryavarman II (r. 1113–c.1145–50) was the builder of Angkor Wat, ‘the most spectacular of all the monuments that remain to attest the empire’s glory’.59

The Khmers expanded westward, contending with the Mons who had founded the kingdom of Dvaravati, centred at the present city of Nakorn Pathom, and with the Thais of the Menam Chao Phraya valley. To the east they also contended with Champa, now thought to have been a ‘polyethnic’ country, including uplanders, Jarai and Rhade, Mpong and Stieng, as well as Chams. In 1177 Champa was able to defeat Angkor, but its success was only temporary. The prince who redeemed the Khmers was Jayavarman VII (r. 1181–1218). His reign, however, represented the peak of Angkor’s glory. In 1369 the capital was temporarily abandoned, and in the fifteenth century the Khmer rulers moved to the Phnom Penh vicinity. Angkor had, as Mabbett puts it, reverted from its ‘imperial’ standing to ‘that of a regional kingdom engaged in a struggle for survival with its neighbours’.60

The Chams had been contending with the Vietnamese to the north as well as with the Khmers. Conquered by the Han in the first century CE, the Red River area became the site of a relatively stable polity, built up by Chinese frontier administrators and leading local clans, sensitive to dynastic interests but ready also to take advantage of dynastic weakness. ‘Giao Province has gone its own way’, a Ch’i dynasty official lamented in the late fifth century; ‘[t]he people trust in their remoteness and the dangers of the road; they often rise in rebellion.’61 As part of its frontier reorganisation, the succeeding T’ang dynasty set up the Protectorate of An-nam, Pacified South, in 679. The T’ang were able to drive back a ninth century invasion from the kingdom of Nanchao in Yunnan. But the T’ang were now too weak to dominate Vietnam, and the regime that emerged from the post-invasion reconstruction was ‘the first of a number of transitional regimes that finally led to the establishment of an independent Vietnamese monarchy’.62

In 939 Ngo Quyen, the son of a provincial magistrate, took the title of king. A period of anarchy followed his death in 944. Out of this Dinh Bo Linh fashioned a new kingdom, which he called Dai Co Viet. Though he called himself emperor, he managed to come to terms with the new Sung dynasty to the north. His successor, Le Hoan, repelled the Sung’s attempt to benefit from his assassination, and the Vietnamese gained a century free of Chinese pressure, in which they could lay the foundations for continued independence. This was the work of the Ly dynasty, which based itself at Thanh-long (Hanoi), and of the Buddhist monks it employed. In 1076 it was able to defeat a second Sung invasion.

Under the Ming the Chinese sought in the early fifteenth century to restore the province of Giao. The endeavour was abandoned in the 1420s. Vietnamese resistance had gathered behind a wealthy landowner from Thanh Hoa, Le Loi, who began a new dynasty. The rule of his grandson,
Le Thanh Ton (1460–97), was famous. Keeping the Ming at arm’s length, he dealt Champa a decisive blow, capturing its capital, Vijaya, in 1471, and annexing everything north of what is now the border of the Vietnamese province of Binh Dinh. With that, however, Dai Viet came into closer contact – and into more intense conflict – with the Khmers, who were at odds also with the Thais.

The Shan-Thai-Lao peoples had been moving down the Salween and Menam Chao Phraya valleys under constant Chinese pressure in the early centuries CE. Early in the twelfth century tiny Thai states appeared in the upper Menam valley, and Shan states appeared in this region and in Burma and Assam in the thirteenth century. The weakening of Khmer power helps to explain the expansion of these peoples. The principal movement was, however, caused by the Mongols’ destruction of the kingdom of Nanchao in 1253. A last great dispersal ensued and Thai military ruling classes took control in new regions in the Irrawaddy and Menam valleys. By the end of the thirteenth century, the mainland was no longer dominated by super-kingsdoms: its political landscape, as David Wyatt puts it, was ‘fractured into numerous much smaller states, relatively more equal in their political and military power’.

In the 1290s Chiang Mai became the capital of the Lan Na kingdom, its ruler, Mangrai, fending off the Mongols, who settled for the presentation of tribute. To the south Ramkhamhaeng built up the kingdom of Sukho-tai after his accession in 1279, but it fell away after his death in 1298. The way was open for the creation of a new southern Thai state. Its centre was at Ayudhya on an island in the Menam, where the king was crowned in 1350, its influence based on ‘an uneasy alliance between Tai manpower . . . Khmer prestige and statecraft from Lopburi and the eastern provinces, and Chinese (and other Asian) commercial power concentrated at the center in the port-capital’. To the north lay the Lao states, welded into the kingdom of Lan Chang by Fa Ngoum in 1353, as well as Chiang Mai. Characteristically Ayudhya looked south, struggling with Cambodia, and gaining some form of control over much of the peninsula. Its great king Borommatrailokanat (Trailok) (r. 1448–88) strengthened its institutions.

The Tibeto-Burmans had been descending the Irrawaddy valley probably since the later centuries BCE. Until the early ninth century the Pyu people occupied the central as well as the southern zone, but in 832 and 835 they were raided by Nanchao, and they lost their last city in central Burma. That probably gave the Burmans their opportunity to create a kingdom of their own. A city, started on a Pyu site in 849, was to become Pagan. Its ‘great unifier’ was Aniruddha, who established Burman hegemony over the Mon kingdom of Thaton. The super-kingdom, like Angkor, was held together only with difficulty, and Mongol invasion was coupled with Mon rebellion. The notion that a subsequent period of anarchy gave the Shans their opportunity, and that they founded the kingdom of Ava in 1364, has recently been exploded by Michael Aung-Thwin.
Burman kingdom, ‘Pagan writ small’. It was unable to secure the submission of the Mon kingdom of Pegu, which had established its independence after the collapse of Pagan. Moreover, Arakan, which had hitherto been a field of conflict between Mons and Burmans, was able also to establish its independence after 1430, and a new capital was set up at Mrohaung.

Even so short an account suggests comparisons both among the peoples and states of Southeast Asia and between them and those of Europe. Some mainland peoples sustain or develop their identity over long periods, even to the present day; others vanish from the historical record, like the Pyus. Some create states with a continuous history; in other cases they are more ephemeral; in yet others – particularly in mountainous regions – they remain in a tributary relationship with lowland rulers. Angkor recalls a great state, while Hanoi has been the capital of the Vietnamese state – though somewhat discontinuously – for most of a millennium. The nationalists of the twentieth century might appropriate the past – some of whose monuments Europeans uncovered – and be inspired or in some cases daunted by it. Their chances were affected not only by the imperialists with whom they contended, but by another legacy of the past. The Southeast Asian monarchies had built themselves on and consolidated social systems that the colonial phase often did not dislodge, though it frequently modified.

The archipelago offers monuments of past greatness and distinctive social structures, but no state has so continuous a history as some of those on the mainland. One kind of archipelagic state was indeed likely to be readily challenged. That was first represented by Sri Vijaya, a state centred at Palembang in southern Sumatra. With the decline of Funan, and the increasing use of the Straits, it made itself from the late eighth century what proved to be the first of a number of commercial states or empires in the peninsula/archipelago area. Those sought to centralise the trade of a number of petty river-mouth statelets, and establish an entrepôt for traffic with the wider world. Their political structure remained somewhat fragile, requiring command of the sea, naval battles and blockades, and they were not backed by the larger resources of land and people at the disposal of mainland super-kingsdoms like Pagan or Angkor.

An entrepôt is always difficult to sustain, even apart from the weaknesses of a state that may be built upon it. On the one hand, it is exposed to rivals, who may plunder it, even if they cannot displace it. An entrepôt is, on the other hand, also exposed to economic dissolution, in particular through the development of alternative connections between its dependencies and the outside world. The growth of Chinese shipping in Southeast Asia, particularly under the Sung dynasty, enabled other ports to operate independently of Sri Vijaya, and its supremacy unravelled. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, other overlords spread into the area, the Thais from the north, and the Javanese from the east, where a new ‘imperial’ kingdom had been established, Majapahit.
State-building in Java, unlike that in the peninsula and Sumatra, could draw not only on commercial but also on agricultural resources. Javanese coastal towns were well placed for linking the trade to the eastward with the world trade that began to flow through the Straits of Melaka, and were at times at odds with Sri Vijaya. But the fertile soils and growing population, particularly of central and eastern Java, also suggested the possibility of creating ‘early kingdoms’ like those on the mainland, and even ‘imperial’ or super-kingdoms. In the eighth century a Saivite king established himself at Mataram in south central Java, which became the base for the Mahayana Buddhist rulers who built the Borobudur, a huge terraced monument in the Kedu plain. A subsequent Saivite king responded with the temple complex at Prambanan.

In the mid tenth century the royal centre moved further east: the kingdom of Airlangga (r. 1016–49) was based on the delta of the Brantas and Solo rivers. So, too, were its successors, Kadiri and Singhasari, though the latter, under its most famous king, Kertanagara (r. 1268–92), sought to assert control over Sri Vijaya as well as over Madura and Bali. His successors were to create Majapahit. That was an ‘imperial’ or super-kingdom in the sense that its rulers were able to unite all of eastern Java. Taking up Kertanagara’s ambitions, it became ‘imperial’ in another sense. The concept was of an archipelago-wide empire, nusantara, ruled by the Javanese. Under a great minister, Gajah Mada, and a great king, Hayam Wuruk, something of this was realised, and celebrated in Prapanca’s epic poem, the Nagarakrtagama, written in 1365.66 The extent of the empire has been disputed, though it was in any case for the most part a loose hegemony that rapidly disintegrated with the passing of the men who had created it. But Indonesian nationalists were tempted to invoke it as a precursor.

The decline of Majapahit, coupled with a renewal of Chinese commercial and political activity in Southeast Asia under the Ming, created the opportunity for another attempt at commercial ‘empire’ in the Straits. That originated with a Malay prince who first appears as a vassal of Majapahit at Palembang, and then at Temasik, which he renamed Singapore, and finally, after he was expelled by the Thais, at Melaka in 1400–1. There he competed with Ayudhya, using his contacts with the Ming to help fend off the Thais. The state he founded established its supremacy over parts of the peninsula and coastal Sumatra, and thus guaranteed its dominance of the Straits. It also established contacts with the north Javanese ports, restive under Majapahit’s dominance, and thus indirectly with Maluku and the further parts of the archipelago. It utilised its position and its politics to make itself the leading entrepôt for the international trade of the area. In a sense it was a new Sri Vijaya. One major difference was its adoption of Islam in 1436, after it had ceased too be a base for the Ming voyages.

Its expansion was now associated with Islam. That, as well as its entrepô-
tal control of Southeast Asia’s trade, made it a prime target for the Portuguese at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and they captured it in 1511. It, too, became a nationalist symbol. The independence of Malaya was proclaimed in Melaka in 1957. Yet Melaka had not, of course, been a merely peninsular precursor. Indeed no state in the archipelago had established a widespread and continued hegemony and thus built upon and created a Malay identity. The language was a lingua franca, and Islam was to prove divisive as well as unifying.

In whatever way the word ‘imperial’ is used in respect of early Southeast Asian states – whether in Kulke’s way or in the more limited way the author prefers – the region is more commonly seen in terms of empires whose centre was outside it. Its neighbours, India and China, were powerful, but even when more or less united did not exert their power in this way. The Europeans did. Particularly at first, however, the structure of their empires in Southeast Asia resembled those of the commercial empires they tended to displace. Unlike those empires, however, they were part of larger empires not based in the region. They were to give way to a different kind of empire, territorial and colonial. In some ways, however, that, too, was to resemble the empires or super-kingdoms it largely replaced: it both challenged them and utilised them. British Burma was in some sense the successor of Pagan, French Indo-China of the Vietnamese empire, and Netherlands India of Majapahit.

The Portuguese never achieved the dominance of which their commander Affonso de Albuquerque spoke when attacking Melaka in 1511. The capture of the town indeed struck down the major Muslim entrepôt. But they did not destroy the opposition their endeavours continued to face. Instead they both diffused it and inflamed it. The destruction of Melaka prompted a dispersion of Malay power and the creation of a number of new Malayo-Muslim states. None of them, however, had the ability to create an ‘imperial’ kingdom along the lines of Sri Vijaya or its Muslim successor.

Melaka had been fostering the independence that the coastal trading cities of east and central Java were attempting to secure from Majapahit. That super-kingdom appears finally to have disintegrated between 1513 and 1528 in face of a coalition of Muslim states, Madura, Tuban, Surabaya, and Demak, and the sultanate of Demak became the most powerful state in Java. The Portuguese gained a foothold in west Java by agreement with the petty Hindu state of Pajajaran at Sunda Kelapa, but by 1527 the neighbouring ruler of Bantam, forcibly acquired in the name of the sultan of Demak as an outpost against the Portuguese, had taken over, renaming it Jayakarta (Jakarta).

The collapse of Majapahit had left the interior of Java a political chaos, but a new dynasty arose, based on Mataram, which was at the very heart of central Java. It had been a small district under the ruler of Pajang, itself
part of Demak. In 1582 an official of that ruler, Senapati, an adventurer of low origin, was able to usurp the government of Pajang, and in 1586 he shifted its seat of government to Mataram. The new sultanate attempted to control the coastal towns, which were perhaps weakened by their struggle with the Portuguese. At Senapati’s death in 1601 it was still, however, an inland state. Its chances of becoming an ‘empire’ that shared Majapahit’s dual character – both Javanese and archipelagic – were to be destroyed by the Dutch.

The Javanese towns competed with the Portuguese both in Maluku and in the western parts of the archipelago, attacking Melaka itself on a number of occasions, but failing to capture it. In that area, however, other Malayo-Muslim states had emerged, rivals to the Portuguese, but also to the Javanese. Some Melaka traders had fled to Aceh in northern Sumatra, and in the first half of the sixteenth century Aceh extended its control over the pepper-producing ports of Pidir and Pasai and over part of Menangkabau, and in pursuit of pepper it stretched down the west coast as Bantam stretched up it. Aceh attacked Melaka itself several times and it endeavoured to establish control over states on the peninsula, like Kedah and Perak, sources of tin. Aceh did not face only the Portuguese. The rulers of Melaka created a new state, despite the repeated attacks of the Portuguese, its centre based at the southern end of the straits in Johore and the Riau-Lingga islands. The rivalry that developed between Aceh and Johore, particularly over Deli and eastern Sumatra, helped the Portuguese to survive.

Other traders fleeing Portuguese Melaka settled in Pattani on the peninsula, in Makasar, in Brunei, Sulu and Mindanao, contributing to the development of Malayo-Muslim sultanates in those regions. Many of them became significant states, Aceh and Pattani sustaining centres of Islamic learning, Brunei extending its commercial range and influence as far as Luzon. The successor-state of Johore retained much of the mana, if not all the power, that it had inherited from Melaka, and that the Portuguese could not inherit. Johore, Aceh, Sulu and Brunei were still politically active in the late nineteenth century. A reduced Brunei is now an independent state, a reduced Johore is part of Malaysia. Mataram royalty have been influential in Indonesia, while an Acehnese movement seeks to break away from it. In general, however, the states of this period did not survive to become the possible basis of nation-states. The Portuguese had prompted an assertion of Malayo-Muslim political power, but it was and remained diffused.

The establishment of Dutch power had made the creation of a new Melaka even less likely, just as it impeded the creation of a new Majapahit. What the Dutch initially created, however, was an ‘empire’ in the style of the Portuguese, not the kind of colonial framework that might itself provide the basis of a putative nation-state. Their empire, like the Portuguese, was Asia-wide, and linked politically with Europe. It was also more
methodised, and it proved longer-lasting. While the Dutch East India Company (VOC) created no general commercial monopoly in the archipelago, and established no overall political supremacy, it curbed not only its European but also its local rivals. It did not eliminate all the latter. Indeed it often sought to establish a contractual relationship with them. But it prevented their empire-building and it tried to channel the international trade of the archipelago/peninsula region.

Initial Dutch ventures were decentralised, like the rebel republic itself. The state wanted a more organised approach, since it wished to wage war in Asia against its Iberian opponents without expense to the government. The States-General created a united company, the VOC, in 1602, and gave it exclusive rights beyond the Cape of Good Hope. In 1609 a Governor-General was appointed, and in 1610 the Directors, the Heeren 17, ordered the acquisition of a central rendezvous at Johore, Bantam, or Jakarta. The choice fell on the last, midway between the two points traditionally the focus of power in the peninsula/archipelago region, the Straits and east and central Java. There, Governor-General J.P. Coen created the new city of Batavia.

The Dutch capture of Melaka in 1641 – with aid from Johore – enabled them to pursue command over the tin and pepper trades of Sumatra and the peninsula. It also deeply affected Mataram. The great Sultan (Susuhunan) Agung, after a vain attempt to eliminate Batavia, had sought to prolong Portuguese resistance, and had sent an embassy to Goa in 1633. After the fall of Melaka his successor, Amangkurat I, sought to maintain an influence in southeastern Sumatra, but the VOC contested it. The Dutch also sought to constrain the Javanese trade to the eastward. In 1646 the VOC made a peace treaty with the Susuhunan, but they now quarrelled over northern Java. Batavia depended on it for rice and timber. Amangkurat I needed its resources more than ever as his larger empire fell away. His violent rule provoked rebellion, however, and the VOC decided to support the authority of Mataram in the hope of restoring peace and stability.

A comprehensive treaty was concluded in 1677, in which the Susuhunan promised to meet the VOC’s costs, to grant the Company the right to trade throughout his dominions, to deliver rice, and to prohibit trade with Makasarese who did not have a VOC pass. A further treaty was made with Amangkurat II in 1678: the northern seaports were ceded to the VOC until his debts were repaid; it was given a monopoly over the import of textiles and opium; the boundaries of Batavia were extended; and Semarang was made over to the Company. It was soon able to turn its recent acquisitions to account: coffee was successfully introduced in west Java, and Java coffee became quite popular in Europe. ‘The VOC had now become a territorial power with vital economic interests to protect on the island of Java.’

Obtaining a monopoly of fine spices, then grown only in a very limited

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area, was easier than obtaining a monopoly of pepper. The VOC had gone a long way towards securing control of the former at the source in Maluku in the early part of the seventeenth century. What it did in the latter part was mainly designed to prevent ‘smuggling’ by other Europeans and Asians, for which Makasar was a base. In 1660, when the VOC attacked all the Portuguese ships at Makasar without warning, Sultan Hasanuddin – now a university is named after him – agreed to prohibit all sailings to Maluku and expel the Portuguese. He failed to carry out the undertaking, however. In 1667 he was finally defeated by a Dutch force under Cornelis Speelman, aided by Buginese allies from Bone led by Arung Palakka.

The monopoly of fine spices became less relevant in the eighteenth century. The provision of winter cattle fodder and culinary changes reduced their significance for the Europeans, who, on the other hand, developed new demands, for Indian textiles and for China tea. To those the British proved better able to adapt than the Dutch. Increasingly the Dutch focused on Java, and saw Melaka as an outpost of it. The relations between Company and Susuhunan were uneasy, even perhaps contradictory, and broke down again in the 1740s. Pakubuwana II mistakenly involved himself and his forces in a Chinese revolt. In 1743 he was made to sign a new contract, involving the cession of Pasuruan, Madura, Surabaya, Rembang and Japara, and in 1746 Governor-General van Imhoff secured the cession of all the coastal regencies for a yearly sum. Yet further military action followed in 1749–57. Mangkubumi, his brother, opposed the Susuhunan, and when his successor received the crown from the Dutch as Pakubuwana III, most of the Mataram chiefs joined Mangkubumi. For a time the Dutch were hard pressed, but the outcome was the partition of Mataram.

The VOC’s deployment of force and diplomacy had been assisted by the divisions among and within the mainly Malayo-Muslim states they faced. Those had indeed tempted its officials at times to intervene incautiously or over-ambitiously. That led to the long and devastating wars in Java. Out of them, however, the VOC emerged as the predominant power on that island. Increasingly, too, it began to see Java as the centre of its empire. In the seventeenth century it had sought to control the trade of the peninsula and archipelago and to establish monopolies over selected products. In the eighteenth century it deployed its power to exact tribute from the protection it might afford. A number of the larger states – in particular Palembang and Perak – accepted that relationship, in part because of their internal instability, but also because of the new threats of instability from the Bugis, dispersed by the Dutch intervention in Sulawesi and by the establishment of the overlordship of Arung Palakka, and from the Thais. The Dutch themselves could not be dislodged, save by a European power. But they had not created a state.

The Spaniards had. Their venture in Southeast Asia was shaped by their relationships with the Portuguese and the Dutch, and above all with the
Muslim sultanates to the south of what they called the Philippines. The objective of the voyage begun in 1519 by Magellan – a Portuguese who had fought in the conquest of Melaka, and subsequently joined an expedition to Maluku – was the spice islands. He reached Samar and Cebu, then an entrepôt for trade with China. Its ruler, Humabon, welcomed him, and sought to enlist his support against his rival Lapu-lapu on Mactan. Lapu-lapu refused to recognise the Spanish-supported ruler, and the ensuing battle led to Magellan’s death.68

A major expedition to the Philippines left New Spain (Mexico) in 1564. It made a settlement in Cebu but, partly as a result of Portuguese prodding, its commander, Legazpi, shifted to Panay in 1569, and then to Manila in 1570. Over the succeeding decades, with aid from Mexico, the Spaniards, with missionary support, established a territorial control in Luzon and the Visayas, where they met little organised resistance. From the sultanates to the south, however – Muslim, or, as they called them, ‘Moro’ – they met continued resistance, and they were unable to establish their control. By contrast, indeed, the coastal settlements to the north were frequently exposed to ‘piratical’ raids.

The Portuguese retained a toehold in the Lesser Sundas, to which, a source of sandalwood and slaves, they had first come in the sixteenth century. They refocused on the area after the Tokugawa turned them out of Japan in 1638 and the Dutch turned them out of Melaka three years later, and were established at Larantuka on Flores. On Timor – to which they had first come in 1516, when it was on the trade routes of the Javanese – they lost Kupang to the Dutch in 1653, but they were not entirely displaced. They constructed Lifau, at Oecussi, to replace Kupang, effectively dividing the island, and in 1769 they were to move their base from Lifau to Dili.

In general the Europeans played a far more limited role on the mainland than they did in island Southeast Asia, even during the boom of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. There those we still recognise as the main peoples of the area had established monarchical states – the Burmans, the Thais, the Khmers, the Vietnamese – even though their boundaries were not today’s, nor of course their nature of their rule, or its relationship with other peoples. Indeed they were almost continually at odds with each other. The dynamic of inter-state politics was not greatly affected by the Europeans: it followed established patterns. Companies and individuals, merchants, missionaries and mercenaries, the Europeans did not establish empires, nor even lay the foundations for them, though at times they were affected by the intra-regional struggles or drawn into them.

The kingdom of Ava had been able to maintain some semblance of authority in the fifteenth century only when China was pressing on the Shans who threatened it. In 1527 they finally sacked the capital, and the remaining rulers up to 1555 were all Shan chiefs. Then it was
incorporated in a new super-kingdom created by the rulers of Taung-ngu, who had also incorporated the Mon kingdom of Pegu. Among the forces with which Tabin-shwei-hthi attacked Martaban in 1541 were Mon levies and also a contingent of Portuguese mercenaries, and his victory against Ava was won with the help of Portuguese gunners. Though he was crowned in Pagan, his capital was in Pegu. Indeed the expanding commerce of the sixteenth century focused his attention, and he attacked Ayudhya in 1548, thus beginning a long struggle between the Burmans and the Thais for the old Mon lands and the northern peninsula.

His kingdom collapsed when he was murdered in 1550, but his successor, Bayin-naung, renewed his ambitions. In 1551, with Burman, Mon and Portuguese forces, he recaptured Pegu, and in 1555 he took Ava. His attack on Chiangmai, or Lan Na, was but a step towards his chief object, the conquest of Ayudhya, and the vast expedition of 1563–4 forced its ruler to submit. A second expedition in 1568–9 installed a vassal king. A first attempt to take Vientiane, the capital of the neighbouring Lao state of Lan Xang, failed, but in 1574 it was captured, and the king sent into exile. Facing revolt in the north, Bayin-naung’s successor, Nan-da-bayin, also tried to deal with Ayudhya’s attempts to regain its independence. In 1587 he besieged Ayudhya, but the invasion ended in a disaster that might have been even worse but for a Cambodian invasion of the Siamese state. By 1593, however, Nan-da-bayin had failed in five full-scale invasions, and the Thai king, Naresuen, turned the tables. Dealing first with Cambodia, he turned on southern Burma, acquiring Tavoy and Tenasserim and then, with the help of Mon rebels, Moulmein. In 1595 he threatened Pegu, and Nan-da-bayin’s kingdom collapsed.

The dynasty was restored by the Nyaungyan prince, who now once more based the kingdom in the dry zone of central Burma. He dealt with the Shans, and his son and successor, Anauk-hpet-lun, with the south. He re-established control over Chiangmai, but accepted the independence of Ayudhya, and the new king, Thalun, pursued a peaceful policy. The Restored Taung-ngu dynasty lost control over the outer zones of its domains in the early eighteenth century. That opened up a threat from the Manipuris to the north, galvanised by Hinduisation, and their incursions encouraged the Mons to revolt in 1740. Aided by their use of European ordnance, they captured Ava in 1752, though neither neighbouring Arakan nor Ayuthia afforded them support.

The disaster revitalised the dry zone, and the Burmans reasserted themselves under a great warrior, Alaung-hpaya, founder of what turned out to be the last Burman dynasty, named after Kon-baung, the traditional name for the country round his village. In 1754 he took possession of Ava. In 1755 he entered Dagon, opposite Syriam, renaming it Yan-gon (Rangoon, The Enemy is Consumed). Syriam was taken in 1756, and Pegu sacked in 1757. He went on to attack Ayudhya, and his successor, Hsin-hypu-shin, sacked it in 1767.
The kingdom of Ayudhya, like other coastal kingdoms, had generally been strengthened by the commercial expansion of the period, as well as, more specifically, by the use of European weapons and the employment of Portuguese mercenaries. Its position as an international trading centre had made it a target for the Burmans, but helped it to recover from their invasions, and so did the statecraft of Naresuen and his successors. Foreign traders were welcome, European, Chinese, Japanese, and they were used by the monarchs to conduct their trade. The VOC – itself interested in Ayudhya’s intra-Asian trade – was especially important, first as a counter to the Portuguese, and later, under Prasat Tong, for its political support, for example in dealing with the recalcitrant Malay vassal state of Pattani.

After the Burman interventions of the 1570s and 1580s, Lan Xang had fallen apart, and it was only restored by the great king Surinyavongsa (r. 1637–94). The death of the king was, however, followed by a succession dispute. Just as those in Mataram opened the way to Dutch intervention, that dispute led to the intervention of the neighbouring Vietnamese. The subsequent break-up of the kingdom into three states, Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Champassak, indeed led to the intervention of the Thais as well, and later to that of the Burmans under Alaung-hpaya. The Lao kingdoms ‘were easy prey to hostile or ambitious neighbors, and the longer their disunity prevailed, the more difficult their reunification became’.69

Also uncomfortably placed among the three major mainland kingdoms, Cambodia, too, was a prey both to its own weakness and to the aggression of its neighbours. Its king had sought to take advantage of Ayudhya’s difficulties in the 1580s, and then sought assistance against the avenging Thais, even appealing to the Spanish governor of the Philippines, and securing problematical help from the Spanish adventurers. Though the capital, Lovek, fell in 1594, the early seventeenth century proved to be a period of prosperity for Cambodia. For the first time since Funan, it became, as David Chandler puts it, ‘a maritime kingdom’,70 and in the 1640s the king married a Malay and converted to Islam. He was overthrown in the 1650s by rival princes. They were assisted by the Vietnamese, who subsequently choked off the international trade of Cambodia. Increasingly, too, the Mekong delta was made part of the Vietnamese state, though it was still known to many Khmers even in the twentieth century as Kampuchea Krom (lower Cambodia).

The Southeast Asian kingdoms found it difficult to retain central control and to avoid the debilitating localisation of power, as the case of Burma showed. It was true of Dai Viet, too. The early sixteenth century was a period of bloody chaos. Out of this the emperor Mac Dang Dung emerged in 1527. Though a descendant of the Le sought the intervention of the Chinese, he bought them off in 1540. But the Le, with their generals Nguyen Kim and then his son-in-law Trinh Kiem, recovered the provinces of Thanh-hoa and Nghe-an in the early 1540s, and the following
decades saw struggles that culminated in the defeat of the Mac in the early 1590s by Kiem’s younger son, Trinh Tung. The restored Le emperors were, however, now powerless; and under their nominal sovereignty the Trinh dominated the north, and the Nguyen built their power on newly acquired lands to the south. A unity that depended on division was but a semblance, but it retained the idea of a single Vietnamese state.

From the 1620s, indeed, civil war developed between the Trinh and the Nguyen, and it lasted until the 1670s. Stalemate between the two regimes followed, and a kind of boundary was established along the Song Gianh, once the division between the Viet and Cham lands. Though possessed of the heartland, the Trinh had been restrained by continued opposition from the Mac and apprehensions of Chinese intervention. After the truce, the Trinh were able to end the power of the Mac in 1677, and to secure peace with the Manchu dynasty in China. The latent threat of Manchu intervention, however, restrained the Trinh, who had fought the Nguyen during the weakness of the Ming.

The Nguyen had survived partly because they tapped the resources of the south, not only through their traffic with foreigners, but through colonisation. Champa’s independence was terminated in the 1690s, and the Vietnamese moved on to colonise the Mekong delta, in part with Vietnamese captives and refugees, and also with Chinese settlers. Despite its economic expansion, the Nguyen regime was politically fragile. Nor did it secure from the Manchus the recognition of a separate political status for ‘Cochin-China’, though the eighth lord assumed the title vuong (prince or king) in 1744.

The Nguyen regime, and indeed that of the Trinh, were to be overthrown by the Tay-son rebellion that began in the 1770s. But, as the Canadian scholar Alexander Woodside suggests, the political failure of the southern regime did not mean that it was unimportant. The Nguyen ‘were the Vietnamese gatekeepers of a relatively thinly populated Southeast Asian seaboard society at a time when Southeast Asia had to face great demographic and commercial expansion’, and they ensured that its future was Vietnamese. At the same time, though their realm was in many ways distinctive, they failed to achieve the creation of a separate Cochin-China polity, ‘which would have begun to give eastern Indochina the Latin American quality of a common civilization with multiple states’.

The outset of the next phase saw renewed conflict between Burma and Siam, the overthrow of Ayudhya, the Tay-son revolt in Vietnam. Out of all this, however, the chief mainland states emerged with yet greater cohesion, and were for a time, at least, able to deal both with the renewed expansion of Chinese economic enterprise and with the growth of British trade and power.

Archipelagic Southeast Asia once again presented a different picture. There the Europeans had had a greater impact in the previous phase,
both because their commercial objectives were more urgent and more specific and because their opponents were weaker and more exposed to sea-power. Their incursions, however, tended to diffuse political power and entrench Islam. No traditional ‘empire’ could emerge, and super-kingdoms found it difficult to survive. Yet Aceh and Sulu, like the mainland states, were, for a time at least, able to respond to the changes of the closing years of the eighteenth century and to take initiatives.

Except for the Spaniards, the Europeans had so far not been building states, but pursuing commercial empire. Even now they were slow to build states. The Dutch had consolidated their hold on Java, but not beyond. The British, their commerce growing, their power expanding, did not look for territorial expansion in Southeast Asia, though they did in India. In 1819 they founded a new entrepôt, Singapore, more attractive than Penang to traders of the archipelago, made free of customs by subsidies from India, and becoming a new focus for Chinese enterprise. Their turn to empire was reluctant. The first ‘imperialists’ in Southeast Asia were the French.

‘Vietnam during the nineteenth century, and earlier, was already a nation’, Truong Buu Lam asserted. ‘The Vietnamese people possessed a definite territory, spoke one language, shared common traditions, and were born of a single historical experience.’ Nothing in the history of the precolonial phase on which this chapter has focused suggests, however, the existence even of ‘proto-nationalism’. It has pointed to the existence of peoples and states the history of which nationalists were to appropriate – with greater or lesser ease or relevance – in creating or ruling future nation-states: Pagan; Dai Viet; Cambodia/Angkor; Majapahit; and rulers who could become – by remembering and forgetting – national heroes: Anirudda, Le Loi, Hayam Wuruk, Hasanuddin. Yet the states were not ‘nation-states’, nor were the ruled and their rulers inspired by ‘national’ feeling, even in Vietnam. Burman kings populated their court with Mon captives and utilised Portuguese mercenaries. The Thais welcomed the Chinese. Rivals, Cambodia and the Nguyen regime sought to populate the lower Mekong with Chinese as well as ‘nationals’.

Legend is, however, not the only ‘legacy’ of the period. This chapter has focused on the forms of the state, their struggles of one state with another, the impact of the Europeans. There are other foci to its history. If these states could not rely on ‘national’ allegiance, they had to rely on other ways of legitimating their claims and securing taxation and service. When nation-states emerged, they both utilised and contended with the social and religious structures that earlier states had consolidated. They also utilised and contended with what Western imperialism had brought to the region, ‘mottled’, as Ben Anderson nicely terms it, ‘marked by an irregular arrangement of patches of colour’.
Part II

Colonial states

‘The colonial state was hardly a state at all.’

Adrian Hastings
3 Construction

‘Precolonial’ states provided nation-states with ‘precedents’, even if they might be myths. In some cases they assembled a population, which could become a ‘core’ or a ‘majority’ in a subsequent state, even if the concept of ‘proto-nationalism’ cannot be accepted. They provided, too, ways of structuring society and ways of conducting politics, elements of which were to persist, to be contested or turned to account in later states. In between, as it were, lay, except in the Thai case, experience of the colonial state, and even Siam behaved like one in many respects. ‘As a theoretical concept’, J.Th. Lindblad suggests, the colonial state is ‘rather undeveloped’.1 The term ‘colonial state’ may indeed seem to us something of an oxymoron. That, no doubt, is partly the result our ‘banal nationalism’. In fact the colonial state incorporated some aspects of the modern state but not others. As a result, the colonial phase could not but be a passing one, a ‘transitional’ one, in Wang Gungwu’s phrase.2 Further to consider the ‘origins’ of the nation-state, we need also to consider its ‘imperial[ist]’ predecessor, and what Ben Anderson calls ‘the imaginings of the colonial state’.3

‘The colonial state was hardly a state at all – more simply an extension of services of one or other European country, and loyalty to these states or any real “imagining” of their national reality was extremely limited.’4 What Hastings convincingly says of Africa is less true of Southeast Asia, though not irrelevant. What the ‘imperialists’ effected there was the creation of states that had but some of the features of the nation-states of Europe. They extended to their colonies and dependencies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries some of the ‘services’ their states were providing at home and some of the features those states were assuming. Indeed, to a greater or lesser extent, they regarded the colonies and dependencies as a projection of the metropolis, its ‘possession’, even in some cases a part of it.

Partly as a result, partly also as a result of the ‘capricious outcomes’ of their endeavours, as a result, too, of the impact of economic changes and the expansion of international contacts, and in all cases of the local responses, they found that colonial states were emerging that could
scarcely be contained with a merely colonial relationship. To that their reaction varied. Some powers were more positive than others, and all varied over time. The creation of nation-states became in a sense both a work of ‘completion’ and a work of emulation. Imperial rulers came to recognise – more or less clearly, more or less reluctantly – that they could not ‘modernise’ the states they had created any further. The nationalists who believed they could and should had the advantage in what might be regarded as a form of competition. In Southeast Asia, though not in Africa, the discontinuity of the Japanese interregnum gave them a further advantage: once broken off, colonial rule was difficult to re-establish. ‘Nationalism’ could fill the gap.

The most obvious legacy of the imperial phase is the establishment of colonial frontiers or borders. They have in general become the frontiers of nation-states, though never designed for that, and they have been preserved as a result both of the rivalries of the Cold War phase, of the very emergence of a world of nation-states, and of the general and regional unwillingness openly to foster the subversion of a particular frontier – by, for example, encouraging irredentist movements (even the word seems out of fashion) – lest it weaken the system in general.

There were, however, other legacies. Imperial rule relied on collaborators, even more than it relied on force: judiciously used, the latter backed the former. But it also, of course, provoked opposition, both at the elite level, and, to the limited extent that it clearly penetrated the village – also penetrated by economic change – at the mass level, too. Nationalists were able to conceive of a community of suffering. Imperial rule was, however, not merely negative. It was constitutive. Though colonial rulers had limited concepts of the purpose and extent of education, for example, they had to provide some (and some of them wanted to provide a lot): education was necessary for economic and administrative purposes. But, like other forms of ‘modernisation’, it tended to take on a life of its own. With education came ‘modern’ ideas of community and nation, but also ‘modern’ ideas of identity and ‘ethnic’ division. Communications, though designed perhaps to improve administration or to expedite business or transport the products with which business dealt, had other results as well.

In part, therefore, an account of the origins of ‘imperialism’ in Southeast Asia is also an account of the origins of nationalism and the concept of nation-state in the region. The development of ‘imperialism’ is also in turn an intrinsic part of the development of nationalism. It is not the sole factor involved, nor are imperialists the only persons on the stage. But – through action and counter-action – it shapes what happens, even though not always in the ways its progenitors plan.

Of ‘imperialism’ in Southeast Asia the author has already attempted an account. There, as in the present book, he pursued a definition and a periodisation. For the former he looked in particular to D.K. Fieldhouse:
‘the deliberate act or advocacy of extending or maintaining a state’s direct or indirect control over any other inhabited territory.’ For the latter he referred to Maarten Kuitenbrouwer: ‘modern imperialism as a historical category should be reserved above all for the period between 1870 and 1914’.6

Then he pursued the question of ‘origins’. Unhappy with the post-Hobson, post-Lenin, ways of linking imperialism with ‘capitalism’, with the tendency even to see the latter as the cause of the former, he suggested a more complex relationship, in which the two movements at times coincided, at times collided or conflicted. For others, indeed, had traced the source of imperialism to the political struggles of the European states. The ‘real taproot’ of imperialism Benjamin Cohen found in ‘the anarchic organization of the international system of states’. Nations yield to ‘the temptations of domination because they are driven to maximise their individual power position’, and they are driven to that ‘because they are overwhelmingly preoccupied with the problem of national security. The logic of dominion derives directly from the existence of competing national sovereignties.’7

The present author went on to argue that ‘national security’ may be threatened at different times with differing degrees of intensity. Such times are likely to include those in which the distribution of power among states is being altered in any case. One such phase was that in which the Europeans ‘discovered’ the world and the wealth it could bring their states. Another was the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, witness to new ways of organising the state demonstrated by the American and French revolutions, witness also to the achievements of Great Britain that had provoked them, itself effectively mobilising its economic resources even before it became the first industrial society.

Nationalism, the previous chapters of the present book have argued, was initially associated with the inter-state rivalry of the period and with the consequent need to build stronger states. The attempts to mobilise domestic resources more effectively – which the incorporation of nationalism demonstrated – was paralleled by the attempts to mobilise resources drawn from the non-European world either by trade or by dominion or both. By the later nineteenth century, indeed, what had come to be called ‘imperialism’ was often a focus of ‘nationalism’, used by governments or their critics, constituted also by nation formation.

In an endeavour to prevent the process from leading to open conflict, the imperial powers established frontiers for their respective territories, such as had been established in Europe. Within those frontiers, they projected the state-building processes in which they were engaged at home, though rarely promoting or even accepting industrialisation. Intentionally and otherwise, they thus created colonial states.

In Europe itself the concept of a frontier between states was one that developed over time. The modernisation of the state – itself in part a consequence of inter-state rivalry – made it more crucial: it defined the
resources, human and physical, that a state could exploit. The idea that
the frontiers were, or should be, the frontiers of nation-states was a further
step, its implications still indeed being worked out. In some cases states
with more or less settled frontiers preceded the concept of nationhood,
which then reconceived the concept of peoples, turning subjects into cit-
izens. Elsewhere the aspiration to form nations where few had states chal-
lenged existing frontiers and indeed made it difficult to determine new
ones. Southeast Asia’s experience differed from both. Its leaders and
peoples inherited frontiers. Nationalism generally emerged in that
case, and nation-states were successor-states.

European states had, of course disputed their mutual frontiers. They
had been the focus of wars. Peace treaties had recognised adjustments,
and allegiance was transferred from one monarch to another. But what
had been a matter between monarchs became a matter between peoples,
and it was then more difficult to reach a settlement and more difficult to
implement it. No such difficulty faced the transfer or exchange of colonial
claims or even possessions. In their disputes the colonial powers had
much in common. They conceived the building of an empire as part of
their own state-building, and imperialism was part of the formation of
their states. They also applied many of the practices they developed at
home to their possessions abroad, the ‘rule of law’, the map, the census, ‘a
totalizing classificatory grid’.8 They all, therefore, needed a recognised
frontier. Behind that their subjects would be under their government as
their citizens were in the metropolis. Beyond it, as in the case of the
metropolis, they were the resource and the responsibility of another
government.

Determining where the lines were in Europe was a long process, only
being worked out in the western part of Europe, only begun in the eastern
part, during the ‘imperialist’ phase. The process had been accompanied
by conflict, and more was to come. But though there were colonial
‘crises’, the Europeans did not go to war on colonial questions. Europe
was their priority. Outside Europe – in Africa as well as Southeast Asia –
frontiers were established out of European convenience and by European
diplomats. Though that avoided conflict, it often meant that, in historical,
geographical, linguistic or ethnological terms, they were quite arbitrary.
Yet it was the frontiers so established that the putative nation-states were
generally to inherit.

They were less arbitrary on the Southeast Asian mainland than in the
archipelago. They were indeed formed in both regions by outside powers
more than by regional ones, and the purpose behind them was ‘modern’.
But on the mainland the monarchical regimes had drawn the predomi-
nant peoples together, and to some extent the Europeans were not only
taking over but utilising the claims of the monarchs. And in Siam – surren-
dering some of its claims and some of its territories, but retaining the core
and more – the monarchy adopted a colonial stance to his subjects and his
non-European neighbours and outliers. In the archipelago the intervention of the Europeans had taken place over a longer period, in parts at least with greater intensity. They were also more decisive in shaping the frontiers that their successors were – despite a backward glance to Sri Vijaya or Melaka or Majapahit – to inherit as those of independent nation-states in a world of nation-states.

It was largely in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the frontiers took their present shape. The author has at times been accused of over-emphasising the role the British played and giving them too large a place in his historiography. Yet they had secured a remarkable degree of world power during the nineteenth century – enjoying a security in Europe that none of their predecessors had enjoyed, and enjoying also the advantage of early industrialisation – and their decisions were often, though not always, those that counted. That did not mean that they sought universal empire. What they sought was security, stability, commercial access. Their concept was indeed that of a world of states, trading with each other without obstruction.

Ruling India, indeed, was an exception to the rule. Even that country must one day, however, rule itself. In the meantime China must not, *The Times* agreed with the government in 1875, become ‘another India’. Nor must ‘Further India’. In Southeast Asia there was room for other European powers, too. In a sense it was the British decision not to use their power to establish territorial dominion in the region that ensured its continued division. That division now, of course, took new forms. Most of Southeast Asia was incorporated in the overseas empires the Western powers established or consolidated in this period. It was divided into what became ‘colonial states’.

The general unwillingness of the British to extend territorial dominion was enforced in Southeast Asia by their lack of intrinsic interest in the region before the early twentieth century. Southeast Asia’s importance, so far as they were concerned, lay in its position in regard to their dominion in India and their commercial interest in the route to China. It was also convenient that minor powers – such as the Dutch and the Spaniards had now become – should hold the island territories, particularly as their independence helped to sustain the European balance of power. Even the French need not be seen as a threat in Vietnam. They might ‘open it up’. And, if successful there, they might be less of an irritant elsewhere. Only in the twentieth century – with the advent of the rubber tyre and the motor car and the need for dollars – did Malaya assume major importance for Britain on economic grounds. Singapore assumed new importance as a naval base, designed to permit a one-ocean fleet to fulfil the needs of a two-ocean empire. But that was in the inter-war period, one of relative decline.

Such an interpretation of Britain’s policy is controversial. And it was true that not all the British adhered to the policies laid out by the
central authorities. Like the officials in other empires – the Russian and the French, for example – local British governors, like Sir Andrew Clarke in Perak, thought it necessary ‘to act in the first place and to report afterwards’. Sir James Brooke was apt ‘to imagine English ships and troops may be used for the promotion of civilisation and commerce generally, by the pulling down of unfriendly and the setting-up of friendly chiefs’, wrote Lord Stanley at the Foreign Office in 1852. It was ‘not clear that we have a right, or that it is expedient, to carry interference so far’.

Even the acquisition of Burma was arguably a second-best policy. Furthermore, what brought it about, it might be said, was concern for the interests of India rather than concern for the interests of Britain itself. The prime objective of British policy was the security of the dominion in India rather than the commercial opportunities offered by Burma or, through Burma, by Yunnan. The two states, British India and the Burman monarchy, found it, however, difficult to resolve their differences and to agree on a modus vivendi or establish common frontiers because of their differing perceptions of inter-state relations. A Burman monarch, on the one hand, had universalist claims, set in Buddhist terms. The British, on the other hand, did not view their neighbour as a state among states. The attitude they might adopt as a trading nation was modified because in India they were more than that. A continental empire cannot accept challenges on its perimeters. States there may enjoy independence only if they accept that it is a qualified independence. Moreover, the Indian empire rested not merely on force, but also on ‘prestige’. A challenge from a prince on the frontier, even if it did not involve consorting with a foreign power, had to be met, lest it set a disastrous example within the frontier.

In the first war (1824–6) the British hoped for a decisive victory that would produce a more compliant view. The aim was not to acquire territory, but ‘to produce such an impression of the power and resources of the British Empire in India as will deter the Court of Ava from any attempt again to disturb the friendly relations which may be re-established by the result of the present contest’. No such victory was secured. The war was prolonged, and at the peace, made at Yandabo, Britain’s supremacy was marked instead by the acquisition of Tenasserim and Arakan, outlying parts of the kingdom, not its core.

That was not, however, followed by friendly relations. The defeated monarch resented the loss, and his successor declared that he would have nothing to say to the treaties, ‘that they had not been made by him, and that we had never conquered him’. Poor relations made it difficult to resolve disputes. But Lord Dalhousie did not go to war in 1852 to defend the rather disreputable British merchants at Rangoon. Once the crisis had begun, however, it had to be carried through successfully. ‘We can’t afford to be shown the door anywhere in the East’, he declared. The victory was
again marked by the acquisition of territory, this time Pegu, land of the Mons and Karens as well as the Burmans.

The new king, Mindon, attempted to come to terms with the British, while yet, like his neighbour in Bangkok, opening up relations with other powers. Trying to be independent like the Thais was not easy on the frontiers of India, and his successor lost the capacity to balance. The establishment of the French in Indo-China did not make his task easier, especially when they attempted to use their contacts with Burma so as ‘to keep the British on tenterhooks’ and gain an advantage in Siam. In the third war, the British advanced quickly on Mandalay. The king was sent into exile, and the monarchy abolished early in 1886.

It might be argued that there was a fourth stage in the making of ‘British Burma’. The Shans had also to be brought under ‘control’. They had generally owed allegiance to the Burman king, acknowledging his supremacy while avoiding his rule. Now that supremacy was replaced by that of the British, and the frontiers of the state defined by agreement with its neighbours, French Indo-China, Siam and China.

The piecemeal acquisition of Burma may have demonstrated Britain’s reluctance to take over. It certainly had an effect on their administration, marked by the fact that they had more experience of the outlying parts of the kingdom than of the core. It had an effect on the nationalists and their popular followers, too. The king had been deposed and the monarchy eliminated, but that had finally been done only in 1886. A little more than half a century later the British power was itself eliminated. The colonial state was short-lived, though it lived longer in some parts of Burma than others.

The French also acquired Vietnam in stages and the three parts into which they divided it made up, with Laos and Cambodia, what they called ‘French Indo-China’. Rivals of the British – in Asia as elsewhere – in the eighteenth century, they had then seen a venture in Vietnam as a way of countering their frustration in India. In the mid nineteenth century, when Napoleon III resolved on a warlike expedition, Britain offered no opposition. The Vietnamese rulers had offered a negative response to its attempts to ‘open up’ their country to foreign trade. French intervention would not damage, and might even promote, the interests of commerce, and ‘a second Cherbourg in the East’ was not ‘cause for serious anxiety’. In 1859 the French occupied Saigon, and in the subsequent decade acquired six southern Vietnamese provinces, which they formed into a colony they called ‘Cochin-China’. In 1863 they had placed neighbouring Cambodia under their protection. ‘[S]o long as the proceedings of the French in or towards Cambodia do not in any way interfere with the independence of Siam’, the India Office in London commented, ‘...in the present state of affairs, they may be regarded by Her Majesty’s Government without anxiety or concern.’

The defeat of France in 1870–1 did not halt this extraordinary venture,
pressed by adventurers, empire-builders and a group of politicians at home. Rather the reverse. ‘Like its ignorance of Empire, the injured nationalism of French society made it vulnerable to a colonialism with which it was fundamentally out of sympathy.’

Even so, the work of a minority, it won its influence on policy rather from the weakness of governments and their preoccupation with domestic affairs, which allowed officials and men on the spot to have their way. Their ambition to take over the whole empire of Vietnam is astounding.

Even before German troops had left France after their triumph of 1870–1, Admiral Dupré had despatched an expedition to Hanoi, designed to withdraw the provocative Jean Dupuis, merchant and arms-supplier, but also to secure a protectorate over the rest of Vietnam. It was headed by Francis Garnier. ‘As for instructions’, he wrote to his brother, ‘carte blanche! The admiral is relying on me! Forward then for our beloved France!’

He occupied the citadels in Hanoi and other delta towns. In a counter-attack he was killed. The emperor Tu-duc negotiated the withdrawal of the expedition, but not without agreeing to a disguised protectorate.

The steps that led to a formal protectorate in the early 1880s were not dissimilar. Governor C.M. Le Myre de Vilers was authorised to send a small force up to the delta to deal with disorderly Black Flag bands and thus ensure freedom of commerce. Its leader, Henri Rivière, was warned ‘not to drag the government into complications’; but since it sent him reinforcements, ‘I set out to accomplish on my own what it lacked the nerve to make me do’.

His death became a cause and the prime minister got backing for a major expedition. The Vietnamese court accepted French protection. The monarchy was not dislodged, but it was deprived of effective power, even more in ‘Tonkin’ than in ‘Annam’.

‘French Indo-China’ was also to include some of the Lao territories. Over them Siam had claims, as it had over Cambodia. It had reached a compromise with the French over the latter: it accepted the French protectorate, while retaining Battambang and Angkor. Its claims over Laos came into serious question when the French established themselves throughout Vietnam. The French at times talked of compromise, though they also talked of acquisition. The Pavie mission of 1890–1 was designed to collect evidence of Vietnamese claims and push back the Siamese garrisons one by one. Its lack of success enabled the colonialists to secure parliamentary support for an expedition to evict the Siamese garrisons on the east bank of the Mekong. The resistance of the Siamese led to a naval blockade of the Menam river.

The Franco–Siamese crisis of 1893 was also an Anglo–French crisis. The result was a compromise. The British urged King Chulalongkorn to accept the French ultimatum – which would involve the loss of the east bank and most of Luang Prabang – while they protested in Paris against any extension of its terms. The result was to keep Battambang and Siemreap tem-
porarily out of French hands, but they, too, were transferred in 1907. The British and the French had reached an agreement in 1896, not so much a guarantee of the core of the Thai kingdom, the Menam valley, as a mutual promise of self-abnegation. It did not prevent the loss of further Thai claims, including those over the northern Malay states, but it did help to preserve the independence of the Thai kingdom when all around were losing theirs. Thai nationalists were later to see such losses as irredenta.

The success of the Thais in preserving their independence owed something to the shrewdness of their policies. It owed something to their geographical position, too. The core of the kingdom was centred on the Chao Phraya, and Bangkok, the capital since the 1780s, commanded it. Furthermore, it was placed between the Southeast Asian possessions of the British and the French. That might indeed have led to a complete partition. But, signing the Burney treaty of 1826 and the Bowring treaty of 1855, the Chakri monarchs had developed a positive relationship with the British – unlike the Vietnamese and the Burmans – so far as commerce and diplomatic relations were concerned. When the French began to establish their control in Vietnam and Cambodia, the British were clear that the Thai kingdom should and could constitute a buffer state. That was consistent with their commercial policy, the policy of Britain itself. It was consistent, too, with their Indian policy, that of a continental power that insulated itself from threats on its peripheries. The Thai state behaved like a colonial state, but did not become one.

Britain’s relationship with Siam and with France had another context, that of its relationship with the Malay peninsula, where the Thai monarchs claimed the allegiance of some of the Malay sultanates. There Britain was to create what Frank Swettenham called ‘British Malaya’, though the title was never official, later, minus Singapore, the Malayan Union and the Federation of Malaya, the core of the future Malaysia. But building a colonial state entered Britain’s calculations very late. It was certainly not the intention when it acquired Penang from the Sultan of Kedah in 1786, Melaka from the Dutch in 1795/1825, and Singapore from a claimant sultan of Johore in 1819. The eyes of the British – as the very placing of the three ‘Straits Settlements’ suggested – were looking outwards not inwards, to the security of India and the route to China. And the commercial success of Singapore – as indeed its founder, Sir Stamford Raffles, intended – was derived from its position in relation to the Malay world as a whole. It was an entrepôt – the successor in a new context of Sri Vijaya and Melaka – that linked the archipelago with the world beyond the region.

While the establishment of the Straits Settlements did not guarantee that the British would create a colonial state on the peninsula, it did ensure that no other European power would. Though the Settlements guarded the Straits, their value would be undermined if another power were established in their proximity. It was the return of the Dutch to Melaka after their elimination during the French wars that helped Raffles
persuade his superiors that Britain should secure a settlement at the tip of the Straits. The subsequent Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824 required the Dutch to transfer Melaka, to accept the occupation of Singapore, and to refrain from further political connections with the peninsula. For several decades there was little risk that another power would settle there either. The growth of ‘imperialism’ after 1870, in particular the emergence of Germany, encouraged Britain to take further precautions. In the meantime, the governors had built up informal connections with several of the Malay states, and merchants in the Settlements had a growing interest in their tin mines. But the decisive factor in the ‘intervention’ of 1873–4 seems – though it is a subject of controversy among historians – to have been a concern to ensure that no other power should establish itself on the peninsular side of the Straits.

The informal connections already established, however, did not suggest that it was necessary to do very much to prevent it. Britain did not annex the Malay states or displace rulers. It made agreements with them, providing that they should take the advice of Residents. Initially the system was applied in the tin-bearing west coast states of Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong. Only at the end of the next decade was it applied to the east coast state of Pahang. In 1895–6 the states were drawn together as the Federated Malay States (FMS). ‘British Malaya’, however, included the ‘unfederated’ states. They included Johore, which accepted a version of the residential system only in 1914, and the states over which Siam finally surrendered its claims in 1909. No united state including the Straits Settlements, the FMS, and the Unfederated Malay States (UMS) was ever created.

Malaysia did, though only for two years. Its components included a postcolonial state, Malaya, and three colonial states that gained their independence from the colonial power by joining. It was found impossible to accommodate Singapore for long. But having failed to include Brunei, which remained under Britain’s protection, Malaysia continued to include Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah). Convinced that their governments, the Brooke raj and the British North Borneo Company, could not survive in postwar conditions, the British had made them colonies in 1946. The British were clear that the states could not survive on their own – it was not then thought that such small territories could become independent states – but were not clear as to what might become of them. Their notion was some kind of association of the three Borneo territories, preceding some looser connection with the peninsula, but it did not happen that way.

The initial British intervention in northern Borneo a hundred years earlier was not the result of a government decision at all. The official policy after the French wars was that the British should not contest Dutch authority in the archipelago, and that included Borneo. The enterprise was initiated by a British adventurer, James Brooke, who, like Raffles,
believed that the official policy was mistaken. He hoped to overturn it, not merely by talking, but by acting. The Dutch had ‘gradually and effectually destroyed all rightful authority . . . their doubtful title and oppressive tenure would . . . render the downfall of their rule in the Archipelago, certain and easy, before the establishment of a liberal Government and conciliatory policy’. He aimed to establish that in the sultanate of Brunei, which, then claiming all northern Borneo, was still outside the Dutch system of treaty relationships. Brunei would be an example to others. And his own rule in the province of Sarawak, then only the Kuching area, would be an example for the rest of Brunei, of which it formed part.

It was an ambitious programme, which could in fact have been carried out, if at all, only with the backing of the very government, the British, which had determined not to use its power in this way. The result was a permanent tension between Britain and the rajas of Sarawak. The British government did not stop the venture, and indeed it gave the Brookes some support, but that support was qualified, often critical, and informed by a sense of the anomalous. The Brookes believed they deserved more support, but also treasured their autonomy, and considered their methods were an improvement on colonial rule.

They were in fact allowed more or less formally to assume the independence which Raja James claimed for his raj all the more forcefully with the collapse of his ambitions for Brunei as a whole. He and his successor Charles indeed contrived – though without formal British backing, and at times in face of some British criticism – to expand Sarawak at Brunei’s expense. The possibility that, despite the sultan’s obligation under the treaty Brooke had made with him on Britain’s behalf in 1847 not to cede territory without Britain’s assent, the sultanate might become – willingly or not – the prey of another power was a factor in changing the attitude of the British government in the imperialist phase. But its response took the form of tendering limited support to another anomalous regime, that of the British North Borneo Company, chartered in 1881, ruling territories leased or ceded by the sultans of Brunei and Sulu, and then, in 1888, of extending protectorates over Sarawak, North Borneo and the remnant of Brunei.

It seemed likely that Brunei itself might be entirely partitioned. A number of British Colonial Office officials, chief of them C.P. Lucas, thought otherwise. They argued that the three protectorates should be drawn together, not, however, as they had at first thought, as a single colony, but as a federation, on the model of the recently established FMS. Of that Brunei, given a Resident in the Malay style, might become the core. The plan, never squarely backed at higher levels of the Colonial Office, did not succeed: it would indeed have been difficult to press it on the second raja, if not on the Company. But Lucas and Swettenham did manage to get the concept of a Resident approved, and the
sultan, recognising that it might be the only way to preserve the remnant of his state and his dynasty, accepted one in a new treaty in 1906. That his state fell heir to enormous oil and gas reserves was not known at the time, and it was not an element in British policy.

No ‘colonial’ state had been established in Borneo, nor even colonial states. Sir Cecil Clementi made a new attempt to restructure ‘British Borneo’ in the 1930s, controversial, like his attempt to restructure British Malaya at the same time, and no more successful. By the end of World War II, the states had grown further apart. Pulling them together proved impossible even in the postwar period when British authority was clearly established in all three.

In the French wars the British had eliminated Dutch authority at the Cape, in India, Ceylon and the archipelago. They retained the Cape and Ceylon, but in the treaty of 1814 undertook to restore the other holdings of the old Dutch company to the new kingdom of the Netherlands. Included not only the old Dutch republic, but also the Belgian provinces of the Habsburgs, that had been set up as a barrier to a new French attempt to disrupt the balance of power in Europe and to threaten the security of the British isles. Handing back Dutch possessions in the Indies would help the new kingdom to sustain its independence, if not guarantee its friendship. At the same time, it would keep another major power out of those possessions, which had been one of the objectives of the British conquests.

During the nineteenth century, the British were essentially to hold to this policy, cleaving to it even more firmly during the imperialist phase. They did, however, make two exceptions, which added an element of distrust to their relationship with the Dutch, marked already as much by a sense of humiliation as by a sense of gratitude. Raffles persuaded his superiors that allowing even the Dutch to remain on the peninsula was a threat to the security of the Straits. Twenty years later Brooke won limited support for a venture in the sultanate of Brunei. Otherwise the British made no attempt to challenge the political predominance of the Dutch in the archipelago, through Singapore helped to ensure a share in its commerce. That meant that, at least until the imperialist phase, the Dutch could, as it were, take their time in building a colonial state. No one else was going to challenge them, and they could focus on the areas that were most profitable. Elsewhere they could rely on ‘paper claims’ and need not establish any administrative structure. The fundamental document in this relationship was the treaty of 17 March 1824, under which the British withdrew from Sumatra as the Dutch did from the peninsula.

The treaty provides a striking example of frontier-making in the region as a means of resolving differences among European powers. There were and remained many commercial links between the peninsula and archipelago. The treaty was also a challenge to long-standing historical links. Traditionally the Straits of Melaka and Singapore had brought political
entities together rather than divided them. That was true of the Malayo-Indonesian states, of Sri Vijaya, Melaka, Johore and Aceh. It was true of the Portuguese and the Dutch, too. Now the two parts of the Malay world were set on political courses that were likely to diverge. There was indeed no guarantee that the British would extend their political control over the peninsular states, nor even that the Dutch would extend their control over Sumatra at least for a long time to come. It was, however, clear that neither power could extend across the Straits: the options of the Malayo/Indonesian rulers had been reduced.

In a sense, too, other powers had been warned off. No line had been drawn on the map, partly for fear of provoking them. ‘The situation in which we and the Dutch stand to each other is part only of our difficulty’, George Canning had written. ‘That in which we both stand to the rest of the world as exclusive Lords of the East is one more reason for terminating our relative difficulties as soon as we can.’ Other powers did in fact recognise that the British and the Dutch were ‘exclusive Lords’: the British, the prime naval power, was seen to have an interest in the preservation of the Dutch empire in the Indies, and others did not challenge it, weak though Dutch authority was outside Java, and challenged as it was there in the war of 1825–30.

The apprehension that they might do so was renewed in the ‘imperialist’ phase. If the British took precautions on the peninsula and later in northern Borneo, so did the Dutch in the archipelago. Not all were well advised. Their reduction of tariffs was wisely designed to buy off territorial ambitions with commercial opportunities. Their policy towards Aceh was, by contrast, disastrous. Not yet brought within the ambit of the contractual relationships on which their position outside Java largely rested, the sultanate, they feared, might turn to other powers. The Dutch felt that they had to interpose and began what turned out to be the kind of long and exhausting war which a colonial power – particularly a minor one – ought always to avoid. It even limited their attempts to establish their control more firmly east of Java, which the Berlin conference of 1884–5 – which set criteria for the recognition of colonial claims in Africa – seemed to make more necessary. Only in 1894 – and with great violence – was Lombok brought under control. Bali followed a decade later, not without a mass suicide in the principality of Badung. The establishment of Dutch control in eastern Borneo was more peaceful, though it required a frontier settlement with Britain and the Company.

Though Indonesian nationalists – defining themselves by reference to the ‘other’, the colonial power – were to speak of three hundred years of Dutch rule, most of what they called Indonesia had not been under control for more than a few decades, and even the suppression of opposition did not mean that an effective administration had been established. The nationalists did, however, claim for Indonesia the frontiers that the colonial power had established, including even West New Guinea. As
Benedict Anderson writes, the ‘stretch’ of Indonesia, with ‘its hybrid pseudo-Hellenic name’, did not ‘remotely correspond to any precolonial domain’: until Suharto annexed East Timor, its frontiers were those of ‘the last Dutch conquests’.23

Though once part of a larger commercial, political and religious venture, the Philippines had become an outpost of the Spanish empire in America. The advent of ‘enlightened’ rulers in Spain – coupled with the temporary British occupation of Manila in 1762–4 – prompted an endeavour to turn the Philippines to greater account, and the subsequent loss of the American colonies made it even more necessary for it to rely on its own resources. The Spanish response was to ‘open up’ the Philippines. British and for a while American traders in fact contributed a great deal to the economic development of the islands in the nineteenth century, and the British government made no further attempt to dislodge the Spanish rulers. The only dispute was over the Muslim regions which the Spaniards included in Filipinas, but over which they had not established their control. At the outset of the imperial phase the Spanish authorities – concerned over Islamic revival as well as over the rivalry of other powers – made new attempts to assert control, finally establishing a fort on Sulu in 1876.

Partly perhaps to avert unilateral German action, the British asserted the right to trade freely to islands not under Spanish control, and a tripartite protocol was concluded in 1877. The creation and chartering of the British North Borneo Company led to a different kind of agreement among the Western powers in 1885. The British agreed to cease any attempt to sustain or support the independence of the sultanate of Sulu, while the Spaniards agreed not to take up his claims in northern Borneo, and the Germans put up with the deal. Once again the Europeans had reached an agreement that avoided dispute among themselves. But it did not accord with the facts of geography or history, and was indeed at odds with them.

Spain had still not effectively incorporated Sulu in Filipinas when the Americans intervened in the course of the Spanish–American war in 1898. Their victory over Spain made the Philippines the outpost once more of an American empire. In the course of the war, begun as a result of US intervention in Cuba, Admiral Dewey’s fleet seized Manila. It was not certain that the US would retain any or all of the islands, but the Republican President, William McKinley, convinced himself, after consulting businessmen, experts and diplomats, and going on a pre-election tour, that the American people wanted an expansionist policy. The Spaniards at the peace negotiations played for time, vainly hoping that the Congressional elections would bring Democrat victories and undermine American ‘imperialism’. An agreement was promoted by the offer of financial compensation of $20m.

Colonies had been bought and sold before, but not in the presence of a
nationalist movement. Like the Cubans, the Filipinos had been in revolt against Spain, but, while in Latin American style Cuba was to attain independence, the Philippines did not. The claims of the nationalists were bypassed in 1898, and a long struggle with the new imperialists began the following year. No other power intervened in their favour, European or Asian, distant or neighbouring, though the Japanese, in occupation of Formosa since 1895, showed some cautious interest. The British would have preferred the Philippines to remain under Spain, but, if that were impossible, it was better that the Americans should take over than the Germans. No one thought that the Filipinos could rule themselves.

Succeeding the Spaniards, the Americans acquired their territories in Luzon and the Visayas, and also the challenges they had continued to face in the ‘Moro’ lands. While they were dealing with the northern ‘insurgents’, they compromised with the Sultan of Sulu, recognising him in the Bates treaty of 1899. Once their authority was secured in the north, they moved to extend it in the south. The struggle was an extremely violent one. The US deployed more force than Spain. The response was no less vigorous or ‘fanatical’.

The world in which these frontiers were drawn was indeed a world dominated by the ‘imperial’ powers, to which the US and indeed Japan had recruited themselves. The frontiers were drawn at their convenience, designed to avoid conflict among them, even to ease their conflict elsewhere. The relevance to history or geography varied. Peoples were thrown together or pulled apart by the imposition of a more or less arbitrary imperial framework. How far they were pushed together or forced apart, however, depended on the extent to which the imperial powers determined actively to govern, and in what ways. Those decisions were taken in part as a result of the extension to the territories of the state-building under way within the metropolis, and pressed perhaps by its state-forming politics. They were also taken in response to the economic changes in this period. Both the decisions, and indeed the economic changes themselves, had their impact on the territories and the peoples, and contributed to the creation of colonial states in terms both of building and formation.

The author has argued elsewhere that two of the main sources of change that reached Southeast Asia from the outside world – what might be described as the ‘political’ and what might be called the ‘economic’ – should be distinguished from one another.24 ‘Imperialism’ cannot be identified with capitalism, nor explained by its requirements. The greatest industrial power of the day pursued, at least until 1870, an ‘imperialism of free trade’ that in essence falls outside the definition. The vigorous French ‘imperialism’ came from a country slow to industrialise, though anxious to sustain its place in the world. Latter-day US imperialism was not endorsed by the great industrialists, nor did it sustain, if it ever
acquired, a popular backing. Even in Japan, the old zaibatsu were slow to rally to the grandiose ventures of the 1930s.

The industrial revolution, making Britain the first industrial economy, and then spreading to other countries like the US and Germany whose resources enabled them to surpass it, certainly began to transform the interests of the states involved and their relationship with the outside world. The process was speeded up by the improvement of communications, the introduction of steamers, the extension of the electric telegraph, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the building of continental railways. It produced major changes, tending to transform countries that did not industrialise – or parts of those countries – into producers of commodities and recipients of manufactures.

What governments did was not simply what these changes suggested. Acquisitive imperialists often pointed to economic opportunities, hoping for the backing of capitalists. Capital was generally more cautious, and offered backing only after the event, often indeed seeking or requiring positive encouragement from the new colonial governments. Motives and actions overlapped: they did not coincide. Perhaps, as Thomas Lindblad has helpfully suggested in the case of Netherlands India, they came together more often at the local level than at the centre or in the metropolis.  Governor or resident would want to encourage investment, so as to produce revenue that would assist in state-building. The concept of state-building, as the author suggests, is thus a helpful one. Two qualifications are, however, worth advancing.

The territories that were pulled together under colonial rule were often fragmentary in nature, their population highly differentiated. The impact of economic change was also differential: commerce and labour might concentrate in segments within an already fragmented and differentiated territory, the source, say, of tin or rubber, Perak or Deli. What was the impact of potentially state-building activities in such a context? Involving the transfer to the colonial territories and administrative protectorates and to Siam of practices now becoming common in metropolitan states, they would aim to provide the infrastructure, services and legal systems that a modern economy and administration required. But they might focus on those areas best able to produce revenue, and still further differentiate them from the rest of the territory. The interests of the state itself might not entirely coincide. A railway, for example, might merely run from plantation to port, or be designed to attract investment in a hinterland. A government could also, however, build a railway for a strategic purpose or as a boost for territorial unification, even though, once built, it might have other effects as well, economic and cultural. It could thus put a priority on state-building, which would have state-forming effects. But if the focus was on one area only it might be less integrative, even disintegrative, in effect.

The second qualification raises a related question. The colonial govern-
ments were transferring from the metropolis the state-building practices being adopted there. There was, however, a fundamental difference. Those governments might be building a colonial state – their railways, for example, might be designed to sustain it – but that state was not the same as the metropolitan state and could never be so. That was evident, for example, when the question of industrialisation came to be considered. Even if a colonial state had acquired the conditions under which it might be able to embark on a programme of industrialisation, its chances of being able to do so were limited, and it was entirely unlikely to receive from a colonial state the kind of support or protection offered by the state in Germany, the US, France and Japan. Whatever the relation of imperialist and capitalist at the outset of a colonial venture, their interests tended over time to become more intertwined. Even when governors might see that industrialisation might advantage their territories – and their revenues – they were likely to be constrained by their metropolitan superiors who might have to face criticism at home. If modernisation involved industrialisation, there was a limit to the modernisation that could be achieved under colonial rule. For that reason colonial states could only be transitional.

There were other reasons. A more modern economy – even though it stops short of industrialisation – requires greater literacy. The uncertain future of the colonial state was nowhere more clearly shown that in its educational provision. It had itself to make some, and it could not altogether prevent others from providing more, Christian missionaries, Muslim clerics, Chinese nationalists, local nationalists, though it would try to control them. What was provided in metropolitan countries was often still quite limited, but doing too little in the dependencies was increasingly likely to be criticised at home, where a sense of mission accompanied the justificatory presentation of imperialism to the expanding electorates and public opinion that were part of state formation. The colonial economy needed bean-counters, and the growing colonial state itself needed clerks. It did not want there to be too much education, nor education of the wrong sort. Yet, as the Spaniards had already realised, it was not only hard to contain it, but harder still to contain its outcomes. How did you stop Jose Rizal and his fellow college students reading whatever publications – books, magazines, newspapers – entered the Philippines, legitimately or illegitimately, from Hong Kong or from Europe? Along with them came ideas about modern states and nations that showed the limits of the colonial state and the limitations on its inhabitants. Education had ‘capricious outcomes’.

‘Englishmen sometimes indulge the notion that England is secure in the division and disunion among the various races and nationalities of India’, Dadabhai Naoroji wrote in 1881. But ‘new forces’ were ‘working their way. . . . The kind of education that is being received by thousands of all classes and creeds, is throwing them all in a similar mold . . . all feel
alike their deprivation, and the degradation and destruction of their country.\(^{26}\) The remark – which should encourage historians to consider the impact of the state and education in the Habsburg dominions well before industrialisation even in Bohemia – might also have resonated with the Filipino nationalists.

The industrial revolution did not at once transform the economic relationships between Europe and Asia. Those had seldom been reciprocal, still less often taking the shape of exchanging European manufactures for Asian commodities. The Portuguese, the English and the Dutch engaged more often in the trade within Asia, remitting the profits, while the Spaniards simply spent the silver dollars their conquests in America made available. There was little that the Europeans made that could be sold in Asia. The transformation gathered pace in the course of the nineteenth century, particularly from the 1870s. Trade within Asia did not, of course, disappear, but its character changed, and so did its relative importance. It had focused on the export of Indian textiles and drugs to other parts of Asia, on the import into China of jungle and marine products, precious metals and drugs, on the export of manufactures from China. The new emphasis on an export–import relationship with the industrialised world was accompanied by a related regional differentiation. While tin and later rubber were exported from Malaya, for example, rice was taken to Malaya from Burma, Siam and Indo-China.

A mixed pattern had indeed been emerging before the 1870s. When the Spaniards turned to the encouragement of foreign trade to help sustain the Philippines following their loss of Mexico, the British initially competed in the rice trade to China. Then they developed the trade in sugar from Luzon and later the Visayas, which they sent to markets in Australia and Europe. Much more interventionist than the Spaniards, the Dutch sought to profit from their possessions in Java under the so-called culture or cultivation system. That put goods, coffee and sugar, on the world market at a price made highly competitive by the use of compulsory labour.

Before 1870 the mainland states made no attempts to emulate the economic interventionism of the Dutch. At most they opened up their territories to the play of economic forces. That was the policy of the British in Arakan and Tenasserim, and later in Pegu, and later of Mindon Min in the remnant kingdom. Responding to the British more positively than Burma or Vietnam, Siam made a treaty with Sir John Bowring along the lines of the ‘unequal treaties’ the Western states made with China. The Burma delta, the Chau Phraya valley, and Cochin-China were all to become major exporters of rice, to India, for example, as well as to other parts of Southeast Asia.

In the imperial phase, indeed, those were turning to production for export on a new scale, and becoming rice importers. In general the shift
was towards producing commodities for world markets. But the changes did not affect each ‘colonial state’ equally, nor each area in a colonial state. In Netherlands India, for example, Java developed under private capital along the lines set by the cultivation system, using village labour and land for the production of sugar, for example. Increasingly, however, the exports of Netherlands India came from the ‘Outer Islands’, or from some parts of the Outer Islands. The creation of the ‘cultuurgebiet’ on Sumatra’s East Coast in the closing decades of the nineteenth century was the most striking example. It was found that it could produce a form of tobacco with a niche in the world market, the Sumatra wrapper leaf, and the area was transformed by European investment and indentured Chinese and Javanese labour. Mineral wealth also attracted foreign investment. The conflicts that ensued on the Malay peninsula – among Malay chiefs and Chinese societies – were a factor in British intervention in the 1870s. But the changes focused on the west coast, particularly the states of Perak, Selangor, and Sungei Ujong.

In the early twentieth century the industrial revolution moved into a new phase and exerted new demands. One feature was the growth of the automobile industry. That called upon Southeast Asia’s oil, found in Burma, in southern Sumatra and eastern Borneo, in Brunei and Sarawak, and over the subsequent decades those areas were transformed. Such a product required substantial outside investment and expertise. Producing rubber – for which the automobile industry also called – required much less. In some parts of Southeast Asia – in Malaya, for example, also in Cochin-China – it was a plantation industry. But it was also amenable to smallholder production through large parts of the Malay world, as was another product in increased demand, copra.

These ventures were an ambiguous legacy to the successor-states. They produced wealth, but much of it was spent overseas. What was spent in the colonial state was not necessarily spent in the interests even of the colonial state, let alone a nation-state to be. Know-how was not necessarily transferred, though peasants could sometimes imitate or improve on planters. The results included both resentment and lack of competence. They did, however, show the possibilities, both by what they did, and also by what they failed to do. The failure to encourage even light industry prompted unrealistic attempts to create heavy industry, as in Burma, and in general a belief that government could and should intervene, to undo what the colonial government had done or remedy what it had failed to do, though that belief was also sustained in the postwar era by the example of states in Western Europe and the Soviet bloc.

The infrastructure the colonial governments created left an ambiguous legacy, too. In the Malay states the development of rail transport – Bismarck’s iron – was associated with the development of tin-mining in the west coast states after the British ‘intervention’ in 1874. ‘With revenues from tin, the first railways were constructed connecting the inland mining
centres with the ports’, as Amarjit Kaur writes.27 Linking the railways, it was later argued, would help ‘to consolidate the union’ created by the formation of the FMS.28 But the railways, Kaur adds, ‘were not conceived in terms of stimulating well-rounded development in the country as a whole’.29 There were indeed few links with or on the east coast.

At the end of the century Governor-General Paul Doumer sought to pull French Indo-China together, not only by administrative and political reforms, but also by a programme of railway construction. One great project was the Transindochinois. The difficulties of the coastal route meant, however, that Saigon and Hanoi were not linked until 1936, while Cambodia and Laos remained without rail connection with the Vietnamese lands. In any case, another Doumer project had priority, one that related less to the construction of French Indo-China than to the long-standing, though ultimately disappointed, French aspirations in China itself. The Yunnan railway was designed to ‘open up’ south-west China. The 290-mile line, with 172 tunnels and 107 bridges, was built at monumental cost of life and treasure: 30 per cent of the 80,000 coolies involved died and 40 of the 300 European personnel.30

In Southeast Asia in general the railway was less significant than in other parts of the world, given the ease of travel by water and the obstacles to constructing the permanent way. In Burma the railway, built by the British with Indian capital, competed with the superbly navigable Irrawaddy used by the British-owned Irrawaddy Flotilla Company. The first line, opened in 1877, ran from Rangoon to Prome, but after that, to avoid duplicating the main river route, it followed the Sittang valley. By 1889 it had reached the old capital, Mandalay, and from there a spectacular line extended to Lashio by 1903. The transport system, however, as C.A. Fisher put it, ‘markedly concentrated in the two central regions of the dry zone and the delta’.31

Contrast the independent kingdom of Siam. The railway that extended down the Malay peninsula became a means of supplying rice to Malaya, but the system was constructed mainly with political objectives. ‘Politically the railway will always play a leading role as it ties the outlying provinces more firmly to the government’, wrote Luis Weiler, one of the German engineers involved.32 That would help to preserve them as part of the kingdom vis-à-vis the imperial powers. Apart from a short line between Bangkok and Paknam, the first line to be built was a line to Korat, significantly enough at the time when the French were advancing into Laos. A south-eastern line was begun in 1908, the year after the French secured Siemreap and Battambang. Part of the deal that involved the transfer of suzerainty over the northern Malay states to the British in 1909 was a loan for the completion of the railway into the southern provinces, linked to the Malayan system in 1917.

In Netherlands India, so accessible by water, few railways were built except on Java, where they were designed to improve the connections between the interior and the main ports. The Dutch government,
however, offered the KPM special privileges as a means of reducing the role of the Singapore entrepôt, underpinning them with ‘public investment in strategic port development in the Outer Islands’. By the late 1920s, ‘[t]he stranglehold of Singapore over the foreign trade of the Outer Islands was thus broken for all main commodities except rubber’.33 But that also had a political effect. It was a further step in unifying Netherlands India and separating it from the rest of the Malay world.

If so many outcomes of the imperial venture, and of the economic changes that the industrial revolution promoted, were unintended or ‘capricious’, the same was true – even more true, it might be said – of another activity that they both influenced, the spread of ‘Western’ education. It was that indeed which created or provoked the creation of new elites that perceived the future of the colonial states in national terms and that, in reference to the task of modernisation, could both rival their alien rulers and complain that they were doing too little or doing wrong what they were doing. Yet to create such elites was not the original intention of the colonial rulers.

To some extent, indeed, the provision of education should be seen, like other aspects of late nineteenth century state-building, as a projection into the colonial dependencies of new practices in the metropolises. Those who believed that the colonial state did too little often failed to recognise how little the metropolitan state did. Britain itself, unlike Germany, was slow effectively to recognise the state’s responsibility. The levels of literacy in some parts of Europe were quite low, even compared with Asian dependencies. Perhaps colonial governments were even more cautious, especially as they realised that the elite might have political objectives, and it certainly seems that the educational gap between metropolis and colony increased in the twentieth century. That was not necessarily fatal to the nationalist cause: a small elite could provide leadership, and indeed could conceive national unity more readily than a dispersed one. The longer-term effects were more adverse. Even now Southeast Asia – notwithstanding its ‘miracles’ – is affected by the educational deficit of the colonial period. It is at least as noticeable in non-colonised Thailand as in former colonial territories, arguably in part because the kingdom had to focus on the external threat.

Nationalists were concerned not only about the quantity of education provided in the colonial states but about its quality. What was its purpose? Was it merely to provide foreign firms with clerks, staff lower positions in an expanding administration, in the state railways, in the tax monopolies? The effects of even such an education could not be limited. Was it then to provide a more positive steer or, nationalists might think, a more negative one, such as Governor Butler looked for in setting up a committee ‘to ascertain and advise how the imperial idea may be inculcated and fostered in schools and colleges in Burma’?34
Christian missionary enterprise was another source of ‘Western’ education, the outcomes of which were at least as ‘capricious’, perhaps even more. The purpose, indeed, varied. Some missionaries saw it as essential, part of an endeavour to transform individual and society. Others saw it as an enticement. Yet others saw it as a good work, casting bread upon the waters. All three groups recognised that they were preparing their students for tasks in this world if not for salvation in the next as well. Those might be in the church itself, in government, in business. Indeed that was an attraction for their students, and for some, perhaps, the chief attraction, particularly if the missions offered or used English, already becoming the lingua franca of economic globalisation.

Not many missionaries conceived of themselves as providing education for state-builders, but – with their students – they were in effect participants in state formation. In the twentieth century, as they recognised the emergence of the nationalism to which the education they had provided made a contribution, they sometimes made a conscious effort to take part in nation-building, concerned as they were to provide for the future of their church in postcolonial states. That they did not always achieve. The outcomes of their endeavour – itself the witness of a tension between religious message and secular purpose – were at times at odds with regimes and ideologies. Indeed missions and governments could never see entirely eye to eye. Missions might be useful, but they might also be harmful, provoking opposition and emulation from Islam, giving ‘minorities’ a voice. Their educational endeavours might privilege some segments of society, and in general they were intrinsically likely to offer individuals an additional emotional focus, if not an alternative one.

Colonial governments were ambivalent over education, whether missionary-sourced or not. In the Philippines – so reliant on the missions – the Spaniards had established a European-style education system at the outset of the colonial period. The ‘friars’ established schools that taught the rudiments – reading and Christian doctrine, more rarely writing and arithmetic – not, generally, using Spanish, but choosing, and privileging, one of the local languages. The Jesuits began secondary education in 1585, and their college-seminary was raised to university status in 1621. The Dominican secondary school, begun in 1611, started to offer degrees in 1626, and became a university in 1645, Santo Tomas. The friars continued to dominate education, even after the attempts to establish a government system in the 1860s. Over Santo Tomas itself there was a compromise. The government secured supervisory powers, and there were laymen as well as Dominicans on the staff. Nearly 2,000 degrees were awarded between 1865 and 1898. The graduates could not get the posts for which they were fitted, the university pointed out in 1887. They could go into ill-paid professional jobs, but the government preferred men educated in Spain. The university urged a change of policy in order to avoid political disturbances.35
The government system – like the mission system – was not without its ideals. The immediate purpose of founding a normal school, the Manila government reported in 1865, ‘is to facilitate communication between the native Filipinos and the Spanish authorities; major development in arts, industries, agriculture, and commerce; indigenous participation in arts and sciences, and filling up of various subordinate positions in the government’. Implicit was an attempt to establish a new relationship between state and subjects in a changing world. ‘[M]odern education played two contradictory roles’, Oades writes. ‘While it was intended to strengthen the Spanish colonial superstructure, it nevertheless fostered the spirit of “Filipino” national consciousness.’ To produce graduates, and not to employ them, or to employ them only in unworthy positions, could only be counter-productive. It produced opposition, not collaboration.

That was always to present a challenge to colonial states. The Philippines – with its comparatively strong emphasis on education – was only the first Southeast Asian case. Much of the education offered there was in the liberal arts, law, theology and medicine. ‘Was it at all surprising that education of this sort should produce Filipinos who thought they knew the rights of citizens and the duties of government . . . and who had the impudence to invoke Rousseau and the Laws of the Indies?’ The attempts other states made to emphasise the utilitarian did not, however, avail them.

What happened in Netherlands India – though somewhat later – bore some resemblance. Not reliant on a clerical elite – with its distinctive agenda – the Dutch were, however, even more restrictive in approach. To make the cultivation system work, they relied largely on the status and influence of the traditional elite, the priyayi, and they did not require a modern education. In 1878 the government established chiefs’ schools (hoofdenscholen) for the sons of the higher elite, but not until 1893 did it institute a professional education for native administrative officials. Back in 1851 it had set up a teacher training school (kweekschole) and a ‘Dokter-djawa’ school for training vaccinators. Now the growth of infrastructure and other services created new opportunities for the lesser priyayi. But it was only in the ‘Ethical’ phase, the early years of the new century, that the government adopted a more systematic approach to education, and even that was marked by division and doubt.

For ‘Ethici’ like J.H. Abendanon, the focus was on the elite, the object to win them over to Western culture, countering the appeal of Islam that Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje identified. The chiefs’ schools were reorganised as training schools for native officials (OSVIA), open to an inlander who had completed the European lower school, and in 1900–2 the Dokter-djawa school became STOVIA. In 1914 the first-class native schools established in the 1890s became Dutch Native Schools (HIS), teaching Dutch, and relieving the pressure on the European schools for those who wished to attend OSVIA and STOVIA, or go on to secondary education in
the Hoogere Burgerschool (HBS). In 1914 MULO schools were set up to provide more extended lower education, and in 1919 AMS, general middle schools, to carry students to university entrance level. In the 1920s university-level education was made available in the Indies for the first time, by turning STOVIA into a medical college and founding a technical and a law college. Before that an inlander could enter tertiary education only by going through HBS and on to the Netherlands.

Governor-General Van Heutsz and Colonial Minister Idenburg favoured a less elite-oriented – and less expensive – approach. Village schools were set up, the villages unenthusiastically bearing much of the cost. From 1915 native senior schools (vervolgscholen) were created to take students to a higher level. But the whole system remained under-resourced, and never dealt with large numbers. In 1930–1 1.66m inlanders were in the vernacular primary schools designed for them, 8 per cent of the relevant population group. Some 7,000 were in Dutch-medium secondary education in 1941, mostly in MULO. By that year a total of 230 had graduated from the engineering, law and medical schools.

Even so they did not have the opportunities they looked for. As Idenburg had observed in 1908: ‘students who had received a European education, either in the Netherlands Indies or in the Netherlands, are not always assigned to a position in keeping with their education, but to one which threatens to degrade them.’ They did not take up the national cause simply because they were not employed in the jobs they might legitimately expect. But the education they got capriciously conveyed other concepts, including that of serving the people of the Indies in other ways and through other means.

Not that government provision was the only provision. Muslim education was not destroyed, nor even sidelined, partly because the government’s counter-moves were so inadequate, and partly because Islamic leaders reacted in a more positive way than Snouck Hurgronje had forecast. Mission schools provided vocational education in Java, in the Batak lands, in the Minahasa. Chinese schools catered for the Chinese. And the Taman Siswa schools of Ki Hadjar Dewantoro sought to combine modern education and Javanese tradition.

Across the Straits provision was limited and purpose even more so. Malay vernacular schools were established alongside the Koran schools. ‘I do not think’, Swettenham wrote, ‘we should aim at giving Malays the sort of higher education that is offered by the Government of India to its native subjects.’ Education for the Malay elite was offered at the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, opened in 1909. The training of teachers for Malay schools, begun at Melaka in 1900, was provided in the Sultan Idris Training College at Tanjong Malim from 1922. That was a source of some radical thinking about the role and future of the Malays and Malaya.

Indeed they saw themselves facing not only what was in effect virtually colonial rule but also extensive immigration from India and China. The
Chinese set up their own schools, securing subsidy from the government in the 1920s only when it became concerned about the influence of the Kuomintang, the Chinese Nationalist Party. Tamil schools were provided as a means of encouraging immigration when the rubber industry needed labour, and the labour code of 1923 included a requirement for estate schools. What the government did not do was to promote a common education for the communities, nor education in English. Those schools that provided English were in fact the ones that created a trans-community elite.

The Medical School was opened in 1905, and Raffles College, conceived in 1918, only in 1928. Chinese leaders had wanted it to be a university. ‘There are not in Singapore and the Straits sufficient boys who would be thought proper for university education’, the teachers’ association was told. ‘It is very much better that a few boys should go home to get a proper education.’ The University of Malaya was founded only after the war.

Annexed to India, itself an exception and, for the British, a warning, Burma was also exceptional. It shared in the development of Western university education in the Indian empire, strengthened by the Universities Act of 1904. By 1919 there were 875 Burmans enrolled at the University of Calcutta. A government committee in Rangoon was meanwhile working out the guidelines for a university there. The 1920 Act adopted its approach: a residential university with a relatively high standard of entry. But, prompted by India’s political advance, Burmese critics saw this as a restrictive rather than a progressive approach: they argued that the government’s object was to restrict the number of graduates so that Burma could never govern itself. The current students were persuaded to strike, and the strike spread to schools. Pongyis (Buddhist monks), editors and politicians called for a ‘national’ system of education. Most of the ‘national’ schools that were set up did not long survive, and no ‘national’ university was set up. But the University of Rangoon was to be central to the nationalist struggle, and its student leaders came to dominate the independence movement.

Unifying Vietnam after two centuries or more of division, the Nguyen dynasty sought to reinstitute the Chinese-style examination system as a means of recruiting a loyal bureaucracy. Villages chose their own teachers, failed or retired scholars, or those who did not want to serve as officials. Traditional examinations continued after the imposition of French control, until 1915 in Tonkin and until 1918 in Annam. Then the system was revamped on the model developed in the colony of Cochin-China. There, ‘Franco-Annamite’ schools and colleges had emerged, mainly in the urban centres, with secondary or lycée education following in a few institutions after 1910. By 1930 only 323,759 children were at public schools, about 60,000 in government-approved private schools, and 3,000 in lycées. In Cambodia the first high school was opened in 1935, in Laos.
the first lycée in 1947. The University of Hanoi, opened briefly in 1907, reopened in 1917, enrolled a total of 3,000 students in 25 years.

‘Colonial educational policy was characterized by a tension between cultural expansionism and racial elitism.’42 French cultural influence was to be brought to bear, but not too much. The colonial regime, and particularly the French in the colony, ‘feared that the colonial schools might produce an unmanageable army of French-speaking Vietnamese intellectuals who could compete with native Frenchmen living in the colony for positions in the colonial administration’.43 Even more than in Netherlands India, the ‘colon’ factor indeed made for inflexibility.

Western education was both a disruptive and a constructive factor in the making of nationalism in Southeast Asia. Introduced alongside – and partly as a result of – other changes, themselves both disruptive and constructive, it created new elites, brought new ideas, encouraged new aspirations. Colonial states – like indeed the Thai monarchy, which sent students off to Europe – accepted the need for it, but they sought to limit it both in quantity and quality: they were apprehensive of its social and political effects. They could not, however, solve their problems in that way: indeed they worsened them. By failing to employ graduates, they caused resentment and frustration. By trying to limit the amount and content of education, they provoked those who sought it. It was a genie they could not put back into the bottle. Indeed the strikingly small size of the elite they created made it easier for it to develop a new sense of identity, based on Western-style nationalism but drawing on the past. The colonial states again revealed their bankruptcy. But they were not easily overthrown. The nationalists sought to ‘confront’ them by organising the ‘people’, also affected by political, administrative, and economic change and religious ferment. They were dislodged, however, only by the Japanese.

Southeast Asia had been divided anew by the arrangements the British made with other colonial powers. Within frontiers largely established through that diplomacy, colonial states had developed, in part as a result of ‘building’, in part as a result of ‘formation’. ‘Those who watched the native world with interest have known for some time past that during the last decades new desires and new ideals have made themselves known’, Adviser Hazeu wrote of the Indies in 1908, ‘and that society, often considered stiffly conservative and incapable of development, slowly began to reform itself’.44 But the colonial regimes reacted in an ambivalent way to the changes they had themselves helped to bring about. Could they risk expanding education? could they promote industrialisation? ‘For three decades after 1912 the major theme in Surakarta’s history’, George Lensen writes, ‘is the Dutch attempt to effect change and at the same time curb the political response to that change.’45

They realised that they could create a modern colonial state, but that could not be a fully modern state, since it could not be a national state.
The question of an army again illustrated their limitations. Could you recruit an army on a national basis and still rely on its loyalty? Or was it, as Sarekat Islam put it in 1916, the government’s business to defend the country? The British seemed to think so, even in 1941.

Writing in the late 1950s – when Southeast Asia was largely independent, but the wind of change had not reached gale force in Africa – Rupert Emerson suggested that in the past it could be taken for granted that an imperial power would lack zeal ‘to achieve the welding together of peoples over whom it ruled. What emerged in the way of national unity was an accidental by-product rather than an intended result.’ Even in the changed political climate – where nation-building had found some acceptance as a colonial goal – ‘colonial administrators cannot take on the tasks which only a national government can assume.’

Would a national government take on the tasks, even if it could? That was a question that could already be asked in the later 1950s, but became yet more problematical in the later decades. Governments were indeed tempted to build regimes rather than states or nations, their contribution to them being ‘capricious’. Offering another negative legacy, the colonial past removed a check upon them. There was yet a further sense in which the colonial states were not nation-states, if states at all.

To a large extent colonial governments and their avowed rule of law relied on local elites, backed by occasional displays of violence. Below that, though they scarcely wished to recognise it, their subjects were at the mercy of the elites and the bully-boys they often employed, successors, for example, to the jagos of eighteenth century Mataram. ‘[T]he entire construction of the colonial government in Java was in fact based on an extensive network of rural crime, largely due to the inability of the official Javanese administrators to control all of Java. For this reason, they were forced to bring local strong men into their service.’ With so insecure a basis, the colonial state offered its successors another kind of limitation. There was no trust in the wielders of power; there was no civil society to support or to check them. Meanwhile, however, nationalists had an opportunity.
Nationalist elites had to define the ambit of their action: was it all or part of the colonial state? Was it more? The process of definition would be influenced by their education, their understanding of the concept and their analysis of the circumstances in which they were operating. Would they have local support? Would they have support from within the colonial regime or its metropolis or would they meet only with opposition? Would they have support from outside – indirectly by example or directly by some kind of intervention – from other powers, imperial or regional, from other movements, communism, Islam? Did they have access to the media of the day? What infrastructure could they utilise?

Their appreciation of such circumstances would also influence the way they took what may be considered the next step, the creation of a larger movement. If it might facilitate the process of definition, the small size of an elite might also make it difficult to widen support. Would you need or receive support, advice or example from other states, other movements in this task? What language could or should you employ? What media were available? Could mass support be won on so novel a basis as nationalism? How could the ‘people’ be rallied to the cause? Would opposition to the colonial power – and to the changes that it had brought or that seemed to be associated with it – be sufficient? Would you need or receive mass support on the basis of ideas no more than obliquely related to nationalism? ‘Society does not cohere simply because the nationalist ideology, fashioned by the ruling elite, strikes a responsive chord in the population’, Craig Reynolds tells us. ‘The concept of a dominant ideology assumes an over-integrated, overly systematic view of society.’ Drawing on Carol Warren’s study of Bali, he suggests that ‘the dominant ideology thesis presumes that subordinate classes are much more affected by hegemonic production than is in fact the case’. If that was true of the pantjasila state of President Suharto, the suggestion also offers a way of looking at pre-independence nationalist movements. Indeed it suggests that the nation-state is still working on what earlier nationalists began.

‘The process of national liberation is a process that has done much to form nations. It has not been simply a mechanical external protection of
existing cultural and social units but rather a mode in which communities of cultural and social interaction have come to be created. Nor, of course, did colonial rulers simply provide a target for nationalist movements, though opposition to outside powers and influences continued to provide nationalist support for states, regimes and governments. The activities of colonial rulers were also constitutive. Much of what they did was the capricious outcome of what they did with other purposes in mind, but not all. They were, after all, engaged in state-building. In that they increasingly found themselves nation-building. For some at least it was a welcome step towards a successor nation-state, ‘the product of a tacit collusion between imperial power and nationalist movement designed to achieve a stable transition to independence’.

The concept of ‘tacit collusion’ may also be used in a reconsideration of the earlier history of nationalist movements. In Europe governments sought to strengthen themselves by involving the people in the state, through appropriating the national concept, even through applying the democratic one. Colonial governments felt a need to take at least some of the steps towards modernity, though they might feel that they need not, or could not, take others. Those who set up the normal school in Manila wanted to facilitate communication between ruler and ruled. The idea was shared by the Ethici in Netherlands India. They secured, moreover, some response, though not as moderate as they would have liked. By taking such steps, they were creating a public space, and in it seeking and even finding a new measure of support.

The same was true in Indo-China, though the French, even in the 1920s, were the least accommodating of colonial powers. ‘The institutions which act as vehicles for expression of the new ideas of “nation” and “nationalism”, and are thereby both cause and effect of the shift of sovereignties from village to nation, are the schools, representational bodies, the press and political parties’, Sampson writes.

The growth of these institutions in Viet Nam during the post World War One period redirected political activity to the pursuance of nationwide goals for the benefit of the Vietnamese people as a whole. Inasmuch as these institutions were a product of Western technological advances, such as the press, or imitations of Western political forms, such as representational bodies and political parties, we can say that national integration was triggered by association with the West. In view of the French obstruction of these mass institutions it is obvious that Vietnamese nationalism was in no way a ‘gift’ of the West, but the product of hard struggle on the part of the Vietnamese themselves.

In India, Breuilly writes, ‘Congress was both a challenger to and a part of the Raj’. Its nationalist ideology ‘provided an inspirational vision of Congress as the expression of a nation challenging foreign rule’. In fact,
however, ‘[t]he construction of Congress as a political reality out of the pressures created by the colonial state actually pushed nationalists towards the imagery of nationalism’. What it called for, he adds, was in many ways ‘a democratized Raj, a Raj in which the lower elements of the existing political system would be dominant’. The process was not entirely unlike that in the Spanish Philippines, Netherlands India or French Indo-China. Where India – and the British – differed was in the level of positive response. The state sought to extend its support downwards by extending the franchise in order to ‘force nationalists into more popular politics’. That would bind them and their followers to the state.

Colonial governments and nationalist movements were to a greater or lesser extent in collusion in the modernisation of the colonial state. They were at the same time rivals, at stake that very project. In retrospect, it seems to be a struggle in which in the longer term the nationalists must surely win and in which the efforts of colonial governments either to oppose them or to draw them into the current system could only have a delaying effect. Liberal empires, as James Mayall puts it, could only ‘play for time’. That seemed less evident to contemporaries. In Southeast Asia, indeed, the invasion of the Japanese was crucial at least in speeding up the process. As a result, however, the new states did not have so long an experience of colonial government as India. Nor, for the most part, had they had governments that were prepared to begin the positive modernisation of political life.

The concept of collusion may be taken further back. Colonial governments required collaborators who had roots in local society, and could help to secure stability and compliance. Some collaborators were, of course, merely self-interested; some recognised or rationalised that collaboration was a means of learning what later generations would need to know. In any case oppositional nationalist movements would have to attack them as well as the colonial powers with whom they worked, discredit and dislodge them, damage their hold on the masses, even though their support might be desirable. Colonial powers themselves faced a quandary as a result. If they wished to win support from young nationalists, they might have to abandon old collaborators. That was a risk they were often not prepared to take.

Collaborators were, of course, expected to possess or acquire a firm popular base in order to counteract the endemic threat to disrupt the state offered by gangsters, dacoits and ladrões (robbers), and to prevent the emergence of subversive or millenialist movements. Identified with an alien regime, the collaborating elite might, however, be unable to mobilise mass loyalty in its favour, or even prevent mass alienation, and even if it succeeded in that, it might not be able to respond to the demands a modernising regime made upon them. Even so colonial regimes sought to avoid interference at the village level, turning a blind eye, for example, to the use of bully-boys. There were indeed limits to the
modernisation that such regimes could bring about. Too active an administration, as the Ethici found, might alienate the people, rather than win them over. The regimes had often been difficult to establish, initial victory followed only by prolonged ‘pacification’. They remained weak, and in that sense again were bound to be transitional.

It was at the interstices of the colonial regimes that the nationalist elites had their best opportunity. They might undermine the forces at the disposal of the regimes, sowing mutiny in army or navy, though for the most part regimes avoided recruitment from majority peoples. For that their most effective instrument – working, perhaps, on other grievances, such as pay, promotion, being sent abroad – was to create an alternative and undermining loyalty to the ‘nation’. But since the regimes relied only sparingly on force, the real focus had to be on undermining the hold, such as it was, that the colonial regimes and its collaborating elites had upon the mass of the population. When in the 1920s the Indies government employed Islamic youth gangs to intimidate communists, it was, as Agus Salim said, ‘playing with fire’.\(^8\) The insecurity within the village could be turned to account by its opponents as well. A crucial point in any Southeast Asian state – precolonial as well as colonial – was the link with the village, source of tax and labour. Cutting the link was another nationalist objective. Economic and administrative change – often resented in the village – offered an opportunity and a challenge. The ‘national’ cause offered an explanation and a way out, but it, too, was novel, if not itself alienating. It competed or had to come to terms with other causes, perhaps more readily comprehended by the peasantry.

Its competition with another European ideology added to the ambiguity: communism was a help to nationalist movements, but also a hindrance. Its attitude to the nation and the state itself was, in theory at least, one of opposition: nation was a bourgeois concept; the state should wither away. Such an ideology was bound to divide nationalists. It could also complicate their attempts to mobilise the masses. On the one hand, it might be opposed by religious leaders, whose support was also sought. On the other hand, it might appeal to the millenarian traditions of the peasantry, its own utopian component contributing to the kind of premature, ill-organised and local action which the colonial power found it easy to put down.

No such complication faced the nationalist movement in the Philippines: it emerged too soon. The Southeast Asian nationalist movements which this chapter aims to compare vary in character, not only because they emerged in different territories and under different governments, but also because – partly as a result – they emerged at different times. That meant that they emerged in different contexts, in terms not only of the history of the relevant metropolitan state, but of international political trends as well, in terms, too, of the development of world trade and communications.
The opening-up of the Philippines expanded international trade, but also reduced its isolation. It brought unprecedented wealth to the mestizo elite, and so was likely to upset the established hierarchies, civil and religious, upon which the colonial state depended. But the formulation of the challenge with which it was presented also owed a great deal to the educational facilities that it had provided, and more generally to the degree of Europeanisation to which the Spanish colonial endeavour exposed at least the elite of the Philippines. In the nineteenth century a more critical elite element emerged, the ilustrado, the enlightened, while El Eco Filipino, published in Spain and advocating independence for the Philippines, was smuggled in by Spaniards of liberal persuasion.9 ‘The colony can no longer be kept secluded from the world’, wrote the German traveller, Friedrich Jagor. ‘Every facility afforded for commercial intercourse is a blow to the old system, and a great step made in the direction of broad and liberal reforms. The more foreign capital and foreign ideas and customs are introduced, increasing the prosperity, enlightenment and self-respect of the population, the more impatiently will the existing evils be endured.’10

The crisis was first felt within the church. The regime had continued to rely, not only on the native elites, the principalia, but also on the ‘regulars’, members of religious orders, even though, with the effective establishment of Christianity, the missionaries should, under canon law, have passed their ministry over to ‘seculars’, parish priests under the control of the bishops. The reason was essentially political: the orders did not admit non-Europeans. While the colonial government believed it had insufficient control over the orders, it found itself unable to dispense with them. ‘Seculars’ were presented as ineffectual, if not disloyal. Even liberals in Spain were cautious over dislodging the friars in the Philippines. The appointments they made, however, raised hopes, soon dashed.

The Spanish revolution of 1868 brought more liberal officials to the Philippines, headed by Carlos Maria de la Torre. Filipino liberals, led by lawyer-professor Joaquin Pardo de Tavera and by Jose Burgos, formed the Comite de Reformadores, and welcomed the new Governor. He released Felipe Buenacamino, jailed because he had led students at Santo Tomas who sought the use of Spanish not Latin. His successor, Izquierdo, cut off reformist discussions, however. Reactionaries assumed power again in the colony even before they did in Spain itself, and that precipitated the Cavite mutiny of January 1872. The regime resorted to exemplary violence. Allegedly implicated, three seculars, Burgos, Gomez and Zamora, were garroted, and other priests and lawyers were deported to the Marianas. But violence ran the risk of creating martyrs, and prison and exile were nurseries of nationalism.

Writing back in 1842, Sinibaldo de Mas y Sanz, a Catalan litterateur and traveller, had offered his government the choice: to preserve the colony or ‘to decide on its emancipation and prepare it for freedom’. He preferred
the latter: ‘how can we combine the pretensions of liberty for our own selves and desire to impose our own law on distant people?’ If that course were chosen, he envisaged ‘a popular assembly of representatives in Manila’, and a Spanish withdrawal, leaving behind ‘a constitutional form of government’, perhaps headed by an Infante.11 The government made no such attempt to collaborate with the new elite it had helped to create: it stayed with the regulars and the principalia. In 1893 there were but three Filipinos in the Governor-General’s cabinet. Their colleagues were the archbishop, the commander of the navy, the vice-governor, the president of the Audiencia, the intendant of the treasury, the director-general of civil administration, and the provincials of the six religious orders.

After attending private schools or colleges under priestly direction in Manila, Iloilo or Cebu, some ilustrados went on to Hong Kong or to Europe. ‘If you can do no better, study in Spain, but preferably study in freer countries’, Burgos had recommended.12 Those who went to Spain, however, certainly enjoyed a freer life than they could in the Philippines. Even so the aims of the so-called Propaganda movement were strikingly moderate at first. In 1888 Spaniards and Filipinos in Spain founded the Asociación Hispano-Filipino, which was reformist in tone – it wanted, for example, the compulsory teaching of Spanish, hitherto limited by the friars’ utilisation of various Filipino languages – and began the journal La Solidaridad in Barcelona. The following year Marcelo H. del Pilar of Bulacan transferred it to Madrid: it sought the expulsion of the friars, representation in the Cortes, a prohibition on deportation without sentence. The movement was backed by Spanish Masonry, and in 1891 the Filipinos were allowed to set up lodges in the colony. But the government was generally unresponsive, and the reforms of the 1880s – the abolition of the tobacco monopoly in 1881 and of tribute in 1884, the reduction in compulsory labour, the reorganisation of the provincial governments, and the revision of the legal codes – did not touch the real grievances of the ilustrados. ‘If the Filipino . . . is sufficiently intelligent to pay taxes’, Jose Rizal wrote, ‘he should also be so to elect a representative who can watch over him and his interests with the product of which he serves the government of the country.’13 Could that after all be achieved only through revolution?

Scion of a well-to-do family from Laguna, educated at Santo Tomas and in Spain, but also in Berlin and Heidelberg, Rizal espoused a reformist programme, aiming at the reduction of abuses and the secularisation of parishes, his marvellous novel, Noli me Tangere (published in Berlin, 1887) unsparingly criticising the friars but also the old elite. ‘Our people slept for centuries’, declares Elias, one of the characters, ‘but one day the lightning struck, and, even as it killed Burgos, Gomez and Zamora, it called our nation to life. God has not failed other peoples; He will not fail ours, their cause is the cause of freedom.’ But Ibarra replies that ‘wrongs are
not righted by other wrongs. The frustration of Rizal’s reformist hopes did not destroy his fears about the consequences of resorting to a more violent course. In his second novel, *El Filibusterismo* (published in Ghent in 1891), Padre Florentino tells the dying Simoun (Ibarra) ‘that we must secure [liberty] by making ourselves worthy of it . . . and when a people reaches that height God will provide a weapon, the idols will be shattered, the tyranny will crumble . . . and liberty shine out like the first dawn.’

The Liga Filipina Rizal founded in 1892 still did not aim at separation. What it seems Rizal hoped to do – and in this he anticipated other South-east Asian nationalists – was to confront the regime with so strong a movement that it would feel compelled to make concessions without the need for violence. It is possible that his planned settlement in North Borneo was not intended as an asylum, but as a back-up, a kind of threat; in Antonio Luna’s phrase, ‘a keystone for us’, or, as Lopez Jaena put it, ‘a town of Filipinos, the centre from which later will spring the redemption of our Archipelago’. He was arrested and deported to Dapitan in Mindanao. ‘[M]y crime consists solely in having desired for my equals the exercise of political rights, a most just aspiration which any man possessing self-respect should have.’

That left the way open for the less patrician leadership of Andres Bonifacio. Son of a tailor in Tondo, he was a Mason, and he joined the Liga. But about the same time he founded the Katipunan, a secret society with Masonic and traditional overtones, which sought the overthrow of the regime, its newspaper being titled *Kalayaan*, independence. Its discovery in August 1896 precipitated a crackdown by the Spaniards, apprehensive lest the ilustrado should join the movement. They executed Rizal. But that precipitated the Filipino revolution. In Manila, Bonifacio’s forces were beaten, but outside it the Tagalogs continued to resist, particularly in Cavite. One reason was the effective leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo, capitan municipal (mayor) of Kawit, who had not had the schooling of an ilustrado, but who had experience of leading the police against bandits.

After the expulsion of the Spaniards from the province, it was administered by two municipal consultative bodies, one, Magdalo, also the Katipunan name of Aguinaldo, at Kawit, and the other, Magdiwang, at Novaleta, associated with Mariano Alvarez. The latter invited Bonifacio to Cavite, but that stimulated tension between Magdiwang and Magdalo, which only helped the Spaniards. In March 1897, therefore, the revolutionaries met at Tejeros, and replaced the Katipunan with a revolutionary government headed by Aguinaldo as president. That Bonifacio could not accept: he was executed by his fellow revolutionaries on 10 May 1897.

The Spaniards recaptured the province by the end of May, and Aguinaldo moved his government north, eventually to Bulacan. At the end of the year he reached a truce with the Spanish authorities, mediated by Pedro A. Peterno, son of an 1872 exile. Aguinaldo and others went into exile in Hong Kong. The Spaniards hoped the revolution would fizzle out.
But for the revolutionaries it was a time for regrouping and spreading unrest outside the Tagalog provinces. Whatever Rizal had hoped of North Borneo, the British in Hong Kong protected political refugees so long as they did not violate Britain’s ‘avowed neutrality’. The revolutionaries made plans in the colony, but shipped arms from Chinese ports.

‘Whenever a people have risen against another people that ruled them, a colony against a metropolis, the revolution has never succeeded on its own strength’, Ferdinand Blumentritt had told Rizal. The Philippine revolution, unlike colonial revolutions in the mid twentieth century, had secured no overseas aid. The revolution had no precedent in Southeast Asia itself, and no ‘world opinion’ espoused its cause. Only some of the wilder nationalists in Japan were able to offer a little unofficial help. The Japanese government, which had just acquired Taiwan/Formosa, was cautious, lest it provoked the intervention of others, or interrupted the renegotiation of its own unequal treaties. The revolutionaries placed their main hope in the US. It did indeed intervene, fending off the Germans as well as the Japanese. But, defeating Spain, it did not accept the Philippines Republic that the revolutionaries had proclaimed in 1898, and for which Apolinario Mabini had written a True Decalogue. In November 1899 Aguinaldo had to disband his troops, but a long period of guerrilla war ensued. He was captured only in March 1901 and Malvar, the last general, surrendered only in April 1902. Those who refused to take the oath of allegiance – Mabini, Ricarte and many others – were exiled, in good colonial style, to Guam.

Bringing this guerrilla war to an end, like others, was achieved not merely by force, but by political means: the new regime had to win collaborators. And in that it succeeded. The revolution, strongest in the Tagalog provinces, had built up its strength there partly because it had been joined by members of the elite. Whatever their patriotic motives, they had an interest in supporting an effective government, such as at least initially Aguinaldo’s promised (post-Bonifacio) to be, and thus securing internal stability and perhaps international recognition. When the prospects of that eroded, they turned to the American alternative, and in so doing further eroded the Republic’s diminishing chances. At the same time, they could argue that the American option would offer not only stability but autonomy. Indeed, while President McKinley’s re-election clearly affirmed annexation, the Americans came to talk of self-government.

The elite was small in size and relatively homogeneous, though ‘Tagalogs’ predominated among the ‘Filipinos’. Like Rizal himself, it had, however, an ambivalent relationship with the masses, whose strength was needed against the colonial power, but was itself a source of concern. The ‘masses’ indeed saw the struggle in a different way: for them it was a social revolution, though not, of course, a Marxist one. In the Philippines peasant millennialism had taken on Christian overtones. The propagation
of Christ’s teachings, through hymns, poems and dramas, and, as Reynaldo Ileto has shown, the dramatised epic of His passion, death and resurrection, had reshaped the popular view of the world. So, too, had the exemplary impact of a charismatic leader, Apolinario de la Cruz, an indio lay brother from Tayabas, unable to enter an order, who had created a kind of alternative church. His movement had been violently suppressed in 1841, but the many smaller ‘Colorum’ sects were a legacy. The popular attitude to Rizal and the nationalist struggle were other legacies. Like Apolinario, he was hailed as a Tagalog Christ King. Returning to the Philippines in 1887, he had been persuaded to leave again in 1888 for his own safety’s sake, but his absence only intensified the ‘popular textualisation’ of his career. ‘Alas, Jose!’ a townmate wrote to him in 1889. ‘All the people here ask about you and pin their hope on you. Even the poorest people of the mountains are asking about your return. It seems that they consider you the second Jesus who will liberate them from misery!’

But for mass support the nationalist struggle could not have been carried on for so long or with such desperate intensity. That support was not, however, delivered on the basis of nationalism. At the same time the popular association of independence with social revolution, with turning society on its head, gave the elite caution. To Modesto Joaquin, a prominent Pampangeno, the peasants seemed ‘radical’ and ‘communistic’. It was a further reason for ending Rizal’s ambiguity in a different way, collaborating with the US in setting up a more stable government.

The creation of an independent Philippines became, very much more evidently under the Americans than under the Spaniards, a matter not simply of collaboration but of collusion between colonial elite and imperial ruler. Though recruiting itself to the ranks of the colonial powers in Southeast Asia, the US was a colonial power with a difference: challenged at home, its imperialism was from the start seen as transitional, even though that involved depreciating the current achievements of the Filipinos. How was it possible to reconcile the nationalism that the US had in some sense been the first to adopt with the nationalism which inspired the Filipinos?

‘What will you do with the nine million inhabitants of our Archipelago?’ Galicano Apacible asked the American people in a pamphlet published in Toronto in 1900. ‘Will you allow us to take part in your elections? Will you allow us to become one of the states in the federal Union? . . . Or’, he asked, no doubt alluding to the Americans’ own cause more than a century before – ‘will you tax us without representation?’ A group of upper-class Manilenos, led by T.H. Pardo de Tavera, indeed aimed at making the Philippines a state of the Union. That would offer tutelage and protection, but without colonial inequality or second-class citizenship. It would, however, preclude ultimate independence. The objectives may have been tactical. The Federalista party they formed indeed gave the ilustrado some leverage with the Americans and helped to ensure that their policy, unlike Spain’s, was reformist.
The US rejected statehood. The grounds on which the Republican Administration acted are suggested by the criticism the Democrats offered of its ‘imperialism’. It was, they said, ‘un-American’, crushing ‘the efforts of our former allies to achieve liberty and self-government’. The Filipinos could not be US citizens ‘without endangering our civilization; they cannot be subjects without imperiling our form of Government’. The US, the Democrats asserted, should declare its purpose: ‘a stable form of government’; independence; and protection from outside interference, ‘such as has been given for nearly a century to the Republics of Central and South America’. The Administration accepted that the Filipinos could not be part of the American ‘nation’, nor could they form a ‘colony’. They were, however, not ‘ready’ for the independence they had proclaimed, particularly in so uncertain a region as East Asia. It did, however, become a prospect. In the meantime the collusive politics of rulers and ruled helped – as in British India – to shape the nature of Philippine politics and the future independent state.

Under the Organic Act of 1902, the President ordered the setting up of a Philippines Assembly, with a national election to be held in 1907, and for that the Federalistas organised themselves as Progresistas. A Nacionalista party was also formed led by Sergio Osmeña, a Chinese mestizo from Cebu, and Manuel L. Quezon of Tayabas. Its platform was ‘the immediate independence of the Philippine Islands to constitute it into a free and sovereign nation under a democratic government, without prejudice to the adoption in due time of any form of guarantee which could be convenient’. The party triumphed, securing over one-third of the approximately 100,000 votes cast by an electorate restricted by property and literacy in English and Spanish. The nationalist cause was promoted both by the setting up of an assembly, and by its having to face ‘opposition’. Apprehensive of other powers, the Filipino leaders did not want independence too soon or too completely, but it became the major political issue, if not the only one. At the same time, granted a measure of participation, the elite had no need again to resort to the risky course of mobilising the masses.

The Democrat victory in the US elections of 1912 brought in an administration devoted to early independence for the islands. Somewhat ambiguously, however, the prologomena of the Jones law of 1916 envisaged independence when a stable government had been set up. A senate was created, the franchise extended, the legislature’s powers increased. President Woodrow Wilson’s wartime advocacy of self-determination as a principle of politics led in 1919 to a mission from the Philippines vainly aimed at persuading him to set a date. The Democrat Governor-General, F.B. Harrison, had, however, meanwhile speeded up the Filipinisation of the public services and given the legislature exceptional latitude in this and other matters.

The Republicans continued to take a rather different stance. In 1908
Taft had declared that ‘we wish to prepare the Filipinos for *popular* self-government’. Early independence for the Philippines would ‘subject the great mass of their people to the dominance of an oligarchical and, probably, exploiting minority.’ Whatever its ideals, Democrat rule had made that more likely. The new Governor-General, Leonard Wood, inherited the Taft policy, but his attempts to implement it, coupled with his wish to encourage more foreign investment in the Philippines, could only provoke a reaction from the elite which it could base on nationalist arguments. The chief effect of Wood’s programme was indeed to unify the nationalists, and to focus politics yet more intensely on the issue of independence.

US tariff policies had offered sugar interests in the Philippines major opportunities. In the depression their competition – and that of Cuba – rekindled the Democrats’ interest in promoting its independence. The outcome was the Tydings–McDuffie Act, under which the Philippines would be granted independence after a ten-year period of rule by a commonwealth government with limited powers. A convention drew up a constitution for the Commonwealth, and that was submitted to the electorate in 1935, in a referendum in which the non-Christians voted for the first time. In the presidential election later that year Quezon triumphed. About one million voted out of a population of thirteen million.

The Communist Party, a largely urban movement founded in 1930 by Crisanto Evangelista, was quickly put down, and Pedro Abad Santos’ Socialists did more to capitalise on the depression. But probably more significant among the peasants was a revival of the Colorum sects, and the continued association of independence with a relief from oppression. The most famous of the popular movements aiming at independence was the Sakdal (‘Accuse’) movement of the 1930s. Led by Benigno Ramos, a petty officeholder who had fallen out with the ruling groups, it at first sought to take part in politics, and did quite well in the 1934 elections, especially in Laguna. But the oligarchs reunited, and the movement had no chance of securing power by such means. Early in 1935, after Ramos had tried to secure arms from Japan, it chaotically attempted to seize power. The Constabulary suppressed the resulting disorder, the bloodiest affair being at Cabuyao, where fifty Sakdalistas were killed and four constabulary men. The timing was significant. ‘The rank and file of the radical wing of the Sakdal party . . . believe that the establishment of the Commonwealth Government is a move to establish and maintain in power a group of Filipino leaders who represent the upper classes who will oppress the lower classes’, a government report stated. The Social Justice programme on which President Quezon now embarked was designed to avoid further disturbances that might delay independence beyond the ten-year period. Mass participation had still to come.

Like some of the European nationalist movements, the Filipino movement emerged in conditions of economic and social change, in which an
educated elite sought a new sense of community. Not in any direct sense the result of industrialisation, actual or anticipated, it was rather the result of the state-building activities of the government and the contextual changes that together conduced to state formation, coupled, of course, with the impressive intellectual grasp and initiative of individuals among the ilustrado. Like the Italian, Czech and Balkan movements, it was spurred by antagonism to an imperial power and an associated elite, though the activities of that power had helped to bring it about, and there was a kind of ‘collusion’ – more or less intentional – in the process. Like other movements, it was initiated by an elite that had to win coherence for itself and win support from a larger community, not always compatible aims. But what was presented to an educated elite was not necessarily what was presented to the masses, nor what they perceived.

Filipino nationalism had of course much in common with other nationalisms in Southeast Asia, too. It had also had distinctive features. It emerged earlier, and therefore in a different context. In fact the movement emerged in two contexts and faced two colonial powers. The first was entirely unwilling to make any political concessions. That itself shaped the movement, which turned, on the one hand, to secret society activity, conspiracy, and revolution; and on the other hand to attempts to involve the masses, initially in the hope of confronting the colonial power and then in pursuit of victory. Lacking support from outside, it failed, and faced another imperial power. That was one, however, that looked, more or less clearly, towards self-government and independence. The elite had no strong need for mass support. The element of collusion grew stronger.

The nationalist movement in the Philippines anticipated others partly because the islands had a long history of European control and Europeanisation. A nationalist movement emerged in Burma in a sense for the opposite reason. The monarchy had created a sense of unity among Burmans at least. It was within less than a generation of its destruction that nationalism appeared, and – particularly at the popular level – it was deeply affected by the monarchical tradition, and even more by the Buddhism that the monarchs had both protected and depended upon. At the same time, of course, it was affected by Burma’s annexation to India.

If, indeed, nation-building may be regarded as the result of kinds of collusion between the colonial rulers and their opponents, it might be suggested that in Burma there was a three-way connection. Burman nationalism was shaped not only by its relationship with the British but also by its relationship with the Indians. The British defined the borders, created the infrastructure, offered Western education, attempted to set the political patterns. Indian precedent was often in mind. Burmans, too, found Indian precedent useful, invoking it when seeking educational and political advance. But India was also a focus of antagonism. Indians
manned the bureaucracy, worked the docks, lent money to the peasants. The two sets of ambiguities reacted upon one another.

In Burma, as in the Philippines, elite and masses articulated their objectives in different ways. The western-educated minority took the lead in attempts to revitalise and modernise Buddhism, and in 1906, stimulated by the success of the Japanese in their war with Russia, educated Burmans founded the Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA) in imitation of, but also in rivalry with, the Young Men’s Christian Association. Their interest in the fate of Buddhism did not, however, enable them to forge a direct link with the peasantry. Popular Buddhism still focused on the monastic order, the sangha, even though its monopolitical protector had been overthrown, and the pongyi enjoyed the respect of the villagers, who pinned on them their hope that alien rule would be displaced and monarchy restored. To create a mass movement, the western-educated elite had to take account of the aspirations of the pongyi and their followers.

Searching, like other colonial regimes, for collaborators, the British had enjoyed limited success. For the monarchy itself Pegu and the south had been relatively recent conquests, and it had relied substantially on appointive taikthugyi at the circle level. The British conquerors followed suit, though finding it increasingly difficult ‘to get men who have influence and are at the same time qualified’.27 At the village level the kyedangyi or largest taxpayer fulfilled the thankless task of man of all work, degenerating, as Sir Charles Crosthwaite put it, ‘into a kind of village watchman and drudge’, since he was given no authority or status.28

In Upper Burma – the core of the old state – the monarchy had been able to rely more on hereditary myothugyi than on taikthugyi. They were much more of a social force than the taikthugyi of the south, let alone the kyedangyi. The new administration, however, did not see them as the source of collaborators. Not only were many of them leaders of the resistance that a major military effort on the part of British and Indian troops was necessary to suppress: the British had no experience of the myothugyi institution as such. Charged with ‘pacification’, Crosthwaite saw the answer in a strong centralised government, with ‘the individual village as the basic social and political unit’, held responsible for ‘everything that happened within the village tract’.29 At the beck and call of officials and subject to fine and reprimand, however, the new headman could rarely ‘generate the needed face and authority to function acceptably and simultaneously as head of the local militia, police officer, magistrate, work requisitioner, and tax collector’.30

Students of British Burma – including men with direct experience of it, like John F. Cady and J.S. Furnivall – have discussed the high levels of local violence and crime. To some extent at least, Cady suggests, it was the product of frustration, of the lack of opportunity to exercise responsibility. Those were, however, features that Burmese shared with other peoples under colonial rule, and indeed all colonial regimes faced a level of dis-
order they were often unready to acknowledge. In Burma, perhaps, it was higher than usual because of the abrupt way in which its institutions were changed, at the same time as it was being subject to other changes of an economic and social nature. The way was open, too, to pongyi and others who wished to focus and work on discontent.

By coming to terms with the pongyi, furthermore, the western-educated elite could gain access to the masses and a means of ‘confronting’ the colonial power. There was, however, yet another complication. In twentieth century Burma, by contrast to the nineteenth century Philippines, the imperial power did not deny the elite the opportunity of participation. The elite had, therefore, an option, to confront or to take part. That tended to divide it, and the division reacted on the need for popular and pongyi support. The British government offered the elite a more limited role than the Americans offered Quezon and his colleagues and rivals in the Philippines, but they offered a wider suffrage. That meant that those who sought to take part might have to turn to the pongyi and their followers, who had no wish for progressive self-government but wanted an end to alien rule.

The constitutional experiments of the British in Burma were indeed more advanced than those elsewhere in Southeast Asia, even, in some respects, the Philippines. One reason was that Burma was treated as part of India, and experiments in the latter suggested that the equivalent should at least be considered in the former. The other reason was that Burman nationalists pressed for equal treatment. The British kept to their course even in the 1930s, when Burma, separated from India, in effect moved ahead of it.

Responding to India’s role in the war effort, in 1917 Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State, had envisaged ‘the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire’. That offered new opportunities for Burman nationalists, too. In December 1917 the YMBA sent a delegation to Calcutta, pressing for separation from India, and then a separate settlement over the future of Burma. The Governor of Burma recommended increased self-government at the district level on the pattern of developments in India since 1882; and a majority of elected representatives on the Legislative Council, which had been predominantly a nominated and non-Burman body since its creation in 1897. The YMBA was alarmed lest separation should mean less advance than in India, and sent two delegates to London. The Secretary of State agreed to include Burma in the Indian ‘dyarchy’ proposals after an inquiry. During the delay the YMBA organised a mass protest against the University Act of 1920. That, the subsequent strikes, and the founding of national schools imparted a new intensity to Burman nationalism, and the General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA), as the council of the YMBA now called itself, boycotted the dyarchy inquiry of 1921.
Dyarchy was nevertheless introduced in 1923. It provided for a legislature of 103, with 79 members elected on a household suffrage, 58 of them Burman, and two Burmese ministers, responsible for ‘transferred’ activities, education, local government, public works, public health, cooperation, and forests. The British presented dyarchy as a preparation for self-government, not simply as a minimum concession to nationalism, but as a preparation it was deficient. It required Burmese ministers to take account of non-Burman interests, but, by providing for their separate representation, appeared to envisage a communal approach. Burmese ministers, furthermore, had no control over finance, and they were not as a result offered experience in handling such crucial issues as allocation and prioritisation. Nor, of course, could ministers offer an overall programme to the electorate in the manner of the democratic forms of government the British had in mind.

The struggle over education had created a new context for dyarchy. In that the pongyi had played an important part, stimulated by U Ottama, a monk, who insisted that Buddhism was threatened by an alien government, and who built a mass movement on the basis of non-cooperation. Aided by the weakness of the headmen, his pongyi followers gained control over many of the local nationalist organisations or wunthawu athins formed by the GCBA. In August 1924 he precipitated a riot in Mandalay, and disaffection was widespread in 1924–5. Affected by the disturbances, the GCBA split, and some broke away to enter the Legislative Council in 1925, including Ba Maw, a lawyer. But it was not possible to pass legislation that effectively dealt with popular grievances, and the local boards and councils, established under the Rural Self-Government Act of 1921, were also viewed with apathy and became very corrupt. Elections did not lead to real power, and could do little to win popular allegiance to the system, or to those who were prepared to attempt to make it work.

The split took a new form, however, when the Simon Commission reviewed dyarchy in 1929. A ‘Burma for the Burmans League’ advocated separation from India and curtailment of Indian immigration. This was above all a secular group, a Rangoon intelligentsia – vernacular editors, minor officials, and others – aiming at freedom from pongyi domination. But mass backing lay with the pongyis and their associates, immediately less affected by Indian competition for official posts, and able to advocate non-separation and cooperation with the Indian Congress in fighting for the freedom which it was alleged the British wished to deny. The Commission was widely boycotted. But following the rebellion of 1930–1 – led by Hsaya San, a frustrated district nationalist leader – a faction of the Westernised leadership entered the Legislative Council, led by U Chit Hlaing.

The Simon Commission reported in favour of early separation, with guarantees for the status of the new government. Following a Burma Round Table Conference in 1931, Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister, spoke of an election on the issue of separation. In the ensuing
campaign, an Anti-Separation League was formed out of the boycotting GCBA groups and the supporters of Ba Maw, and it made the most of the popular suspicion of the British. The Separationists, on the other hand, tried to arouse popular hostility to Indian labourers and moneylenders. Wealthy Indians tended to support the Anti-Separationists, nationalists though they were. They triumphed. Once elected, however, some of them, though not Ba Maw, quailed before the prospect of inclusion in the Indian Federation; joining the Congress’s struggle had been designed to expedite Burma’s political advance, not to bring about what would be permanent inclusion in India. The British government resolved the Burmans’ dilemma by deciding on separation.

The new constitution of 1935 discarded dyarchy in favour of a cabinet responsible to an elected House of Representatives of 132 members. The suffrage was on a taxpayer basis, effectively covering about one-third of the male population and one-tenth of the female, and was effected in 92 general, 12 Karen and 8 Indian constituencies. There were also representatives, for example, from business groups, 6 of the 11 being British. The Governor, however, retained extensive powers in the field of defence, foreign relations, and monetary policy. Nor did the new government cover the whole of British Burma.

The elections held in 1936 gave three seats to a new faction, the Thakins. In 1931 the All Burma Youth League had been founded, aiming to revive the national school organisation of the early 1920s and extend its contacts with non-national schools. Associated was a student group, and from 1935 they called themselves Thakins as an affirmation of their nationalism. Their inspiration was fluid, drawing on both Sun Yat-sen and Sinn Fein, for example. Some Marxists were among them, like Soe, Than Tun and Thein Pe, drawing their communism not direct from the Comintern, but from India and from the British party. The younger and more radical Thakins distrusted the older lawyer politicians and their reliance on xenophobic pongyi-led mass support, but at this stage themselves had no support in the countryside. Support came initially from students at the University of Rangoon. Their clash with the university authorities led to the strike of February 1936, led by Nu, the president of the Union, Aung San, editor of the student newspaper, and Kyaw Nyein. The Thakins also sought to work among urban labour groups, mostly in fact Indian. They also took part in the elections, a sign, perhaps, that they were prepared to use the constitution promulgated by the colonial power, even though struggling against it. Their success was, however, limited, and another prospect was soon to appear more attractive: the Japanese.

In Burma disruption – brought by colonial rule and economic change – created conditions in which nationalism could take hold, dislodging the existing hierarchy and alienating the masses. A new elite emerged, both benefiting from Western education and challenging it. Indeed, there were again elements of competition and collusion, so far as relationships with
the imperial power were concerned. That sought to establish new patterns of collaboration, proceeding in Burma, as in British India (of which it formed a part until 1935), to base it on gradually providing the elements of self-government, British-style. The Burman elite was divided. Should it try to work these institutions, or should it reject them, or both? A more ‘confrontational’ policy – a different route to a new Burma – seemed possible, given the alienation of the masses. But for the time being that involved accepting pongyi leadership, and taking account of popular millenarianism.

Some of that, indeed, invoked the monarchy. The British had dislodged it, rather than involving it in their search for collaborators. But it had meant something to the masses as well as to the elite: it lodged in popular consciousness, above all as a guarantor of religious security. Monarchy was, indeed, not necessarily ‘out of date’, though Mabini’s Decalogue ruled it out. New European states had installed monarchs in the nineteenth century, finding a ready supply in German principalities. Japan was a ‘modern’ example, and so was Siam.

In Indo-China the French preserved the monarchs. A colonial ruler could find such figures useful in securing collaboration and compliance. But, wittingly or not, they could also be a focus for nationalist leaders, not all of whom insisted on seeing them merely as feudal remnants. In some cases a younger son or a pretender had a particular interest in a link with those opposing the colonial power. And the masses could identify the monarchs with a society that must surely have been more just.

Their earliest acquisitions the French made into the colony of Cochin-China. There, few of the mandarins were ready to collaborate – many retreated into non-occupied Vietnam – and the French had to find new men, some of high quality, like Paulus Huynh and Petrus Ky, missionary-educated interpreters, and others in whom fidelity counted more than capacity. From the late 1870s the French established schools that produced trained Vietnamese, and from 1881 lower-echelon bureaucratic posts were available to them. Increasingly the new ‘mandarins’ came from the wealthy class that the economic development of the colony helped to create. In the countryside itself the regime sought to utilise the ‘notables’, but, like the British, burdened them, and, as a lieutenant-governor reported in 1902, ‘the prosperous and honorable families show a certain repugnance for these perilous functions, which thus too often fall into the hands of those who are unskilled, and even, sometimes, dishonest’.

In the north, mandarins who opposed the French could not retreat. The new regime – a protectorate, moreover, not a colony – was able to find collaborators. Their position was weakened, however, by continued mandarin-led resistance, the Can Vuong movement, endorsed by the emperor Ham-nghi, who had fled Hue in 1885. The monarch, General Warnet argued in 1886, ‘could offer a considerable help, by the prestige
which the royal authority still preserves over the populations[,] in pacifying and reorganizing the country’. But while, unlike the British in Burma, the French did not abolish the monarchy, they never allowed it sufficient authority, even in Annam and Tonkin, to act as an effective focus of collaboration. ‘The monarchical idea, having behind it the prestige of a long past, is capable of activating the masses if one knows how to utilise it’, Pham Quynh argued. ‘It is still a force, a latent force which could be an effective force.’ A moderate, he proposed that the French should grant a constitution, enabling the monarch to reign with renewed powers. But the French gave the idea no support. In general, indeed, they made no real attempt to find new collaborators, with whom they might work for the modernisation of Vietnam. The ‘national’ cause fell, in part as a result, into the hands of extremists, and nationalism was constructed more by antagonism than collusion, though also affected by what was taking place in neighbouring China and Japan.

The earliest nationalist movement was a transformation of the mandarin-led opposition that the French faced in the protectorate of Tonkin, provoked in part by Governor-General Doumer’s consolidation of French Indo-China. On Ham Nghi’s capture and exile in 1888, the Can Vuong loyalists accepted Prince Cuong De as their leader, and Phan Boi Chau, a man born to a relatively poor scholar gentry family in Nghe-An, still associating monarchy with the national cause, secured his patronage. Then, having formed the Duy Tan Hoi (Modernization Society), Phan sought assistance from Japan, a monarchy identified both with successful imitation of the Europeans, and with opposition to them, particularly the Russians. ‘The strength of Japan has been felt in the Northwest, all the way to the Ch’ing and to the Russians’, he wrote to Okuma Shigenobu in 1905. ‘Why then has Japan allowed the French to trample over Vietnam without trying to help us?’

Though assistance was not forthcoming, he built up a nucleus of Vietnamese students in Japan, where there were many Chinese as well. In 1906 he arranged for the pretender to go there via Hong Kong, and in 1907 he joined a League of East Asia. Following the 1907 Franco–Japanese treaty, however, the Japanese government expelled Phan Boi Chau and Cuong De in 1909, and dissolved the organisations set up among Vietnamese students. After the Chinese revolution of 1911 overthrew the Manchus, Phan abandoned his insistence on restoring monarchy, and with some of the Vietnamese who had gone to neighbouring China, he organised the Quang Phuc Hoi (Restoration Society) on the model of the Kuomintang. In Vietnam itself he was able only to inspire revolutionary acts, like the attempted revolt in the Hanoi garrison in 1908, and his attempt to organise the assassination of Governor-General Sarraut in 1912 was vain.

Led by Phan Chu Trinh, who came from a wealthy scholar gentry family in Quang-Nam, other nationalists sought concessions from the protecting power on the basis of the principles of its revolution of 1789 –
rather as Apacible had alluded to 1776 – but the strategy did not evoke a positive response. The reformist manifestations that followed the deposition of emperor Thanh-thai in 1907 met with repression: the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc (Free School of Hanoi) was closed down in 1908, and after his alleged involvement in the tax riots in Annam that year, Phan Chu Trinh was first sentenced to death, then imprisoned on Pulau Condore, then exiled. The French authorities tended not to distinguish reformist activities from revolutionary ones. Neither were acceptable.

In the protectorate the nationalist movement had an early start, in part simply because it derived so immediately from the traditional mandarin class, which reacted against the French, but secured access through its wealth and education to new ideas and new – and nearby – overseas contacts. Divided over strategy, however, it won neither popular support at home – unlike the traditionalist Can Vuong – nor effective help from abroad. The French cut off both opportunities, but provided no positive alternative. In the colony of Cochin-China social change was more profound, and it was only with World War I, and in part as a result of its ideological stimulus, that a new nationalist movement appeared there, marked for instance by the founding of the Parti Constitutionaliste about 1917. Made up of civil servants, teachers, merchants and landlords, it showed a ‘moderate and pro-French orientation’. But the French response was at best deeply ambiguous.

The Colonial Council, established in 1880, had by 1910 still only six Vietnamese members in a total of 18, selected by delegates chosen by village notables. The political reforms of 1922 finally expanded the electorate from 1,800 to 20,000 – in a population of some 3 million – while the Vietnamese members now numbered 10 out of 24. Those modest changes gave the Constitutionalists scant opportunity, while some colonial circles began to see their leader, Bui Quang Chieu, a former member of the government’s agricultural service, as a radical.

The arrival of Alexandre Varenne, appointed Governor-General by a leftist government in Paris, revived optimism among the nationalists in Cochin-China. Amid clouded rhetoric, a speech he delivered in December 1925 indeed made a guarded reference to the possibility of independence. ‘Indochina has become conscious of herself. . . . What will her future be? If peace is kept, if the people of Indochina can develop freely . . . she can hope to attain one day the fullest and highest of existences, that of a nation.’ France could help her. ‘Her mission achieved, one could believe that she will have left in Indochina only a souvenir of her work, that she will claim no role in the life of the peninsula, neither in directing nor even counselling, and that the people who will have profited by her tutelage will have no ties with her except those of gratitude and affection.’

Nationalists looked for deeds, however, not words. Varenne indeed gave little, even to Pham Quynh. But for opposition in Paris and in Saigon, he would have liked, he said, to allow ‘under our eyes and in full
light, true political parties. In stifling all normal political life . . . we have ourselves pushed distinguished and sincere Vietnamese into these secret societies where the worst deeds can be prepared without us being informed except by agents who sometimes play a double game.\textsuperscript{38}

In December 1927 a new revolutionary organisation was established in Hanoi, the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD, the Vietnamese Nationalist Party): ‘the aim and general line of the party is to make a national revolution, to use military force to overthrow the feudal colonial system, to set up a democratic republic of Vietnam.’\textsuperscript{39} The model was the Kuomintang (KMT) and the strategy was based on Sun Yat-sen’s: military takeover, followed by political tutelage, then constitutional government. In 1929 its leadership was decimated by arrests that followed the assassination, not its doing, of a French official. In some disarray, and pressed by the onset of the depression, the VNQDD planned a series of uprisings at military posts in the Red River delta early in 1930. ‘It is better to die now and leave behind the example of sacrifice and striving for later generations’, Nguyen Thai Hoc declared. ‘If we do not succeed, at least we will have become men.’\textsuperscript{40} Mutinies at Yen Bay and elsewhere were, however, suppressed. Forty-three bombs were dropped on Co Am, a village to which Nguyen Thai Hoc had allegedly fled. Twenty-two death sentences were carried out.

The situation offered opportunities to the Vietnamese communists. Their identification with the national cause was – and remained – complicated by their ideological and international allegiances, however, and, while they recognised the need to build popular support, they were tempted by adventurism. Communism was, not surprisingly, slow to penetrate into Indo-China, and it was among the exile community in France that it first took hold. The leading figure was Nguyen Ai Quoc, later known as Ho Chi Minh, born of a mandarin family in Nghe-An, and educated at the Lycée Quoc-hoc at Hue, a nationalist school founded by Ngo Dinh Kha, father of Ngo Dinh Diem, also a pupil, as were other future communist leaders, Vo Nguyen Giap and Pham Van Dong. In 1912 Nguyen Ai Quoc left Vietnam as a ship’s cabin boy. He joined an Overseas Workers Association that supported Ireland’s struggle for independence, haunted Versailles in the hope that the peace negotiations would reflect Wilson’s 14 points, and stated the Demands of the Vietnamese People, including a permanent delegation to advise the French parliament.\textsuperscript{41} He became a founder member of the French Communist Party, went to Moscow in 1924, and finally joined the Comintern mission in Canton. There in 1925 he founded the Viet Nam Thanh Nien Cach Menh Dong Chi Hoi, or Revolutionary Youth League of Vietnam.

It aimed to overthrow the French and restore independence through the organisation of an anti-imperialist front. It thus looked for a new kind of international backing, but it was also determined to build up popular support more effectively than its predecessors. Worsening economic
conditions prompted an increasing number of strikes in the urban areas of Vietnam and on the plantations, however, and in May 1930 peasant riots began in Nghe-An. No doubt infiltrated party activists had a role, but, despite the customary analysis of the French, the Indochinese Communist Party, founded in 1930, was ‘barely managing to keep up with events’. The French bombed a crowd advancing on the provincial capital, Vinh, but their authority had collapsed in the countryside. That was an opportunity for the communists which they could hardly ignore, but it was also a danger. The regional committee organised soviets in the form of peasant associations, and encouraged the restitution of communal land, though not the general confiscation of landlord holdings. To destroy the movement the French, seeking on this occasion the collaboration of the imperial court, tried to set up a loyalist organisation. But they also declared martial law and called in the Foreign Legion, and managed to arrest most of the leadership. Ho Chi Minh was jailed in Hong Kong in June 1931, though not surrendered to the French. The events of 1931 provided a heroic legend. But, while reaffirming the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, they also reminded the communists of the perils of adventurism.

Vietnamese nationalism, even more than Burman, could draw on an ‘ethnic’ coherence created by the monarchs, and a long history could be turned to account, in Vietnam often one of heroic resistance to Chinese invaders. Indeed the nationalist movement enjoyed a continuity with the pro-monarchical resistance, but could not draw on the popular support it had enjoyed. Those who sought to ‘modernise’ the movement looked to Japanese and Chinese example as well seeking direct help. In the south, others looked more to the ideas of the colonial power itself, meeting, however, a negative response. The French offered no more than example; they offered no power-sharing, and they had no concept of a commonwealth, British-style. The nationalist movement was formed very much in antagonism to them, and that tended to intensify its extremism, its terrorism, and its communism.

There was even some ambiguity over the nature of the putative nation. Ho’s demands had come, as he put it, from ‘the People of the former Annamese Empire, today French Indo China’. Varenne spoke, albeit vaguely, of the possible independence of ‘Indo-China’. The Comintern intervened when the Youth League broke up into two rival parties, the Communist Party of Indo-China and the Annam Communist Party. Ho then founded the Communist Party of Vietnam, but that was changed at Comintern insistence to Indochinese Communist Party. Colonial power and communist adversary both talked of Indo-China. There was indeed no nationalist movement in Cambodia as yet, nor in those parts of the Lao territories that the French had placed under French protection. When they did appear, they appeared partly in antagonism to the Vietnamese, who had migrated and occupied a significant position: of 16 Indochinese
bureaucrats at the Phnompenh Town Hall in 1913, 14 were ‘Annamese’, 2 Cambodian; in 1937 Annamese outnumbered Laos in Vientiane.44

‘A few more decades of French colonialism . . . (or large-scale industrialization . . .), and the mechanisms of French colonialism might well have transformed the Indochinese idea into a concrete bureaucratic, economic and military reality, turning the Vietnamese into Indochinese nationals like the Javanese in the plural nation of Indonesia’, Goscha suggests.45 If not ‘industrialisation’, itself unlikely, it would surely have required, not only more all-Indo-China infrastructure and tertiary education, but more participation, and that on an Indo-Chinese basis. There was no sign that the French would create or welcome such a ‘mechanism’. Though they recognised that Cambodia and Laos were strategically important to an independent Vietnam, the nationalists themselves, including Ho Chi Minh, generally saw Vietnam as their focus. ‘Viet Nam van tue!’ screamed Nguyen Thai Hoc before the guillotine descended.46 It was that state that over the centuries had after all given the Vietnamese people their coherence. For them nationalism was a new concept – arriving by a number of routes, French, Japanese, Chinese, Russian – but a means to realise an old objective, the political unity that had so long attracted them and so often evaded them.

In Netherlands India nationalists were able to develop an ‘Indonesian’ nationalism that purported to embrace the whole colonial state. Though the Dutch created conditions that made that possible – not only acting as a unifying ‘oppressor’, but also building infrastructure within the frontiers they accepted – they did little actively to promote it, even to the extent that the British might be regarded as promoting Burman nationalism by creating potentially self-governing institutions. They also hesitated, however, to promote sub-nationalisms or ‘proto-nationalisms’ as against nationalism. Moreover, they avoided installing a federal structure until past the eleventh hour. The ‘Indonesians’, by contrast, avoided dividing themselves. The Javanese – the most numerous – did not insist that theirs should be the ‘national’ language, and educated Sumatrans – generally from Menangkabau – played a prominent role in diminishing apprehension of Javanese dominance in the outer islands.

In Netherlands India, as elsewhere, the nationalists had to set themselves against the collaborators as well as the colonial power. In Java the Dutch had found their collaborators in the ‘Regents’, the leading members of the priyayi elite inherited from the ancient sultanate of Mataram. Their hereditary position was confirmed, and, under the cultivation system, they were given a ‘culture percentage’. But their association with the government tended to undermine their hold on the people, and their participation in its exploitation was a source of much of the criticism of the cultivation system after mid-century. In the somewhat more modern colonial state of the ‘Liberal’ period, indeed, the Regents lost part of their
role. They were not, however, dislodged, and their political importance to
the colonial regime was to increase in the twentieth century, when it
reacted ambiguously to the responses to the changes it had helped to
bring about. At the other end of the scale the village headman, lurah,
retained his significance throughout, tying together the peasant and the
state. The village was the source of labour for the cultivation system and
the ‘private’ system that followed, and the headman a useful means of
securing it. His position, like that of village headmen in French Indo-
China, became more burdensome, though possibly more profitable. The
well-meaning changes of the succeeding ‘Ethical’ period made the situ-
aton worse. The headmen were burdened with tasks for which they had
little qualification, and in which the villagers saw little purpose.

The system the Dutch developed – particularly in the ‘pacification’ that
followed the Java war of 1825–30 – sought to take account of the role of
Islam in Javanese society. They recognised that the resistance they had
met had been strengthened by the identification of their leading oppo-
nent, Dipo Negoro, with the Muslim cause. Their alliance with the priyayi
and the adat-based elite was in part predicated on a shared wish to limit
the role of the Islamic teachers and scribes. The increasing alienation of
the peasantry that nevertheless occurred in fact boosted that role. But it
was this same perception that guided the Dutch in the Outer Islands as
well, and it was employed to end the long Aceh war.

The first recognisably nationalist movement, Boedi Oetomo (Glorious
Endeavour), was started by a retired medical subordinate, Dr Djawa
Wahidin Soedirohoesodo, and Prince Notodirdjo, son of Pakualam V, and
supported by members of the priyayi elite and of the princely families.
Wahidin had in 1901 become editor of Retnodhoemilah, a periodical started
in 1895 and originally edited by a Dutchman, that focused on the worsen-
ing conditions of the Javanese, especially the priyayi. The movement itself
focused on the Javanese. ‘What do we know about our fellow-countrymen?’
they asked themselves, as Goenawan Mangoenkoesoemo recalled; ‘we cir-
cumscribed our task. . . . It became a cultural concept. In this . . . we looked
for the elements which form a people, a nation.’47 In 1915 it founded a
youth organisation, called Jong Java (Young Java) from 1918. Its Javanese
focus was emphasised by the founding of similar organisations elsewhere in
the Indies: Sinar Budi, the first modern social organisation in Gorontalo
(Sulawesi), was set up in 1912, inspired by Boedi Oetomo. Jong Sumatra
followed in 1917, including Hatta and Yamin among its members.48 No
doubt to the gratification of the Ethici, Boedi Oetomo (BO) aimed at a
fusion of European and Javanese values, influenced by Tagore and Gandhi.
But it entered politics in 1915, as a result of a debate about the creation of
a wartime militia, and joined in petitioning for a parliament. Faced by
competition from other organisations, the chairman, R.M.A. Woerjan-
ingrat, became more radical, and stressed the need to contact the masses.

The leadership of the first political party in Java, the Indische Partij,
was substantially in the hands of Eurasians, including E.F.E. Douwes Dekker, who founded it in 1912. Its goals were ‘[t]o awaken the patriotism of all the peoples of the Indies to the soil which nourishes them, for the purpose of uniting them in cooperation based on the principle of political equality; to bring the fatherland, the Indies, to prosperity; and to prepare for an independent national state.’ Dekker’s ‘rally’ in Bandung on 25 December was perhaps the first. No doubt again to the gratification of the Ethici, the party was based explicitly on the principle of association, but it was more vehement than the government anticipated. In 1913 it was denied legal status, and Dekker, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo and Soewardi Soerianingrat, who had campaigned against celebrating the centenary of Dutch independence, were banished to the Netherlands.

Sarekat Islam (SI, the Islamic League) did not take the associationist path. It borrowed something from the groups that had – its first rally was at Surabaya in 1913, and its leader, Tjokroaminoto, had no difficulty in being heard, despite the absence of loudspeakers – but it took a different stance. It was not, however, an antagonistic one. Tjokro told the first national SI congress, held in Bandung in 1916, that the Central SI stood for the close unity of all the people of the Indies in order to form a ‘nation’. He spoke of ‘achieving autonomy or at least the right to have a voice in the affairs of the state’, and offered the slogan: ‘together with the government and support of the government’. The Volksraad (People’s Council), then under discussion, he saw as the first step to self-government. ‘We are forced to pay taxes . . . and we are subject to various obligations that should be borne by the citizens.’ In 1917 the CSI declared the aim of self-administration, and it denied ‘the right of any people or group of people to rule another people or group of people’.

The Governor-General, Van Limburg Stirum, was not unsympathetic. When set up, the Volksraad included 19 members of the regional and district councils, 10 of them native, 9 European; 19 appointed by the Governor-General, 5 native, 14 European; and a chairman appointed by the Queen. The Governor-General wished his power to appoint was wider, so that he could ensure the inclusion of ‘young Javanese’ and representatives from the outer islands. His five included Tjipto, Tjokro, Dwidjosewojo of the BO, Prince Mangunegara VI, and Teukoe Tjhi Mohammed Thajeb of Aceh. He told his doubting minister at home that he intended to state that the goal was a ‘responsible government’, empowered to decide all but imperial questions. It would be a ‘fatal mistake not to sound this note . . . for it would then surely be done by [the] members themselves’. The war, forcing the Indies ‘to help itself’, had created a ‘strong fera de se feeling, which it is imperative for the government not to ignore’.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Van Limburg Stirum seized the opportunity offered by the crisis in the Netherlands at the end of the war, when the Social Democrats made an attempt to seize power. The government in The Hague promised reforms, and he promised them in the
Indies, too: ‘not so much a matter of changing course as of speeding up the tempo’. Government and Volksraad must work together for reform and social welfare. A Reform Commission was established in December. ‘[A]n ever-increasing number of intellectuals, by Indies standards, are waiting here’, he told his minister in 1921. ‘They are qualified to become leaders of their people and they claim the right to be heard. It is necessary to satisfy their claims if they are not to be alienated. They should be treated as welcome and needed cooperators in the politics of the Indies.’

The development of politics, however, undermined that position, already criticised by Fock, who became his successor.

Under Tjokro’s leadership SI had quickly become a vast and generalised mass movement, with over two million members by 1919, and with representation in the Outer Islands, too. In some sense nation-wide, SI was not, however, simply or even predominantly nationalist. Its rapid growth indeed reflected the wide range of the membership it acquired, and it had great difficulty in defining its objectives. It appeared, as D.A. Rinkes had put it, ‘that persons of all gradations of opposition could find a place there’. Above all, however, it represented opposition to the threats to Islam presented by the Dutch colonial government, Chinese traders, capitalism, and the alienation of the priyayi from the people. It was, and remained, ‘a coalition of groups, associations, and sects varying according to local and regional circumstances’. What excited the elite, and worried the government, was the extent of its support among the people. That had been secured on a traditional rather than a modern basis. The peasants looked to Tjokro as the ratu adil, the just prince, and expected SI to remedy their grievances. Its following would collapse if it failed in that millennialist task.

Its acquisition of mass support led to competition for its leadership from more radical elements. In Java, by contrast to other colonial territories, there was a lower-class European element that formed an avenue for the direct entry of European radicalism and of Marxism, carried by men like Hendrik Sneevliet, a journalist in Semarang, then secretary of its Commercial Association. He founded the ISDV (Indies Social Democratic Association) in May 1914. It was linked with the labour movement, especially the railway and tramworkers’ union. But the need for wider support drew it to the SI, in respect of which it developed a ‘bloc within’ strategy. That it sought to continue, even after becoming the PKI (Indies Communist Party) in 1920. In 1921 the central leadership broke with the communists. Tan Malaka rightly feared the schism would spread to the locals, ‘which would be extremely dangerous for the people and . . . make much easier the work of the reactionaries’.

Finding it difficult to organise the unions, and facing government repression, the communists indeed turned to the countryside, organising Sarekat Rakyat. The PKI leaders were themselves seized by utopianism: the revolution was ‘often compared with the coming of the Ratu Adil’.
Arrests dislocated the leadership in 1925, making the party more confused about its direction and more dependent on terrorism to retain support. Further arrests were followed by armed revolt in Banten in November. The other centre of revolt was West Sumatra, scene, too, of ‘a strange sort of Communism indeed’ as Soetan Sjahrir put it. About 13,000 were arrested as a result of the disturbances of 1926. The trials resulted in a few executions and numerous sentences of imprisonment. Others, included many against whom there was insufficient evidence to press charges in court, were exiled to Boven Digul in West New Guinea. The colonial government was not simply abandoning the liberal spirit of the Ethical Policy. It was reading the people a lesson it was not to forget.

The government’s repressive policy was intensified in the depression. It became more traditionalist in focus, concerned to uphold adat, re-establish priyayi prestige, restore peace and order. It sought to seal off the peasantry against outside agitators, to confine them to the cities, and to keep them within bounds by surveillance, police warnings, trials, and imprisonment. Arguably, however, these steps helped to create an Indonesian nationalist movement, though not in the way that Van Limburg had conceived.

The limits the Dutch had placed on tertiary education had helped to bring the few who benefited from it together. In Batavia or Bandung, or in the Netherlands itself, young men from Menangkabau or elsewhere met Javanese, and increasingly all saw themselves as Indonesians. ‘Those who studied abroad figured particularly strongly in the leadership of the early Indonesian nationalist movement.’ In the metropolis, indeed, nationalists felt freer than at home, as the Filipinos had earlier found. The Indische Vereeniging, founded by Indies students in the Netherlands in 1908, became the Indonesche Vereeniging in 1922, renamed Perhimpunan Indonesia (PI) in 1925, and it now aimed at independence.

Similarly the constraints the Dutch placed upon political activity in the Indies, particularly after 1926, made it easier for a small, educated leadership to conceive of the future in more particularly Indonesian terms and to work out its implications, undistracted by pressing calls for action from a popular following and from communist rivalry, and increasingly clear that the Dutch were opponents. The intelligentsia, often led by former PI members, now formed ‘study clubs’, like that in Bandung which a young graduate of the Engineering School there, Sukarno, helped to found in 1925. Witness to the decline of SI, and of the vain attempts of his mentor, Tjokroaminoto, to maintain its unity, he argued for a clear focus on Indonesian independence, and sought to play down the differences among Indonesians, religious, cultural and social, and to defer arguments about the nature of the state that would be created. The object was ‘an independent Indonesia in the quickest way possible. This entails that we do not strive for independence by means of improving miserable living conditions in our country, but we must strive for independence in order to
improve these living conditions."\textsuperscript{63} Sukarno became chairman of the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI), founded in Bandung in July 1927. At the end of that year he also took the initiative in creating PPPKI (Perhimpunan Politik Kebangsaan Indonesia or Unanimous Consensus of Political Organisations of the Indonesian People), a federation of the various groups that were striving for independence.

The Indonesian Student Union (Perhimpunan Peladjar-peladjar Indonesia) had also been founded in 1925. Its second congress, held in 1928, pledged the young to one nation, Indonesia; adopted as its language Bahasa Indonesia, in fact Malay; and sang what became a national anthem, ‘Indonesia Raya’, first played on a violin-ukelele-guitar combo.\textsuperscript{64} Though taken by a small group, those were crucial decisions. With the work of the PI, the study clubs and PNI, they helped to bring about fusion with other organisations, and Jong Java and Jong Sumatra merged in Indonesia Moeda (Young Indonesia) in 1930. Malay was the lingua franca of the archipelago, and almost all the 200 indigenous newspapers were in Malay by 1925. Making it the national language was convenient to the Menangkabau and the Minahasans, and avoided the use of Javanese, which was entangled in an hierarchic society. Non-Javanese could welcome the fact that the national language was not the language of the putative majority which putative minorities would have to learn. Indeed BO had adopted it years earlier, because the Sundanese and Madurese could not speak Javanese.\textsuperscript{65}

Sukarno was arrested in 1929 and imprisoned after a major trial. Governor-General de Graeff used the courts rather than internment: his aim was to play by the rules. ‘[I]t made an excellent impression in native circles’, he said,\textsuperscript{66} though it also gave the nationalists an opportunity to put their case, of which Sukarno made the most. Released at the end of 1931, he was arrested again in August 1933, and exiled to the island of Flores. In 1934 Hatta was arrested, and also Sjahrir, another Menangkabauer, and they were sent to Boven Digul.

‘Backstage’, de Graeff had written, ‘I try desperately to promote a native middle-of-the-road party . . . a party which the government will need and which is indispensable to the normal development of parliamentary life in this country.’\textsuperscript{67} He wanted to distinguish ‘anarchic government-hostile revolutionary nationalism’ – which he would fight ‘with all the legal means open to him’, and evolutionary nationalism – which he ‘as a right-minded Dutchman could only have respect for’.\textsuperscript{68} Those who took part in the councils and in the Volksraad were, as H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge put it, ‘working together with the Government, though often playing an oppositional role’. Non-cooperating nationalists tried to win them away. Let them go, you might say. But ‘alienating the intelligentsia from the construction of a modern political order will almost certainly cause failure of such an endeavour. That would not have been so serious if the older political structures were still of some use. But that is not the case.’\textsuperscript{69}
De Graeff’s successor, B.C. de Jonge, took a more negative line. Under him politics were yet more clearly confined to those who would cooperate on the limited terms set by the government. The cooperating nationalists gained experience and were not entirely ineffective. The creation of Parindra (Partai Indonesia Raya) in 1935 indeed tested Dutch toleration: its goal was ‘Indonesia Mulia’, Glorious Indonesia, implying, but not stating, that the aim was independence. By 1941 it had 121 branches and perhaps 20,000 members, double the PNI at its peak.

In 1936 the government rejected the Sutardjo petition – of which the Minahasa leader G.S.S.J. Ratulangie was a prime mover – which called for a ten-year transition to autonomy within the Dutch constitutional framework. F.B. Harrison thought the petition reflected the Philippines plans. Quezon had indeed visited Surabaya in October 1934, and he had aspirations to lead the ‘Malay’ peoples. Dutch officials thought him ‘more subversive . . . than Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin rolled into one’.

Nor did the government respond to the creation in 1937, perhaps influenced by the Comintern’s shift to popular front policies, of Gerindo (Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia or Movement of the Indonesian People), hostile to fascism and designed to counter the right-wing Parindra. No concessions were offered even in 1940, when the majority of the nationalist groups declared their loyalty to the cause of the western democracies. Governor-General Tjarda had 1918 in mind: van Limburg Stirum’s declaration had aroused expectations which the government could not promise to fulfil. Finally in September 1941 GAPI (Indonesian Political Union), a federation of mostly secular nationalist parties, joined the federation of Islamic parties – hitherto somewhat alienated from them – to form a Council of the Indonesian People. But only in January 1942, when the Japanese were conquering Malaya, did Tjarda agree to a conference.

The Netherlands Indies/Indonesia case clearly supports the suggestion that nationalism emerges in conditions of disruption, occasioned by changes economic and political in origin. It also argues for the positive impact of the colonial power, as well as the negative. Its state-building had unexpected as well as expected outcomes. Some of its representatives indeed conceived of a new form of collaboration, in which the colonial power would share in nation-building. Not many went so far, and the 1930s in general marked a reaction against the liberal spirit of the Ethical period. Even so, a kind of collusion persisted between a colonial state that still attempted a selective approach to modernisation, and its subjects who wished both to inherit it and to displace it. The nationalist struggle was, despite Sukarno’s attempt to frame it in some sort of ‘confrontation’, no simple matter, but full of ambiguities. The Japanese intervention resolved some of them, but added others.

In Netherlands India, the elite ‘imagined’ – and invented – an Indonesian community, allegiance to which tended not only to displace older loyalties
but to pre-empt new loyalties to ‘Java’ or ‘Sumatra’ or ‘Minahasa’. In the
territory that the British called ‘Malaya’, the position was quite different.
There ethnic divisions were stronger, intensified by recent and rapid eco-
nomic change and extensive immigration from India and China. The
migrant communities, though becoming more settled, focused on the
nationalist movements in their land of origin. Malays increasingly thought
of themselves as a community rather than simply as subjects of their
rulers, but constituting a political allegiance to Malaya was more problem-
atical. Such a state would not only be an alien creation: it might be domi-
nated by aliens. Some indeed looked to Indonesian nationalism for an
answer: reconstituting the precolonial Malay world might protect the
Malay way of life. The colonial power itself was in a dilemma. A more
modern state would have to be Malayan rather than Malay, yet it felt
bound to protect the Malays. That limited the moves it took towards either
unifying Malaya or promoting political participation.

Malay nationalism was advanced by students in the normal school, the
Sultan Idris Training College at Tanjong Malim, where all the teaching
was in Malay, and students read the vernacular and Indonesian press. Four
students became members of the PNI in 1929. The same year the group
also played a leading role in setting up a student union, and in 1938 they
began Kesatuan Melayu Muda, joined also by students from the School of
Agriculture at Serdang and the Technical and Trade Schools at Kuala
Lumpur. Their ‘solution’ was radical, vaguely Marxist, anti-colonial,
aiming at Indonesia Raya, and 150 of them were behind bars when the
Japanese arrived.

Nationalism in Malaya has no parallels, nor even comparators. The
concept penetrated to the migrant/settler communities and to the Malays,
but it tended to divide them. The colonial power found it difficult even to
re-assemble the ramshackle forms of government in the peninsula so as to
give ‘British Malaya’ a political form. It was still further away from building
a nation within that form. What was even so happening led in two direc-
tions: greater settlement by the migrants; and increased radicalism among
those who saw themselves as bumiputra. There were, indeed, no Indian or
Chinese ‘communities’ as yet, though the word was used. But in the
absence of a national loyalty, such were becoming the focus.

For a parallel or comparator with the Thai case, it is possible both to look
back on Europe and forward to postcolonial states. The core kingdom
never came under European control, but increasingly behaved like Euro-
pean states, in part in order to protect itself from them, in part because,
-facing modernisation, it sought to follow their example. Nationalism took
a trajectory that was unique in prewar Southeast Asia, since it was not a
question of struggle against a colonial ruler. It certainly reflected the
impact of economic change and of western ideas, common experiences in
late nineteenth and early twentieth century Southeast Asia. But the course
it followed, while not without parallels in Europe, may also be compared with that followed by the newly independent regimes of the postwar period. Nationalism was employed by domestic elites in their struggle for power and popular support, even at times at the risk of conflict with neighbours.

Concerned to preserve as much as possible of their dominion in a colonial world, the Chakri kings had engaged in diplomacy and established bureaucracy. They had also given their state a name: Rama IV (Mongkut) made the foreign-derived word ‘Siam’ official, though Thais referred to their state as Muang Thai or Prathet Thai. It seemed less necessary at first to build a national identity. ‘The administrators did not need to mobilize the populace to their cause’, McVey suggests, ‘and the king could not rally them to his because he had no means of reaching them save through the bureaucratic apparatus.’

More was needed in the new century, as the contacts between both state and subjects and the outer world increased. Rama VI (Vajiravudh)’s ‘efforts to create a national consciousness clearly arose from the desire to absorb the surface signifiers of the West and yet retain some authentic or essential Siamese-ness a the same time’. The ideological formulation of his official nationalism – derived both from the Sukhotai period and from Edwardian Britain – was Chat, Sasana, Phramakakasat (Nation, Religion, King). There was another component, too, anti-Chinese sentiment: the state no longer depended as it had on Chinese tax-collectors, and the Chinese had overthrown their own monarch in the revolution of 1911. The troops were given a new flag, ‘the symbol of Siam joining in harmony with the Allies in order to suppress the evil in the world’, said the king. Its colours were red (nation), white (religion), and blue (king).

The revolution of 1932 that ended the absolute monarchy was carried through largely by the official class it had created. Increasingly dominated by military elements, the ruling elite articulated a new Thai nationalism, and its propagandist, Luang Vichit, influenced both by the Japanese and the Germans, echoed Rama VI. The state was renamed Thailand in 1939. Pro-Thai policies were pursued at home, directed against the Chinese and designed to assimilate the Muslims in the south, and pan-Thai policies were pursued abroad, at the expense of the colonial powers, but also of those who expected their protection. The regime took advantage of the Japanese conquests, but sought to avoid the disadvantage.
5 Invasion and interregnum

 Attempting to deploy a definition, coupled with a phasing, but also faced with the fact of Japanese invasion, the author is tempted to engage in the counter-factual. What course would nationalism in Southeast Asia have taken, but for this dramatic venture, which made the region’s experience unique? One can at least ask what its legacy was. Did it advance the cause of independence? Did it advance or impede the building and formation of state and nation? Did it foreclose possibilities or expand them? Exacerbate problems or reduce them? The answers may vary across the region, both because conditions varied and because Japanese policies varied. In general, it might be said, the Japanese had a concept of nation which during the war increasingly coincided with the ideas being articulated in the West. But their main impact was made simply through dislodging the colonial powers, which so far nationalists had been able to do no more at most than confront. Independence came sooner than expected, but the elites were not better prepared for it.

What would have happened is, of course, impossible to say. In some countries the process of creating a nation-state was quite far advanced, in others not; in some countries the colonial governments were much opposed, in others quite supportive, in yet others at best cautious. Burma and the Philippines, for example, seemed well on the way to joining a world of nation-states. No such prospect stood before the ‘Indonesians’, despite the aspirations of the Ethici and the collaborators, still less the peoples of Indo-China. ‘Had the Japanese invasion [of Netherlands India] not occurred’, Howard Dick suggests, ‘colonial rule would have survived at least into the 1950s.’\textsuperscript{1} Few talked of a Malayan nation, and while the Brookes regarded Sarawak as an independent state and marked the centenary of their rule in 1941 by granting a constitution, few thought at the time that small states could survive on their own. The Japanese dislodged all the regimes, though deferring the destruction of French rule in Indo-China until March 1945. It was, as the French had foreseen, to be very difficult for the colonial powers to re-establish themselves once they had been dislodged. Nationalists had an opportunity which they used. But the new conqueror had not given them
much positive help. Success for the nationalists was rather a ‘capricious’ outcome.

The prewar leaders of Japan had been certain that Japan would come to play a larger role in Southeast Asia, but they had not considered that they could or would need to resort to force. The colonial structures there could not endure for ever, they rightly believed: it was a question of time. Taisho nanshin-ron ‘stressed trade and industrial development for Japan’s sake’, as Shimizu Hajime writes. ‘The only things that Japan really tried to do on behalf of the political liberation of Southeast Asia were trying to understand its nationalism and giving passive support to independence from its Western masters.’ Their adventure in Manchuria alienated nationalists like Hatta as well as worrying the Dutch, but the deadline the US set for leaving the Philippines was encouraging, and Britain was slow to build its new naval base in Singapore. The depression, too, struck at the colonial economies.

The Japanese developed no more specific vision of the future of Southeast Asia or of their role in it, still less any more definite plans. Information was collected, societies formed, pamphlets published. Commercial interests were established, either private or, increasingly, with government backing. In 1936, the government authorised ‘footsteps’ in the south. But, while the resources of Southeast Asia became more important, there was no scheme to take it over. Those most interested in them, the naval leaders, were indeed those most apprehensive of the opposition of the maritime powers. Their army colleagues were more concerned about the Soviet Union. It was the European war that changed such attitudes. It was initially hoped that it would provide opportunities in Southeast Asia that might still avoid the need for force: the Europeans would be open to pressure. Force was resolved upon only as it became clear that the US would interpose. Even then, there was a residual notion that it was but a step beyond the previous diplomacy, and that the other powers would accept a fait accompli as in Manchuria.

It was clearly partly as a result of these attitudes that, when the venture was begun, military objectives predominated, and that policies for the conquered territories were limited and largely improvised. They were complicated, however, by a visionary rhetoric that spoke first of equality with the West and then increasingly, as Japan ‘returned’ to Asia, of some kind of leadership in Asia. If the rhetoric rallied opinion at home, it might alienate others, the Chinese, the Western powers, and indeed the peoples of Southeast Asia. Would it appeal to nationalist elites, anxious to shake off European control, but not necessarily to accept Japanese ideology, and certainly not keen to replace one imperial ruler by another? How would it be perceived by the masses whom the elites sought to rally, their existence already disrupted by the depression, now still more by the destruction of trade patterns, the collapse of shipping, the inadequacy of distribution, and the exaction of compulsory labour?
The New Order rhetoric of 1938 was, as Kumitada Miwa says, presented in traditional terms so as ‘to have a readier appeal to the sentiments of the Japanese public. It was also hoped that it would have a similar effect on the Chinese.’ What rhetoric could extend to the non-Sinitic world? Developing that was seriously attempted only in 1940. In April Arita Hachiro, the foreign minister, had referred to the ‘economic interdependence’ of Japan and Southeast Asia, especially the Indies, and, using a term earlier used in respect of China, to ‘co-existence and co-prosperity’. In June he spoke of ‘a single sphere on the basis of common existence’. The new Konoe government put forward the vision of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Four days after the Pacific war began the government announced that the Anglo-American war would be called a Great East Asia War ‘because it is a war for the construction of a new order in East Asia’. It entailed the ‘liberation of East Asian peoples from the aggression of America and Britain’, which was to lead to ‘the establishment of a genuine world peace and the creation of a new world culture’. But the liberation rhetoric remained hard to reconcile both with the Japanese tradition that was being evoked at home and with what was in fact happening.

The Total War Institute, an officially sanctioned think tank, struggled with the task early in 1942. ‘The Japanese empire is a manifestation of morality and its special characteristic is the propagation of the Imperial Way. It strives but for the achievement of Hakko Ichiu, the spirit of its founding... It is necessary to foster the increased power of the empire, to cause East Asia to return to its original form of independence and cooperation by shaking off the yoke of Europe and America, and to let its countries and peoples develop their respective abilities in peaceful cooperation and secure livelihood.’ The desire for independence of peoples in the Co-Prosperity Sphere was to be respected, ‘but proper and suitable forms of government shall be decided for them in consideration of military and economic requirements and of the historical, political and cultural elements peculiar to each area’. Independence was to be based on the construction of the New Order, differing from ‘an independence based on the idea of liberalism and self-determination... The peoples of the sphere shall obtain their proper positions, the unity of the people’s minds shall be effected and the unification of the sphere shall be realised with the empire as its center.’ The Sphere was thus a new form of empire. Within it, the independence of ‘peoples’ was defined by their position in a hierarchy.

Within the territories, once taken, the emphasis was on the acquisition of raw materials. That, and the possibility of some kind of deal or acceptance of the status quo on the part of the Allies, also made for a cautious approach to liberation. No negotiation followed: instead conflict expanded. As the position of the Japanese inevitably deteriorated, they sought to win local support by giving their liberationist rhetoric more reality, and in the last days of the empire they began to prepare for Indonesia’s independence. Even if the war were lost, something would
have been achieved, they could persuade themselves, and it could lay the foundations for a different and more successful policy in the future. These moves faced the local elites with a series of challenges, not unlike those their predecessors had faced when the European empires had been established. Should they oppose? Should they collaborate? With what aims?

On 14 January 1943 the civil–military Liaison Conference decided to determine the future status of occupied areas according to two principles. ‘When considered suitable as Imperial territory, areas of strategic importance which must be secured by the Empire for the defense of Greater East Asia, as well as sparsely populated areas and regions lacking the capacity for independence, shall be incorporated into the Empire.’ Independence would be ‘bestowed upon such areas as qualify for it in the light of their past political development, if this is deemed advantageous to the prosecution of the Greater East Asia war and the establishment of Greater East Asia.’ Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru argued for the independence of Burma and the Philippines. The military were more doubtful. The Liaison Conference of 10 March agreed that Burma’s independence should be coupled with complete military collaboration and a treaty of alliance. The Philippines were to have independence ‘when they have made substantial efforts to render hearty collaboration’, it had been agreed in January. The Liaison Conference of 26 June agreed on a deal like Burma’s.

The war was increasingly presented as – in the phrase used by Shigemitsu Mamoru in the Diet in October – ‘a war of liberation’. A Greater East Asia Conference met in Tokyo the following month, attended by leaders from Free India, Burma, and the Philippines, though not by Thailand’s Pibun, who failed to come, nor by the Indonesians, who were not asked. According to the declaration of principles adopted on 7 November, the countries of Greater East Asia were to ‘cooperate together in order to secure the stability of East Asia and establish an order based on the principle of coexistence and coprosperity’. They were to ‘respect their mutual autonomy and independence, extend aid and friendship to each other, and establish an intimate relationship throughout East Asia’, and to ‘respect their respective traditions, promote each people’s creativity, and enhance the culture of the whole East Asia’. The countries were to cooperate closely ‘according to the principle of mutuality, plan their economic development, and promote the prosperity of East Asia’. They would also ‘maintain friendly relations with all nations, abolish systems of racial discrimination, undertake extensive cultural exchanges, voluntarily open up their resources, and thus contribute to the progress of the entire world’.

That downplayed hierarchy. Indeed, while retaining key concepts like co-existence and co-prosperity, it was more universalistic in tone than pan-Asianist. ‘It is Japan’s tragedy’, the diarist Kiyosawa Kiyoshi noted, ‘to have had to draft a declaration which is similar to the Atlantic Charter, granting all peoples their independence and freedom.’ Adopted at a conference designed to support the war, the statement could indeed also be a means
of working towards a peace. But it would not be a peace of humiliation, for it would end the colonial system in Southeast Asia. On that, indeed, it was more explicit than the Anglo-American Atlantic Charter.13

Similar considerations lay behind the preparation of a memorandum on the independence of Java at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – where there had long been a feeling that emphasising the Sphere would alienate rather than win support14 – early in 1944. Granting independence would, the memorandum argued, ‘naturally contribute to winning the hearts of the natives’, and ‘demonstrate the consistency of the Empire’s moralistic Greater East Asian policies and contribute in no small way to the unity of Greater East Asia’. The ‘tide’ of the war was, however, ‘running disadvantageously’, and it might reach the Indies. Granting independence in such circumstances could restrict ‘the Empire’s pressing military and economic measures and obstruct military operations in no small degree’, and it might give ‘the impression that the Empire is weakening’. Keeping the issue open might be useful if the war were to be ended through negotiation, and ‘a hasty “commitment” of our diplomacy concerning Indonesia at this time may be harmful’.

‘Nevertheless’, the memorandum continued, ‘the Greater East Asia war is fundamentally a struggle against the Anglo-American world order – in essence, a war between two world outlooks.’ Even if the independence granted were not finally ‘upheld by diplomatic negotiations after the termination of the war’ and were ‘temporarily left in abeyance as a future problem’, not even the enemy would be able to ‘deny the fundamental truth that independence inevitably follows the formative development of a people; if so, and if independence is granted by us, then half the victory can be acknowledged as ours.’ Independence could be modified to meet the Empire’s requirements,

should circumstances resolve in our favor; but should the war end completely disadvantageously, with the Empire also unable to honor its other international commitments, the granting of independence, if viewed on a long-term basis, would leave an invincible foundation which could be used in the future resurrection of Japan.15

The policy framework the Japanese government fashioned reflected the wish to enlist support for the war and to hold open the possibility of a negotiated end to it. Even if that had to reflect its military defeat, its endeavours would have enjoyed a success. The other powers would have to face an independent Southeast Asia, and Japan would be able to deal with it on an advantageous basis. The ideology, hastily conceived, then invoked to win support, might now, if implemented, be crucial to making a peace which would not be a total defeat. A negotiated peace, however, continued to evade Japan, and the overall policy was implemented only reluctantly and hesitantly by the authorities in Southeast Asia. By the time
of the surrender Southeast Asian peoples only enjoyed limited and differential levels of independence, and no Indonesian proclamation had been made.

Yet what Japan had done certainly made it difficult for the colonial powers to return. ‘[N]othing can ever obliterate the role Japan has played in bringing liberation to countless colonial peoples’, Ba Maw wrote. Its victories ‘really marked the beginning of the end of all imperialism and colonialism.’ Even so, it cannot be said that the Southeast Asian states owe their independence to the Japanese. Breaking the colonial continuity meant, as the French saw, that it would be difficult to return. Securing independence out of the international situation at the end of the war was, however, very much the work of the Southeast Asian elites themselves.

The Japanese conquest was like Napoleon I’s conquest of Europe in one way, unlike it in another. Each both won support and alienated it. The Japanese did not, however, provoke a nationalist opposition as Napoleon I did in Germany and Russia. The Southeast Asian peoples relied on outside powers to turn them out, assisting where they could do so to the advantage of the national cause. By struggling to reimpose their authority, however, the returning colonial powers once more contributed, albeit involuntarily, to consolidating nationalist movements, now in quite different circumstances, local, regional and international.

Only the Vietnamese – caught up in a new war, though a cold one – were unable to secure independence for their country in the decade or so following the war. The victory in this war was the victory of the Southeast Asian elites, though they had been fought over more than fought. ‘My colleagues and I are of that generation who went through the Second World War and the Japanese occupation and became determined that no one – neither the Japanese nor the British – had the right to push and kick us around’, as Lee Kuan Yew was to put it. ‘We were determined that we could govern ourselves and bring up our children in a country where we could be self-respecting people.’

‘People had expected [the Japanese] to be quite different, stronger and more clever than the Netherlanders they had defeated’, Sjahrir wrote. ‘What people saw were barbarians who were often more stupid than they themselves…. The old experienced Indonesian administrators of the colonial service had only contempt for the political ignoramuses who were placed over them. As a consequence, all layers of society came to see the past in another light. If these barbarians had been able to replace the old colonial authority, why had that been necessary at all?’

Like the earlier colonial powers, the Japanese sought collaborators. While they were often welcomed by nationalists, they tended at first to turn to more established or traditional leaders, only re-enlisting nationalist support as their position deteriorated. Like the earlier powers, too, they offered a limited amount of education. Designed, perhaps, more purposely to win elite support for Imperial Japan, its outcome was again
'capricious'. But some of those they trained had an enduring role, like Pengiran Muhammad Yusof of Brunei, and Ungku Aziz, planner of Malaysia’s Look East policy. The main political lesson was, however, one of political style, and that, too, was picked up by nationalists and used for their own purposes.

They failed, however, to give the nationalist leaders any real experience of government. ‘The farce of Japanese independence did not teach responsible handling of problems.’ At the same time, the Japanese went much further than the colonial powers towards creating ‘national armies’, using the majority peoples, particularly in the later stages of the war. But they were not integrated into a system of government, and though unable to act autonomously during the occupation, were endowed with something not only of the military spirit of the Japanese, but also of their readiness to interfere in civil affairs and to hold civilian leaders in contempt.

The Japanese used terror in the manner of colonial governments, though often more ruthlessly. They left another political legacy, quite unlike that of colonial governments – mass mobilisation, particularly of youth. In the war, as well as after it, Sukarno was able to expand on Tjokro’s earlier example. Now, moreover, loudspeakers, radio and cinema were available, and the disruption the war brought was an opportunity. Rallying the masses had, however, drawbacks as well as advantages. It raised expectations of change, even millennial hopes. Could the elite fulfil them? It was, moreover, mobilisation rather than participation, top-down, not ‘rice roots’.

The last to be conquered, Burma was the first of the Southeast Asian countries to secure independence within the Sphere. Constitutionally, it had been one of the two most advanced countries in the region in 1939. While its electorate was larger than that of the Philippines, it had, however, received no similar promise of independence within a given period of time. Nor at first did the Japanese offer any. ‘[P]remature encouragement of native independence movements shall be avoided’, said the guidelines the planning board issued before the war began. As it got under way, Premier Tojo was a little more forthcoming. ‘As regards the Philippines’, he told the House of Peers on 20 January,

if the peoples of those islands will hereafter understand the real intentions of Japan and offer to cooperate with us as one of the partners for the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, Japan will gladly enable them to enjoy the honour of independence. As for Burma what Japan contemplates is not different from that relating to the Philippines.

On 21 May General Iida Shojiro of the 15th Army set up a preparatory committee ‘for the restoration of the Central Administrative Organ’. Military administration had to be maintained, he declared at Maymyo on 2
June. The goal, as Tojo said, was independence. ‘It is my hope that the glorious Burmese nation will be established as rapidly as possible’, he declared, though the most urgent task was to win the war. ‘Every effort must be made to facilitate the preparation for establishing an independent nation upon a solid foundation.’ On 1 August the Burma Civil Executive Administration was set up, with Ba Maw as Chief Administrator. Final authority lay with Iida, and each department had Japanese advisers attached to it. The elected legislature was replaced by a Legislative Deliberative Assembly (Hosei Shingikai), but the commander of the Japanese army had the right of approval and veto. A single party was formed. It adopted as its slogan ‘One Party, One Blood, One Voice and One Command’, and Ba Maw was its head. The other mass organisations included the East Asian Youth League, started in June 1942 with youths drawn from the Burma Independence Army, the Thakin-led force that had entered Burma with the Japanese.

The deterioration of Japan’s position and the desire to ensure Burmese collaboration prompted the Liaison Conference on 14 January 1943 to favour early independence. The Liaison Conference of 10 March adopted ‘Guiding Principles for the Independence of Burma’. The objective was ‘to create, under the guidance of the Japanese government, a new Burma as one of the members of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’. It was to be proclaimed on 1 August, and to declare war on the US and the UK immediately after. The national domain was to include all Burma, except Karenni and the Shan states. ‘The Burmese Government shall maintain an army and navy for the essential defense of Burma. But Japan shall in reality direct their decisions as to the size and manner of organizing Burmese forces.’

A Burmese Independence Preparatory Committee was set up, including members of the executive administration, Aung San, as leader of the Burma Defence Army, the Chief Justice, six politicians, including Kodaw Hmaing, Nu, and the Karen leader San C. Po. The main debate was about the form of government. Ba Maw argued for a dictatorship. To avoid his becoming a dictator, some suggested that Burma should again become a monarchy. They also opposed Ba Maw’s election as head of state. In both cases the Japanese decided against them. On 1 August Ba Maw read the declaration of independence. The same day, as Head of State (Nainggandaw Adipadi), he declared war on the US and the UK. As in Japan – though Ba Maw was ‘against these Japanese ideas’ – the Defence Minister was a serving officer, Aung San. Ne Win became Commander-in-Chief of what was now called the Burma National Army (BNA).

Ba Maw and the newly appointed Japanese ambassador, Sawada Renzo, also signed a treaty of alliance. The Japanese military wanted to refer to co-prosperity and co-existence; Shigemitsu wanted reciprocity. By compromise it referred to co-existence only. Yet, while Burma was the first Southeast Asian state to gain independence, its puppet nature was
apparent. ‘This independence we now have is only a name. It is only the Japanese version of home rule’, Aung San told Ba Maw a little after the Normandy landings. In September the Japanese government agreed that Burma could take over the Shan states. But, as Tojo had told Ba Maw, two of them, Kengtung and Mongpan, would be made over to Thailand.

The occupation was shaping Burman nationalism and its aspirations to an independent state in a number of ways. It sought to overcome the factionalism of the elite, though its methods were heavy-handed. It sought to help the elite secure the mass backing which it needed itself, though that was to be done by top-down mobilisation. It helped to create a Burman army. It did not endorse the frontiers of British Burma and it had put the relationship of Burman and non-Burman peoples in continued question. Ba Maw indeed planned to end special treatment of the minorities. The international struggle for Burma also shaped the future. Burma was fought over yet again. The failure of the Japanese pre-emptive strike at Imphal early in 1944 precipitated the start of a British re-conquest.

Burman army officers discussed resistance, and Aung San approached the communist Than Tun, also a minister in Ba Maw’s government. The rising that younger officers planned for June 1944 was postponed, but their scheme helped to bring about the creation in September of the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL), with Aung San as leader and Than Tun as secretary. Out of the war the Burmans sought to win independence. The programme was set out in a manifesto ‘Drive Away the Fascist Japanese Marauders’. But would the British accept Burman collaboration? and how would it affect the relationship with non-Burman peoples?

The British had already armed hill-tribe guerrillas, especially Kachins. Alienated by looting on the part of Chinese Nationalist soldiers, allies of the West, the Shans on the whole accepted the Japanese, who recognised their sawbwas. They had not, however, won over the Karens. The entry of the Burma Independence Army (BIA) into Burma had indeed been marked by communal clashes. Though a more conciliatory approach had followed its disbandment, Karens formed 2 per cent of the BNA as against 40 per cent of the prewar army. The British began to recruit Karens in February, and there were 18,000 levies by May.

On the proffered collaboration of the Burmans, the British differed. Accepting it would make military re-conquest easier: General Slim needed all the help he could get if he was to beat the 1945 monsoon to Rangoon. It might make the restoration of British rule harder. But should the future be seen in those terms? Mountbatten, the Allied Supreme Commander, emphasised the political advantages in accepting AFPFL/BNA cooperation, as well as the political disadvantages of refusing it. ‘He said that the eyes of the world would be upon us to see how we handled the first part of the British Empire to be recovered from the enemy.’

The decision speeded the reconquest. It was also of great political
advantage to Aung San and the AFPFL. With the uncertainty over using the Indian army, the restored civil government had no means of enforcing a political settlement along the lines of the White Paper of 17 May in which the British had set out their policy in rather grudging terms. It was a policy that was in any case unsuitable, as Thein Pe Myint put it, for the Burmese who had been ‘awakened’ by the war.33

The Philippines was the other colonial state to which the Japanese granted independence within the Sphere and fought over twice. Unlike Burma, it had been offered a fixed date for independence, but in the mean time its position had been anomalous. The Commonwealth had neither a clear guarantee from the US, nor was it in a position to conduct an independent foreign policy. Ambivalence also marked its defence arrangements. ‘Self-defense is the supreme right of mankind’, Quezon told the inaugural session of the National Assembly in November 1935.34 He appointed Douglas MacArthur as military adviser.

‘The Philippine operation . . . is mainly for the purpose of destroying American strongholds’, Japanese planners declared. ‘The extraction of Philippine natural resources should not be looked upon as urgent.’ If Japan could secure a government that would not ‘resist the Empire’, the occupation forces should ‘respect its sovereignty and not intervene in its administrative affairs’. The emphasis was on conciliating a government led if not by Quezon, then by Manuel Roxas.35 Returning from exile, Ricarte was to win them over. His letter to Quezon arrived after he had left to join MacArthur at Corregidor.36 But the President hankered after a deal, based on independence and neutralisation.

In Manila, General Homma’s chief of staff, Maeda Masami, sounded out Filipino leaders on the possibilities of cooperation and the formation of an administration. He would have nothing to do with the Commonwealth. A republic might be discussed in future. For now the alternatives were ‘un gobierno de hierzo respalando por la forza militar’, a government of iron backed by military force, or a gobierno muneco (a puppet government).37 Jorge Vargas, Quezon’s right-hand man, convened the meetings that led to the creation of the provisional council of state that, with Japanese approval, the Filipino politicians constituted on 23 January. It did not include Ricarte or Ramos, associated with the Japanese prewar, but it did include many leading Commonwealth figures, Aquino, Paredes, Laurel, Yulo, Osias, and Recto among them, ‘no acknowledged Quislings’, as the US High Commissioner Paul McNutt was later to put it.38 The Japanese appointed Vargas chairman of an executive commission, and the Council became an advisory body.

On 6 February Emilio Aguinaldo, aged ex-leader of the first republic, urged MacArthur to surrender, just as he had been ready to negotiate with the US ‘many years before’. He also referred to Tojo’s promise of 20 January. Quezon told MacArthur that he thought of placing himself in the
hands of the Japanese ‘and defying them, in the belief that such action on my part would solidify the opposition to any Japanese influence.’ Early in January the US government had urged MacArthur to evacuate Quezon to Washington, so that he might function as head of a government-in-exile and ‘the symbol of the redemption of the Philippines’. MacArthur had then opposed the idea as it would reduce morale. Now he counselled Quezon against his proposal: the Japanese would not make him a martyr, but would speak for him.39

Quezon decided to ask Roosevelt’s permission to issue a manifesto requesting immediate independence, demobilisation, evacuation and neutralisation, echoing in a sense long-standing aims of the Philippine nationalists. He feared that if Japan established an independent government, ‘the masses of the people who knew very little of the history of Japan in Manchuria would fall into the trap and our leaders would be powerless in the face of such a situation’. If, on the other hand, Japan rejected the proposal, Tojo’s perfidy would be apparent.40 The proposal was, of course, rejected. Roosevelt pledged the US to drive the invaders from the Philippines and to fulfil its promise of independence. The promises Tojo made were valueless. ‘I have only to refer you to the present condition of Korea, Manchukuo, North China, Indo-China, and ... other countries ... to point out the hollow duplicity of such an announcement.’41 Leaving for Australia, MacArthur asked Quezon to join him there. The President finally left the Philippines on 18 March.

‘[T]here is no question that from the outset the Japanese believed that Quezon himself would be the ideal figure to lead a regime under their aegis.’42 Naming Vargas as temporary head of the government, rather than installing a major politico, was designed to encourage his return. Only when it was clear that a return was impossible did the Japanese turn to Laurel, an intimate prewar contact. That was also associated with the move to set up an independent republic. To fulfil that promise, the Japanese were induced not only, as in the case of Burma, by the deterioration of their overall position and, perhaps, by the existence of a government-in-exile, but also, by contrast to Burma, by the presence of guerrilla activity.

On 7 May 1943 Tojo visited Manila. Back in Tokyo he declared that Philippine independence could be granted within a year. On 19 June a special convention of the Kalibapi, the service organisation Vargas and the Japanese Military Administration (JMA) had set up, recommended those who should form the preparatory commission for independence. ‘[R]atified’ by acclamation at a Luneta rally,43 the names were approved by General Kuroda on 20 June. They included Aguinaldo, Aquino, Osias, Paredes, Recto, Vargas, Yulo, and Roxas, a released prisoner-of-war. Laurel, though recently wounded by guerrillas, was to be president of the committee, and it was openly expected that he would be president of the republic. So it turned out.

During the preparation of the constitution Tojo again visited Manila,
and Colonel Utsunomiya Naonori, the assistant chief of staff, participated. Like the two constitutions of the 1890s, Laurel indicated on 20 August, it was to be that of a republic: ‘no other forms, such as a monarchy, could be established here’. A republic, he explained, was ‘a commonwealth where the powers of the state are vested in the representatives who are directly or indirectly elected by the people.’ The constitution in fact removed the popular suffrage. The president was to be elected by a national assembly, composed of the provincial governors and city mayors and delegates elected every three years, one from each province and city. Within a year after the end of the war, however, a constitutional convention, elected by popular suffrage, was to create a new constitution. The constitution was promptly ratified by a convention of the Kalibapi on 6 September, and that was followed by a mass rally. The Kalibapi also quickly produced the elected delegates.

On 29 September Laurel, Vargas, and Aquino, elected Speaker, went to Tokyo. On his return Laurel announced that independence would be proclaimed on 14 October. That day Aguinaldo and Ricarte hoisted the new flag. The Filipino people proclaimed that they are, as of right they ought to be, a free and independent nation; that they no longer owe allegiance to any foreign nation; that hence forth they shall exercise all the powers and enjoy all the privileges to which they are entitled as a free and independent state; and that for the defense of their territorial integrity and the preservation of their independent existence, they pledge their fortunes, their lives, and their sacred honor.

Speeches invoked the memory of the first republic. A pact of alliance was concluded. No declaration of war ensued, as in Burma, despite Tojo’s urging. In 1944 Laurel felt constrained to declare that a state of war existed, but did not impose conscription. MacArthur had promised to return, and, more or less winning his argument over strategy, he waded ashore at Leyte in October 1944, together with Osmena, who had taken over as Commonwealth President on Quezon’s death in August. The liberated areas were made over to the Commonwealth government and, after the destructive struggle for Manila, MacArthur restored full constitutional government to the Filipinos on 27 February. It was clear, however, that MacArthur thought Roxas would be more effective than Osmena. In the islands throughout the war, he had maintained an association with the puppet government, but also a connection with the Luzon guerrillas, and his popularity was considerable. He was indeed to beat Osmena in the elections and preside at the inauguration of the republic in 1946. That met the ten-year deadline the Americans had set, and were all the more determined to stick to because of the war, whatever destruction it brought.
The elite that had dominated the Commonwealth continued to dominate the wartime republic and the postwar republic. It had offered collaboration because of its ‘intense desire to sustain the political, social and economic status quo as far as possible’. Quezon himself had been a reluctant exile, initially handing over to his right-hand man, not to a major politico. You could not know when the war would end, so, Steinberg suggests, Laurel reasoned, or even if it would not end with a deal that left Japan dominant. It was, after all, possible that the US would not return, as Aquino thought, given the prewar history of its relationship with the Philippines. Most went along with the new conqueror, as their predecessors had finally done, comforting themselves with the notion that they were protecting the Filipinos from a harsher government, in which, given Maeda’s threat, there was perhaps an element of truth. At the same time the elite supported the pro-American guerrillas. Its members were, as Goodman puts it, ‘politically astute enough to maintain a foothold among key nonrevolutionary guerrilla organizations and thus protect themselves in the event of a Japanese defeat’. Wholly identifying with either side might risk complete destruction. In the event MacArthur pointed to a compromise figure, Roxas, who was sufficiently pro-Allied to be acceptable to the US and sufficiently involved with the Laurel government not to alarm the collaborationists.

Though the elite continued to dominate, the occupation did not leave the Philippines unchanged. It deepened the divisions between the factions that Quezon had both maintained and managed: they were ‘violently expressed’ in conflicts between collaborators and guerrillas; and the Japanese military, using local political situations, deepened existing hatred and opposition.

The Japanese occupation blocked and even retarded the future of the Philippines, which at the time of the invasion had been laying the groundwork for a sovereign nation-state. All of the institutions planned by the Commonwealth government for the purpose of realizing an autonomous economy and the infrastructure supporting it were destroyed during the Occupation. Ultimately, what the Occupation did was to increase and strengthen the Filipinos’ economic dependency on the United States that they had experienced before the war.

Quezon’s attempt to secure independence and neutralisation was no doubt impractical, and in any case it might not have avoided economic collapse. It was, however, consistent with the nationalists’ earlier objective, to couple independence and security, and with his own frustration over the ambiguous position of the interim Commonwealth. The US failed to offer adequate protection, but shared guerrilla warfare and MacArthur’s return both fostered pro-American sentiment in the Philippines. That,
and the reaction to it, helped, along with economic dependence, to shape the nationalist politics of the next republic.

In Netherlands India, as in Burma and the Philippines, the mere overthrow of Western rule would, of course, have a dramatic effect. But there the Japanese had the opportunity of making a much greater impact than in Burma or the Philippines, where self-government was far advanced. Offering independence and creating a national army would be revolutionary changes, shaping a nationalist movement which the colonial government had succeeded in curbing, and with which it had become reluctant even to discuss the political future. The nationalists themselves had an opportunity. That government was dislodged. Could they ensure that it did not return and that somehow national independence could be secured out of international conflict? That was the aim the AFPFL defined for Burma. The elite in the Philippines had a somewhat different task, ensuring that what happened in the war did not prevent their securing what had already been promised.

There was, however, another contrast. The resources of Netherlands India were far more important to the Japanese than those of Burma and the Philippines. Indeed the oil of Borneo and Sumatra was a prime reason for the determination to invade Southeast Asia. There was a still greater premium on the official policy of acquiring resources and maintaining the status quo. It was not until the crisis of 1944 that the Japanese got round to speaking of independence, let alone proclaiming it.

Official guidelines called for the use of existing administrative machinery, and at first General Imamura Hitoshi was even prepared to use Dutch officials, provided that they submitted ‘as imperial subjects’. When that policy was abandoned, the Japanese turned less to the nationalists than to the native officials, panggreh praja. For their part, nationalists were prepared to collaborate with the Japanese: no government-in-exile offered an alternative focus, and there was no guerrilla movement. The Japanese used the collaborating nationalists of the prewar Parindra in the Tiga-A movement, a propaganda exercise begun in March 1942. When the military government was organised in August, it sought to win the cooperation of the prewar non-collaborating nationalists, but, anxious to boost their cause, they disputed the terms.

The army created two institutions. One was a Research Council on Traditional Customs and Institutions, announced in September 1942, its object being ‘the research and study of traditional customs and institutions with a view to providing reference materials for the administration of Java’, and its ten Indonesian members included leading nationalist figures such as Hatta, Sutardjo, Sukarno, K.H. Mansur (Muhammadiyah), Wondoamisenso (MIAI), Djajadiningrat, Supomo and Ki Hadjar Dewantoro. The second step was the creation of a mass movement under the leadership of the nationalists in the Council. Sukarno and Hatta wanted to
employ the word ‘Indonesia’ in the name of the organisation, to use the nationalist flag and anthem, to admit only indigenous Indonesians, and to allow officials to take part. The military rejected the use of word, flag and anthem: the 16th Army administered only Java; and in any case Tokyo had yet to decide its future. Other Japanese were concerned at the impact on the panggreh praja.

The organisation was finally announced on 9 March, the anniversary of the surrender of Java. It was called Minshu Soryoku Kesshu Undo, Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (Centre of People’s Power). Its objective, its constitution declared, was ‘to create a powerful new Java as a link in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere by extending aid and cooperation to Greater Japan for the purposes of securing the ultimate victory in the Greater East Asia war and harmonizing the operations of military government’.57

Sukarno and his ex-non-collaborationist colleagues were rid of their Parindra rivals, but they were no more independent of the Japanese. As the war position deteriorated, Burma and the Philippines had been given new assurances of independence. Nothing of that kind was on offer in Java. ‘I heard that the nationalists had organised this movement with a great expectation to make it the kernel of the independence campaign’, General Yamamoto Moichiro later declared. ‘However ... the Sixteenth Army had no plan on this question at that time. ... I demanded them to lead this movement more spiritually so as to combine all powers of the inhabitants in directions of the Japanese administration.’58 Instead of offering independence the Japanese sought to win support by pro-Japanese and pro-Sphere propaganda. Out of this the nationalists could hope to gain only indirectly, and at some risk, short- and long-term. They could gain prominence and mobilise the masses, but only by endorsing Japanese propaganda campaigns, such as the Destroy the Americans and English Movement, inaugurated on 29 April, the Emperor’s birthday.

The Japanese, moreover, limited their scope. Hatakeda, of the interior department, indicated that the Putera leaders should not interfere with the work of the panggreh praja, nor contend with it. By January 1944 there were only nine Putera branches at the residency level, and none below that level. The organisation developed in Batavia and in some of the cities, but not in the countryside. There above all the traditional elite could, as Kurasawa puts it, use ‘indirect and subtle compulsion in leading people towards government’s intentions’.59 Seinendan, the new youth corps, was also handled in an ambivalent way. Modelled on a Japanese organisation, it was a striking innovation so far as Java was concerned. But its purpose was ‘to convince the youth of Java to work actively with the government and to support the construction of the Co-Prosperity Sphere in Greater Asia’.60 Here again the panggreh praja were expected to exercise a controlling influence: the aim was ‘mobilization without politicization’.61

The principles governing military administration in occupied areas of March 1942 envisaged ‘grasping people’s minds’, as part of senbu kosaku,
the propaganda and taming operations. In Java, Islam, identified as opposed to the West, was bound to be a focus, and an independent department, Shumubu, was set up to handle religious affairs. Initially, it seems, the Japanese wished to form an all-embracing Muslim body, which would be part of the Tiga-A movement. Masjumi, the Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims, was in the event established only in October 1943, bringing together the more orthodox Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and the reformist Muhammadiyah, as well as admitting individual kiyayi and ulama.

By this time the Japanese had moved towards the greater ‘political participation’, seiji sanyo, that Tojo promised in his speech in Tokyo on 18 June 1943 and on a visit to Jakarta on 7 July. That was, however, very much directed towards mobilisation, for, as the situation deteriorated, the Imperial government had determined to make Java the main fortress and supply base in the south. The initial step was the creation of advisory councils at the centre and in the shu (residencies). Announced by General Harada on 1 August, it was implemented in September and October. The membership at the shu level favoured local officials and Muslim leaders, rather than nationalists. At the centre, the nationalists were more strongly represented, but the council was strictly advisory. The chairman, Sukarno, led a delegation to Tokyo in November. But the Greater East Asia Conference ‘had conveniently adjourned upon Soekarno’s arrival’, and he was not allowed to meet any of the delegates.62

In the context of the deteriorating war situation – which, inter alia, denuded Java of Japanese troops – and the renewed stress on the importance of Java as a base for the future struggle, the Japanese did, however, take a step that was to have long-term consequences: the creation of an army. Tojo assented on his visit in July, but there were doubts about arming indigenous soldiers. A pro-Japanese nationalist, Gatot Mangkupradja, was chosen to make the formal suggestion, not Sukarno or Hatta. On 3 October 1943 Harada formally established PETA, Pembela Tanah Air, Defender of the Fatherland. Its senior officer was Kasman Singgodimedjo, a Muhammadiyah leader, who swore the corps’ oath of allegiance to Japan on 8 February 1944. Its flag was not that of nationalism: it displayed the Islamic Crescent superimposed on the Rising Sun.63

The long-standing doubts about Putera were resolved by the creation of a new people’s organisation, announced by Harada on 8 January 1944. It was to be an all-inclusive mass organisation similar to Concordia in Manchuria and the Imperial Rule Assistance Association in Japan itself. The name was disputed. Indonesian members of the preparatory committee wanted to use the word ‘Indonesia’, as indeed Masjumi did. All that the Japanese would concede was an alternative title, Himpunan Kebaktian Rakyat (People’s Loyalty Association).64 It was generally called by its Japanese name, Djawa Hokokai, Java Service Organisation. The top leadership was Japanese, the priyayi were used on the widest scale, and the
nationalists were not involved below the chu level. Its platform pledged ‘to maintain the spirit of service and to make selfless efforts for the permeation of military government’. In Java, as in Greater East Asia as a whole, ‘the peoples shall be harmoniously united around the nucleus of the officials and the army’.  

While the aim of the Japanese was to unite and secure support, rather than to divide and rule, their methods had, of course, outcomes or by-products other than those they anticipated. The changes they made to their system early in 1944 reduced the role of the nationalists, if not of the Muslim leaders, and enhanced that of the priyayi elite, the main pillar of their rule. Sukarno was director of the secretariat of the Hokokai, Hatta vice-chairman of its central council. They were, however, mere functionaries. ‘Under Poetera’, as Hatta put it, ‘the nationalists actively guided the people; now under the Djawa Hokkokai [sic] they sit idly by in their Djakarta offices.’ Yet identification with the regime, as it became more exacting, and as the economic situation deteriorated, was, in the longer term, damaging for the priyayi and, in a negative sense at least, helpful for its rivals. The prospects for the nationalists became more positive with the moves towards independence that followed Premier Koiso’s statement of September 1944.

The US and the UK were trying ‘to force a decisive battle before we can perfect our national defense structure which depends on the utilization of the resources in our occupied territories’, the chief army civil administrator had argued in March. It was impossible to rely only on the new Jawa Hokokai ‘for the cooperation of the Javanese public’. Nor had Japan publicly endorsed the hopes of ‘liberation’. Indeed, ‘with the passing of time Japan differentiated in her treatment of Burma, the Philippines, and Java; thus there is now a trend toward increased suspicion that Japan may assume direct control of Java together with the Malay Peninsula’. ‘In order to enable the fifty million people of Java to further endure the deprivation of clothing, to deliver foodstuffs while bearing hardships, and to cooperate with the military administration in all aspects, the best policy is to clearly indicate to them that they shall be granted independence when their preparatory education for the postwar future has been completed.’

The proposal made no progress under Tojo, but he was displaced in July. The speech his successor Koiso made in the Diet on 7 September promised independence for the East Indies in the near future. The use of the nationalist flag was permitted, and the singing of ‘Indonesia Raya’. The nationalists were able to make propaganda for their cause, though it had always to be coupled with propaganda for the Japanese cause. But the military administration in Java was slow to act on the proclamation, and outside Java – where Sumatra was under a separate army administration, and the islands east of Java under the navy – the Japanese were slower still.

The revolt of PETA units at Blitar on 14 February aroused the worst fears of the occupying power. On 1 March Harada announced the forma-
tion of a committee to investigate preparations for independence. Then in late March he had to persuade his colleagues in Sumatra and his superiors. Tokyo, which had meanwhile offered independence to Cambodia and Vietnam, also assented. A list of members was announced on 29 April. Nationalists now predominated over priyayi officials and Muslim representatives. The first meeting began at the end of May. Its most famous event was Sukarno’s enunciation of the five principles of the Indonesian state, the pantjasila. One was nationalism, the ‘unity between men and place’, over the ‘entire archipelago . . . from the northern tip of Sumatra to Papua’. Another was internationalism. ‘We should not only establish the state of Free Indonesia, but we should also aim at making one family of all nations.’ The third principle was democracy, ‘representative government’. The fourth was ‘social justice’. What was called democracy in the West was merely political, and that was not enough. The final principle was belief in God: ‘every Indonesian should believe in his own particular God’. Sukarno concluded by invoking gotong royong, mutual cooperation. A subcommittee discussed the role of Islam, and produced the ambiguous compromise, later called the ‘Jakarta Charter’, which, after ‘belief in God’, put the words ‘with the obligation of practising the laws of Islam for the adherents of that religion’.

The second session began on 10 July. One issue, the form of the state, was decisively disposed of: only six voted for a monarchy; 55 voted for a republic. A People’s Deliberative Body, meeting at least once in five years, was to set policy and elect the President. He had extensive powers, but could enact legislation only with the approval of the People’s Representative Council. The extent of the territory to be covered was the subject of sharper debate. Should it include the former Netherlands India, with or without New Guinea? Or should it also include Malaya, northern Borneo, and Portuguese Timor? Mohammad Yamin argued for the latter, and so did Sukarno, alluding to an appeal from Malay nationalists. Indeed he confessed to a dream of ‘pan-Indonesia’, but recognised that the independence of the Philippines had to be respected. The Yamin–Sukarno proposition received the support of the majority.

On 7 August General Terauchi Hisaichi approved the setting up of the committee to prepare independence, and, in a supplementary announcement, the Gunseikan, General Yamamoto Moichiro, said it would cover all Indonesia. Sukarno, Hatta and Radjiman, chairman of the previous investigatory committee, were flown to meet Terauchi in Dalat on 11 August. They flew back to Singapore on the 13th and to Jakarta the next day. The members of the committee for preparing independence were named that day, and the first meeting, with Sukarno as chairman, was scheduled for the 18th.

Japan, however, surrendered on 14 August. That confronted the nationalists with a new problem. Should they proclaim independence? If they sought Japanese approval, their government might seem to the
victorious allies as but another puppet. But if they did not, the Japanese might feel bound, under the terms of the surrender, to suppress it. Youth leaders tried to enforce a demand for bold action by kidnapping Sukarno and Hatta. In the event, while the naval liaison officer in Jakarta, Admiral Maeda, agreed to persuade his army colleagues to turn a blind eye, a brief statement was made on 17 August in the courtyard of Sukarno’s house: ‘We, the people of Indonesia, hereby declare Indonesia’s independence. Matters concerning the transfer of power and other matters will be executed in an orderly manner and in the shortest possible time.’ The words ‘transfer of power’ replaced a bolder reference to the seizure of administrative control by the people.

To make good their bid for independence was to require of the Indonesians great courage and skilful leadership. The Japanese had dislodged the colonial power. They had, however, been slow to allow the nationalist leadership to exploit the opportunity that provided, and gave them no experience of government. The nationalists were, however, given experience in mobilising the masses, and that had some precedent and some attraction. The destruction of colonial rule, and the extreme hardships brought by the occupation, had certainly left the masses open to mobilisation, and the Japanese attempts to utilise traditional leaders tended to discredit their influence. But the nationalists hesitated in face of the high, even millennial, expectations of social change that the prospect of ‘liberation’ held out. At the very least, it might make it difficult to persuade the victorious allies that they were in control, and, more particularly, to persuade the UK and the US that their Dutch allies should not simply take over again.

In these circumstances, too, they had to recognise that the old colonial frontiers formed a maximum claim. The Japanese had tampered with the frontiers, but not dislodged them. The defeat of the Japanese could only mean that it was even less likely that they would be changed. British Borneo was included in the Indonesia Raya that Sukarno and Yamin advocated in June 1945, but not within the boundaries the Japanese finally settled on, nor within the state the independence of which was proclaimed on 17 August. There indeed the Japanese had held out no prospect of independence. ‘There was never the slightest suggestion that Boruneo Kita would ever be anything other than a colonial dependency of Japan.’

In Malaya, too, they saw little need to make promises of an independent future. Indeed they intended to retain Singapore, renamed Syonan, and while the FMS was dissolved and the peninsula was officially called Malai from December 1942, they made the northern states over to Thailand.

During the invasion, it appears, Japanese officers had contacted Malay nationalists, men like Ibrahim Yaacob of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda. Once their control was established, the Japanese looked to more
conservative elements, and in June 1942 KMM was banned. Ibrahim and Ishak Haji Muhammad were, however, given jobs in the propaganda department. In December 1943 to January 1944 recruitment began for a Malay volunteer army, a giyugun, called Peta in Malay, and Ibrahim became commander.

The threat of Allied invasion grew as the British advanced in Burma, and new measures were taken to win support. Following a conference of the secretary-generals of the military administrations of Java, Sumatra, Celebes and Malaya in Singapore on 2–3 May 1945, the military administration set up a new organisation, the Hodosho. It was also designed, Itagaki suggests, to promote Malayan nationalism. The central hodosho opened at Taiping on 3 July 1945. By the end of the month, there was one in each of the states that remained in Malei. But if the Hodosho envisaged a transcommunal Malaya, the Malay radicals saw Indonesia Raya as the solution to the communal problem.

Initially Malaya and Sumatra were treated as an ‘integral territory’ of Japan. Even when the Sumatra policy changed, no promises were made about Malaya, either in terms of its independence, or even in terms of its association with Indonesia, if any. Following Koiso’s statement of 7 September 1944 the Malays in Singapore sought to hold celebration meetings, and to form an Indonesia association, but that was not permitted. The events of 1945 led to a change in policy. Early in May Itagaki informally told Ibrahim Yaacob to start preparing for the independence of Malaya. He and his colleagues began setting up an organisation called KRIS, Kekuatan Rakyat Istimewa (Special Strength of the People) or, according to Ibrahim, Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung (Union of Peninsular Indonesians). The object was to appeal to the radical Malays and their wish to be part of Indonesia Raya, and, as Itagaki puts it, the movement had to be ‘carried out in close connection with the general activities of the Hodosho’, lest it aroused ‘misunderstandings and suspicions of other races’. Ibrahim met Sukarno and Hatta at Taiping airdrome on 12 August. After the surrender, KRIS met ‘informally’ in KL on 17 August. Ibrahim, however, was on his way to Java.

The Japanese, Itagaki points out, had lost Malay support, not only because of war conditions, but also because of the transfer of the northern states to Thailand in October 1943. In what remained of Malei, the Chinese thus became relatively even more significant, and the radicals’ case for joining Indonesia even more urgent. Further concessions to Thai nationalism had indeed taken priority over any attempt to develop Malei. Regarded as imperial territory, it could be disposed of in an imperialist manner. Southern Malaya would be retained as a protection for Syonan. The occupation’s main political legacy to Malaya was its worsened inter-communal relations. They were to defeat the new plan for a trans-communal Malaya upon which the British had finally resolved.
Japanese troops moved into northern Vietnam in September 1940. It was not, however, until 9 March 1945 that the Japanese overthrew the French regime in Indo-China. Their emphasis on continuity was thus at its greatest where they found the colonial regime the most collaborative. After their coup against the French in March 1945 they encouraged the setting up of independent regimes without any of the preparatory steps they had pursued elsewhere. There was, indeed, little time for them to establish themselves. Nor was it clear who would or could lead them. The French had kept the monarchies, but confined their role. Prewar they had also repressed the nationalists. In the Vichy phase they had belatedly sought to mobilise support in order to pre-empt the Japanese. Though the major political force at the end of the war was, however, the Vietnamese communist movement, which took advantage of the north’s unique proximity to China, and which neither the French nor the Japanese were able to eliminate, the Vichy regime’s activities helped, albeit unintentionally, to create a more impatient nationalism.

Isolated from France, the Vichy regime in Indo-China took steps like those the Japanese took elsewhere and, similarly, with unintended results. More Vietnamese were promoted to the middle and upper echelons of the administration: the number doubled between 1940 and 1944. Governor-General Decoux sought both to accent Cambodian, Vietnamese and Laotian nationalism, and to evoke loyalty to a ‘federal Indochinese nation’. He set up a Conseil Fédéral Indochinoise, including 23 Frenchmen, 24 Annamese, 4 Cambodians and 2 Laotians. He emphasised Petainist values – family, work, country. Such values had their appeal, though the Colonial Office was optimistic in declaring: ‘The Marshal’s cult is spreading among the Annamites . . . the ideas of Labor, Family and Country parallel the Confucian ideas at the base of Annamite civilization.’ More important were the youth organisations. Sports et Jeunesses, set up by Decoux’ assistant, the naval officer Maurice Ducoroy, to distract attention from Japanese propaganda, had perhaps 200,000 participants by late 1943. But, as David Marr puts it, ‘from March 1945 the French would have no control over the uses to which these young minds and bodies would be put’. More Viet-Minh company commanders were to graduate from that Petainist youth corps than from all the Viet-Minh Communist cadre schools.

Decoux had savagely suppressed the risings that followed the initial Japanese incursion in 1940. The ICP concluded that it was necessary both to create a guerrilla force and to win stable mass backing. While Chinese support was important, that had, moreover, to be done within Vietnam, so that the movement could at the critical moment offer something to the Allies in their struggle with the Japanese. With the coup of 9 March, and the elimination of the Free French network, the Viet Minh or Independence League, which had been founded by the ICP in 1940–1, indeed became more important to the Allies. It was not, however, the moment to
seize power, the ICP concluded. The communists should prepare for a
general insurrection, ‘for example when the Japanese Army surrenders to
the Allies or when the Allies are decisively engaged in Indochina’.85

Other Vietnamese, meanwhile, welcomed the independence the Japan-
ese offered. It was, however, a limited offer, a ‘fake’, as some saw it. The
Japanese army, it was announced, would

support any endeavour to satisfy the eager desire for independence,
so dear to all the peoples of Indo-China. It declares at the same time
that it is its firm intention to fulfil the duties incumbent upon it for
the defence of Indo-China, in collaboration with the above-mentioned
peoples and to help their sincere national movement in conformity
with the fundamental principles of the declaration of Greater East
Asia.’86

Yokoyama Masayuki, supreme adviser to Emperor Bao Dai, urged him
to proclaim the independence of his kingdom. In a proclamation of 11
March he unilaterally abrogated the protectorate treaty of 1884. Tran
Trong Kim, a retired school inspector and respected writer who had been
protected by the Japanese, formed a cabinet in April. Asserting the unity
of the kingdom was not easy, let alone taking over control. In June, Phan
Ke Toai, the imperial delegate in Tonkin (Bac Ky), was made responsible
to the imperial government in Hue instead of the Governor-General,
General Tsuchihashi Yuki, commander of the 38th Army. Only in August,
however, did the Japanese agree to the transfer of Cochin-China, and no
real authority was granted in defence, internal security, foreign affairs or
communications. The surrender of the Japanese thus offered Ho Chi
Minh his opportunity.

On 19 August his forces took over Hanoi. He telegraphed OSS: ‘We
were fighting Japs on the side of the United Nations. Now Japs surren-
dered. We beg United Nations to realize their solemn promise that all
nationalities will be given democracy and independence. If United
Nations forget their solemn promise and don’t grant independence, we
will keep fighting until we get it.’87 Bao Dai abdicated on 25 August. A
week later Ho proclaimed the independence of Vietnam, by-passing
Truong Chinh’s hope of an Indo-Chinese uprising. He invoked, with a dif-
ference, the US declaration of independence and the rights of man: ‘All
the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right
to live, be happy and free.’88

In some sense Siam, an independent state, prefigured states that were to
become independent: it adopted national, even nationalist, policies. It
had, however, been placed or placed itself within the Sphere, and its
scope for independent action was thus limited. Japan had two options:
Thailand could be treated as a full member of the Co-Prosperity Sphere,
and the relationship used as a positive demonstration to others of what that meant. Alternatively Thailand could be won over by concessions to its ‘pan-Thai’ ambitions, articulated by Luang Vichit, but widely shared, and to its wish to regain the territories of the suzerainty over which it had been deprived by the intervention of the colonial powers. Characteristically, the Japanese took advantage of the second opportunity more fully than the first, at the risk, of course, of alienating the Burmans and the Malays.

In March 1943 Aoki Kazuo, the Greater East Asia minister, took up the promise of ‘lost territory’. That was to include not only the Shan states of Mongpan and Kengtung, into which the Japanese had allowed Thai troops to penetrate, but also the northern Malay states, a claim Vichit had raised. ‘Due to the enemy strategy of seizing upon the people’s lack of freedom due to the pro-Japanese policy of the Phibun regime, the presence of the Japanese army, and the activities of antigovernment bad elements’, Tojo told the Imperial Conference on 31 May, ‘feelings toward Japan are certainly not satisfactory. Because of the troubled position of the Phibun regime and the psychological tendencies of the people, based upon the Japanese–Thai alliance, we will return lost territories in Malaya from the area we have occupied.’ But Pibun declined to attend the Greater East Asia Conference in November, and Prince Wan attended in his place. These territorial adjustments, and indeed those made at the expense of France, Laos and Cambodia before the Pacific war began, had, of course, to be undone when Japan was defeated, and the ‘colonial’ frontiers restored, though the Thais found it hard to accept. Their famous diplomatic skill – coupled with the support they secured from the Americans – enabled them, however, to retain their independence in the postwar phase.

Other states were to achieve independence. To that the Japanese had contributed, though their intentions had been at most ambiguous, and the outcomes capricious. They dislodged the colonial powers, but offered no persuasive ideology themselves. They offered no real political experience, though presenting new avenues of mass mobilisation. They created independent armies and youth movements. Out of all this – and out of the disorder, starvation, despair and desperate hope their rule had brought – the nationalist leaders had to create or re-create nationalist movements that could secure independence out of the wartime debacle.

In Europe Napoleon I had destroyed the old order but also introduced – alongside French imperialism – elements of the new. Seeking to dominate Europe in the twentieth century, the Germans could proffer no generous ideals. Nor indeed could the Japanese in Southeast Asia. Not only were the days of nineteenth-century imperialism numbered. So were the chances of building new empires, if they could offer only their own narrow nationalisms. If there were a valid comparison with the European past, it might be with the deeply ambivalent Napoleon III, who did so much to free the Italians, and then left them with the task of making Italy.
What had once been the imaginative liberation of a people . . . and the audacious metaphoric charting of spiritual territory usurped by colonial masters were quickly translated into and accommodated by a world system of barriers, maps, frontiers, police forces, customs and exchange controls.

Edward Said
Nationalism did not necessarily aim at the creation of an independent state, but increasingly that came to be the normal objective, and the world to be seen as one of nation-states. World War I had promoted those concepts, particularly in Europe. World War II advanced their cause outside Europe. The Southeast Asian experience indeed became something of an example for other parts of the ‘developing’ world in the subsequent decades. Yet what happened there was exceptional. The colonial rulers had been dislodged by an imperialist rival. Its endeavour and its defeat both gave the nationalists an unique opportunity: they could not only aim at but perhaps secure independence for a postcolonial state.

There were disadvantages, too. Invasion and interregnum had not only dislodged the colonial rulers: they had also disrupted the state- and nation-building in which they had been more or less positively engaged and the relationship they had, not only with open collaborators, but with those ‘collusionists’ whose objectives were similar, though their means differed. Without indulging in the counter-factual, it is possible to suggest that, while invasion and interregnum might have enhanced the cause of independence, they made it more difficult to build a successor-state. New divisions had been created, old ones exacerbated; new foci of power established, but no practice in government offered. Nor, after all, was independence always so easy to secure. To struggle for it might indeed create or intensify a sense of national unity, though it might also create or intensify apprehension in a ‘minority’ people who would fear the loss of imperial protection. Could it in any case endure? Could it be institution-alised? Could the high expectations that victory brought be satisfied?

In the prewar phase nationalist movements could rarely do more than ‘confront’ the colonial governments, if so much. The Filipinos had attempted it in the late nineteenth century, and in the early decades of the new century Indonesian nationalism sought to follow a similar line. Resorting to force was the result of desperation, doomed to defeat, given the regimes’ monopoly of arms, elite collaboration, effective spy networks. Stopping short of violence, but confronting the regime, might, however, undermine it, reduce its legitimacy, extort some concessions, diminish
collaboration, perhaps win some international support. The aim might be independence. It could perhaps stop short of that, at least in the medium term. Some regimes were after all responsive, while others were so negative that articulating such an aim could lead to execution, imprisonment or internal exile.

Even though their aim was independence, postwar nationalist movements did not drop the confrontational approach. There was much in its favour. The colonial powers had been discredited by their failure. The ties they had formed with prewar collaborators had been cut off, and some of those collaborators had been discredited by their continued utilisation by the Japanese. Nor did they have a monopoly of force: the Japanese had created armies, provoked guerrillas, left behind arms. In Burma and the Philippines the nationalists could present themselves as collaborators with the Allies as well. Indeed it was important to recognise favourable elements in the international situation. The Allies were not united. The US, for example, was scarcely committed to the return of the colonial powers; and it had an anti-imperialist ideology which had been developed to compete with Bolshevism. Even within the colonial powers, continued imperialism was in question. Winston Churchill’s conservative view was not the only view. And capital might seek more cost-effective opportunities.

If nationalist movements were to proceed along these lines – confrontation, but now with independence clearly the achievable objective – a compromise had to be made. The frontiers that the colonial powers had created would have to be the frontiers of the independent states. Created out of imperial convenience – designed to avoid dispute between imperial powers – they had only limited validity on other grounds. Nor did they necessarily lend themselves to becoming the frontiers of what were now bound to be conceived, not only as independent states, but as nation-states. Yet if nationalist movements were going to enjoy success, they would have to struggle within those frontiers, rather than attempt to undo them. For that there were several reasons.

One set was international in nature. First, the outside powers conceived them in that way. The Japanese had made only limited attempts to change the frontiers of the colonial phase. What they had done had clearly to be undone, however, and itself discredited further change. Furthermore, the territories were liberated or re-conquered one by one, each handled differently, but on the old pattern. If the nationalists were to win without a major struggle, possibly counter-productive, it had to be done within the old framework. That, moreover, might win the support of the British, who had played a large role in creating it, and provided the leadership in South East Asia Command (SEAC), a leadership, moreover, that had displayed in ‘liberating’ Burma a readiness to come to terms with the nationalist movement.

Nationalist movements, moreover, wanted support from other national-
ist movements. To claim territory they claimed would foreclose it. In a struggle against imperialism, they had something in common, but that involved accepting the frontiers it had drawn. In that sense the struggle—though in some cases it became outright conflict—continued the kind of frictioned collusion between colonialists and nationalists that contributed to nation-building before the war. The frontiers gained a new validity. If nationalists would not seek more, however, they could not be content with less.

The struggle continued the ‘collusion’ in other ways, too. It helped to build nationalism and to identify it with the inherited state. It brought elite and masses together, identifying the latter more closely with the objectives articulated by the former. But success might reveal that elite and mass had coincided only temporarily in their common antagonism to the colonial power. The prospects the elite had held out—and the millennial way in which the mass may have interpreted those prospects—moreover heightened expectations of what independence would bring. If the colonial power had been responsible for so much suffering, would its defeat not be redeeming? Postcolonial governments were to face not only the problems left by colonial rule and world war, but also those left by the struggle for independence that they had to varying extents to undertake. The Japanese had ‘mobilised’ all kinds of support in their war effort, capricious though the results might be. The nationalist elite followed suit, even, when necessary, expanding armies, sponsoring guerrillas, forming youth movements, employing bully-boys. But while that might help to win independence, it deferred or worsened the problems it would face when it succeeded, and the task of state-building had to be resumed.

Building a nationalist movement is not the same as building a state: some of the commitments are indeed in contradiction. And so, too, are its unintended outcomes. A strong nationalism might facilitate building a state. It did not necessarily do so. It might indeed work the other way, providing a regime with the means to build itself rather than the state. Or it might provoke a ‘minority’. Or both.

The extent to which ‘confrontation’ sufficed and violence proved unnecessary varied from territory to territory. Sticking to their timetable, the US granted the Philippines independence in 1946. Unable to win the collaboration of the Burmans, the UK accepted Burma’s independence in 1948. In face of Malay opposition, it modified its plans for Malaya, and subsequently, to counter the ‘Emergency’, it set Malaya on the road to a far earlier independence than had been contemplated. In such cases the nationalist movement had only a limited history of ‘struggle’, with its advantages and disadvantages.

The other colonial powers fought to return. Yet even here there is a difference. Pressed by the opposition they faced, but also by their own Western allies, the Dutch abandoned the struggle after two ‘police actions’, and accepted the independence of Indonesia in 1949. To some
extent, therefore, independence was won by diplomacy as well as perdjuan-gan, diplomacy as well as struggle, by international action rather than national. Unable either to fight decisively or negotiate effectively, the French continued their struggle with the Vietnamese until 1954. But here there were other factors, too, geographical and chronological. Because the nationalist movement was also and became even more a communist movement, the US could not accept its success, while the Chinese communists, in power nearby from 1949, could not accept its defeat. A new struggle followed, concluded only in 1975.

In the Philippines there was no real struggle for independence. That meant, for good or ill, that the elite did not have a popular nationalist backing through which it might have reconstructed state and society. Nor, indeed, did it see any requirement to do so. It was faced with disorder and destruction. But its concept of ‘reconstruction’ was a limited one, and it was only after the Cold War had begun that the Americans pressed for land reform. Though it possessed a democratic structure – underpinned, furthermore, by some well-developed elements of civil society – the state remained the possession of the oligarchs.

Collaboration with the Japanese was to become an issue in postwar Philippine politics, and indeed to contribute to the emergence of a two-party system. But reality changed less than rhetoric. Collaboration was indeed not the main issue, but reconstruction. The US was expected to help towards rehabilitation in a substantial way, and that prospect, with apparently immense opportunities for ‘pork-barrel’, refocused Philippines politics along non-ideological lines. Members of the two parties that emerged did not greatly differ: they were aggregations of factions that the leaders tried to hold together. In fact the two-party system was, in O.D. Corpuz’ telling phrase, a one-and-a-half party system.¹

Supported by MacArthur, Roxas became president. Nothing like the shower of gold he had expected was forthcoming, however, and, re-emerging into politics, Laurel solidified opposition factions on a ‘nationalist’ basis, directed against the ‘parity’ for US citizens that the Americans had stipulated. In the 1949 elections he won support from the radicals and affiliates of the left-wing Hukbalahap, but the regime failed either to provide effective participation, or to offer land reform. Even President Ramon Magsaysay, taking up the reforms the Americans proposed, and much admired by them, failed to meet the expectations he had aroused in the barrios where, breaking precedent, he had campaigned among the people.

His failure to deliver the reforms he promised can be explained in the context of the regime within which he worked: the kind of elite support that he needed to become President prevented his carrying out when in office the expectations he had aroused in the barrios. That interpretation has generally influenced the judgement on his presidency. But the sub-
sequent history of the Philippines, and in particular of the Marcos phase, may modify an earlier point of view. The campaign in the barrios suggests a Bonapartist answer to the problems of the regime, rather than a democratic one. Instead of strengthening the democratic system by popularising it, it ran the risk of by-passing it, and of rendering it, not responsive, but redundant.

Hindsight, on the other hand, may tempt us too readily to discount the democratic features of the regime and to dismiss its potential. The separation of church and state was maintained; the press was strikingly free and keen to expose corruption; the civilians were clearly in control of the military, even if it played a more substantial role than used to be thought. The electorate expanded, partly as a result of the spread of literacy, and then also as a result of an easing of the qualification; and, though even in the 1964 election the president could not reach more than a third of the population in any one language, the turn-out was respectable. In 1953, the electorate was 5\text{.}5\text{m}; 78 per cent voted. In 1961 the figures were 9\text{.}m and 70 per cent. What was missing was an active attempt to modernise the way the population was increasingly participating in the electoral institutions and to realise their democratic potential. ‘[W]e must learn to make democracy more than a word, a slogan, a fetish’, Senator Claro M. Recto declared in 1952, ‘and to look upon it as a dynamic thing, a practical business.’

Instead, new elements in the elite were to look to a stronger executive, and President Marcos was to write old Bonapartism very large in his ‘New Society’.

Marcos also seemed to proffer economic development. Filipino nationalists had certainly associated development and independence. The interregnum and its aftermath had undermined the progress the Commonwealth had made. The independent Philippines, perhaps characteristically, seems rather to have slipped into industrialisation almost by accident: it was a by-product of exchange controls and import-licensing. Import substitute industrialisation was, however, a spent force by the early 1960s. Technocrats looked to Marcos for a new approach, though they were to be disappointed in the event.

In Burma independence was associated with industrialisation more purposefully, but not more successfully. It was a project that leaders of independent states tended to favour, since imperial rulers had not promoted it, and Burma, peripheral to India, was one of the least industrialised countries in Asia. But the endeavour may have been damaging, politically as well as economically.

Postwar reconstruction – Burma had, like the Philippines, been fought over twice – had itself been a subject of controversy between the British and the AFPFL. For some of the British – at least during the war – the interruption of imperial rule seemed to be an opportunity for doing better in future, an idea put forward by Sir R. Dorman-Smith, the Governor-in-exile.
The colonial state could be reconstructed and the basis of collaborative politics put on a more positive basis. The project was, of course, unrealistic. Both outside Burma and inside conditions were unfavourable. The concept required a retreat before an advance, so far as self-government was concerned. That was bound to be unacceptable to the AFPFL, particularly as its fortunes were boosted by collaboration with Mountbatten. SACSEA himself argued that Britain’s political future in Burma depended on continuing that collaboration, even though its invocation of the ‘people’s freedom’ suggested to the governor and others that it was fascist in style although anti-fascist in name.

Internationally, too, it would be hard to reject a movement that had turned to the Allies, even if it looked like the kind of movement that had led to war in the first place, and had worked with the Japanese until they had evidently lost. The Governor and the Burma Office in London looked for a more democratic Burma rather than a less democratic one, believing that democracy was a better guarantee of international peace and internal stability. For an imperial power to create a democratic system remained a paradox, however, and the attempt to do so in face of the AFPFL only consolidated its hold on Burma itself. On the other hand, it was impossible to use Indian troops to suppress a national cause. Doing so would make it even more difficult to accomplish a yet more important British task: coming to terms with Indian nationalism.

‘To stay in Burma longer, to clear the place up, to create the conditions for at least something approaching a responsible democracy . . . would have required more nerve and sinew than we seemed to have available for this forgotten satrapy in 1946 and 1947’, the late Louis Allen remarked.\(^3\) Even if Britain had been in a stronger position, however, it is questionable that it could have done more to create the ‘conditions’ for a democracy. Such endeavours, questionable prewar, were even more likely to be counter-productive postwar. The attempts to create a multi-party system were indeed disastrous. They strengthened AFPFL resolve, and revived the ambition of a prewar premier, Saw, who, frustrated even so, encompassed Aung San’s assassination in 1947. The AFPFL could only aim at independence, independence, moreover, outside the Commonwealth.

Nor did mass support – elaborately won by local organisation and boosted by adversity – guarantee that the new government could proceed with the task of state-building. Beset in its initial years by communist-led and ethnic unrest, the government of independent Burma sought to win popular support by programmes couched in terms both of left-wing socialism and of popular Burman tradition: the object was a welfare state, Pyidawtha (Happy Land). ‘Our heritage is proud and strong, but our true history lies ahead.’\(^4\) It had some success. One measure was electoral participation: 3.9m voted in 1956; 6.6m in 1960. The prosperity of the Korean War phase helped the government both to survive the civil war and to win support. But it also helped it to avoid the hard decisions that any
independent government has to make. The AFPFL did not build institutions that would help resolve the issues that a decline in prosperity would intensify. Its structure – which had been effective in confronting the colonial power – indeed made them more difficult to resolve.

From 1955 capital was in shorter supply. That encouraged tension among the leaders. Struggling for independence had in general been a unifying factor: deciding on the future of an independent country – on, for instance, the emphasis and form it should give to the industrialisation project – raised ideological issues about the nature of the state and the policies its government should pursue. They were, too, issues of allocation and priority, connected in turn with issues of power and patronage, potentially divisive and likely to promote factional rivalry. When the economic position deteriorated, the disputes became more serious, especially as AFPFL leaders had based their political support on promoting particular programmes on pork-barrel and log-rolling, as Frank Trager put it. The AFPFL, ostensibly a unified mass party, had itself no mechanism for handling such problems. Nor had the civil service, which had become politicised.

The AFPFL split into two factions, the ‘Clean’ AFPFL and the ‘Stable’ AFPFL, another one-and-a-half party system. The politicians then stepped outside the system, initially at least, however, with the idea that the military, almost Dorman-Smith-style, might put it right. The military intervention of 1958 was indeed temporary. Ne Win assumed the premiership on a caretaker basis. His regime worked against Nu, of whom Ne Win was a long-standing rival. Ostensibly its objective was, however, still to create conditions in which the democratic system could work more effectively, though it has also been suggested that one of the reasons the army returned power to the civilians was because it had experienced its own factionalism and feared the damage to its unity. In any case in the new elections, finally held in 1960, Nu was victorious, but, opposed to his religious and federalist policies, Ne Win carried out a second coup in 1962. This time the army’s intervention was not temporary: the aim was not caretaking, but the creation of a new regime.

The experience of the Japanese phase and of the British attempt to return helped the Burman leaders to aim at complete independence and to create a mass movement for that purpose. It was successful in winning independence, partly because it broke with communists, and so became more acceptable to the colonial power. Its leader was ‘martyred’ not by the colonial government, but by a rival jealous of his success and of the favour he had won from that government. The colonial power indeed shaped the movement both by its opposition and its concession. Accepting nationalism as the way of the future, it hoped that independence would bring stability. That, of course, depended at least in part not only on external economic and political factors, but on the ability of the elite to use and/or transform the support it had secured in the anti-colonial
struggle to build the institutions of an independent nation-state. The tasks were very different, and no training or experience was – or perhaps could ever be – offered. The AFPFL’s success was limited. Rather than persist with democratic forms, the Burman leadership turned to the army. But that was not going to build a state or a nation: only, like Seeckt’s Reichswehr, a state within a state.

The war had seemed to Dorman-Smith to offer a chance to do a better job in Burma. It seemed to offer in Malaya what Roland Braddell called ‘a God-sent chance to clear up all the country’s troubles’. That was, of course, again an extraordinary delusion: it was no such thing. At the end of the war, the British were, however, quick to drop the plan they had drawn up with it in mind. They abandoned the Malayan Union soon after they had inaugurated it, and established the Federation of Malaya in 1948. One essential aim remained, however: to create a viable, ultimately independent and democratic Malayan state.

The Union had been intended as a step in that direction. Leaving Singapore at least temporarily aside, it would draw Penang, Melaka, the FMS and the unfederated states together into a single entity, and grant citizenship to members of migrant communities as well as Malays. That provoked an unexpected reaction from Malay leaders and an unexpected degree of active popular support for them: what would their position be in a ‘Malayan’ Malaya? Outside factors also played their part. Concern lest the Malays – not merely radical Malays – should look to ‘Indonesia Raya’ was a powerful argument with the British for turning away from Union and towards Federation. Still, like the Union, excluding Singapore, the Federation would provide the political unity the British had sought. But it not only restored the states structure that the Union had more or less eliminated; it also curtailed the access to citizenship the Union had offered to the non-Malay ‘communities’.

The leaders of those communities had not offered the Union much support, but they strongly opposed the new Federation. Their alienation offered the communists an opportunity. Despite, or perhaps in part because of, its relatively strong position at the end of the war – boosted by collaboration in the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle – the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) had not presented the British with a direct political challenge. Now, possibly encouraged by the signals from the Cominform given at the Calcutta conference early in 1948, and ever more clearly realising that their hopes of securing power by peaceful means were being frustrated, the communists turned to violence. A spate of terrorist acts prompted the British to declare an ‘Emergency’ in June 1948 and even to ban the MCP. The uprising could be presented as a communist rather than a nationalist movement, and it received little sympathy or support outside Malaya. Its suppression, however, required a costly military effort, and even that was successful only because the British,
unlike their neighbours, put their use of violence in a viable political context.

As early as 1950, the Defence Secretary in London was clear that it might be necessary to concede independence to Malaya ‘prematurely’, in order to contain nationalism.8 Twenty-five years were really needed, Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General, said in June 1950, but ‘we must be mentally prepared’ to ‘accept a quickening of the pace’ because ‘if we were to resist the pace of change we should lose the support of Asian leaders’.9 The creation of an independent state became, more than usual even with the British, a cooperative and collusive process. The British encouraged moderate Chinese leaders, who set up the Malayan Chinese Association, and MacDonald took a special interest in the Communities Liaison Committee. These initiatives had unexpected results. Coupled with extensions of the democratic process, they promoted intra-elite collaboration, with popular support on a communal basis, and with rapid political advance as the objective. That Malays and Chinese could work together politically, at least at the elite level, was demonstrated at the Kuala Lumpur elections of 1952, and still more persuasively by the elections to the Legislative Council in 1955. Independence followed on 31 August 1957. The MCP had never got to the guerrilla phase, and had fallen back on terrorism. With independence ‘the last support was knocked away from the MCP’s pretensions to be the party of national liberation’.10

For Indonesian critics it all seemed too easy: independence had been won without a real struggle. There was indeed still much to be done. Could the elite compromise continue once independence was secured? Would they feel compelled still to win support from the masses on a communal basis? Would that become even more necessary? Could a modern state be built on such a fragile basis or would it become merely a regime? Could it be coupled with a sense of nationhood? Could economic prosperity assuage or overcome intercommunal tensions or would it increase them? The British had left behind some of the makings of a modern state: economic potential; infrastructure; education; administration. But they had also left behind a fragile kind of intercommunal politics. The task of the new government was not made easier by the need to deal with the future of Singapore and Borneo.

Singapore had not been included in the Malayan Union, nor in the Federation. For that there were a number of reasons. One was strategic. For the foreseeable future, it was thought, Britain would have to retain forces in the area, though also encouraging its Commonwealth partners, Australia and New Zealand, to contribute to the defence of what R.G. Menzies had called the ‘Near North’. Either way, Singapore would still be needed as a base. The inclusion of Singapore in Malaya might make the control of that base problematic. Certainly it would put Britain’s attempts at social and political engineering at risk, for Malays would be even more concerned for their future if the predominantly Chinese city were part of
the new state: unification would be ‘assisted by the non-inclusion of Singapore at any rate at the first stage’, as Sir Edward Gent, the first Governor of the Malayan Union, had put it.\footnote{11}

Yet the British – then sharing the common belief that small states could not survive – believed that ‘merger’ would have to come, and that the question was again one of timing. The view was shared by the People’s Action Party (PAP) that won the Singapore elections of 1959. Only ‘merger’, indeed, would offer Singapore an adequate market for the socialist economy it wished to develop. In the course of the struggles with the British in Singapore in the 1950s, it seemed that the political trend was continually to the left. The new rulers of Malaya began to contemplate the idea that the trend could be contained by the ‘merger’ they were at first unready to accept, and that was seized upon by the PAP leadership. Including the Singapore Chinese in the Federation could, moreover, be balanced by also including the three Borneo territories.

Yet, if both the British and their ‘opponents’ could see no future for a wholly independent Singapore, what the colonial government did, and what was in any case happening, made it more distinct. The government took steps towards political participation. Governor Gimson supported an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council – the best means, he argued in state-building style, for securing financial legislation and acceptance of income tax – including three elected by the Chambers of Commerce and six by popular ballot of registered voters who were British subjects. The result was ‘sluggish’: of a potential electorate of some 200,000, only 22,395 registered.\footnote{12} The only party to fight the election was the Progressive Party, ‘essentially . . . moderate’, ‘willing to co-operate with the British to promote steady constitutional reform’. The colonial authorities for their part saw the Progressives ‘as a reliable group, in whose hands the transition to stable self-government could be made in an orderly, peaceful fashion, without upsetting the economy’. The drawback was ‘public apathy’. The present constitution, they believed, had ‘fallen considerably short of Chinese aspirations’.\footnote{13} A more radical approach was the answer.

A commission under Sir George Rendel set out in 1953 to devise a ‘complete political and constitutional structure designed to enable Singapore to develop as a self-contained and autonomous unit in any larger organization with which it may ultimately become associated’. The object was ‘to encourage political awareness and responsibility among the electorate by putting effective control over domestic policy into the hands of a predominantly elected government, a “genuinely responsible body with real power and authority”, which would provide a base for further constitutional development’.\footnote{14} The British looked to a moderate and English-educated leadership. But vernacular-educated Singaporeans were open to the appeal of a Chinese nationalism refreshed by the triumph of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 and to the penetration of the communists. In the 1955 elections the newly formed Labour Front, led by David
Marshall, a Jewish lawyer, and Lim Yew Hock, a third generation Straits Chinese who had been a founder of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), won the largest number of seats, working on a platform of independence and a welfare state. It did not win a majority, and that prompted Marshall to emphasise his anti-colonial credentials. He claimed that ‘merdeka will rally the majority of the people against Communism’.

His successor, Lim, accepted a compromise.

The People’s Action Party (PAP) had taken a different course. Its leader, Lee Kuan Yew, an English-educated fourth generation Straits Chinese, had realised that the future belonged to those who could secure wide support, and he was ready to work, at least temporarily, with the radicals who could mobilise it. Yet at the same time he and the moderates benefited from the arrest of Lim Chin Siong, a left-wing colleague, and he kept open collusive contacts with the British. The new constitution of 1959 provided for a fully elected 51-seat assembly and compulsory voting. That meant mass politics. It also meant a victory for the PAP, which secured 43 seats.

It had advocated ‘merger’, sharing the British view that Singapore could not stand alone. Initially, indeed, the Malayan prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, was opposed. When he spoke in 1960 about enlarging the Federation, he had the future of the Borneo states in mind, in part no doubt because the Indonesian campaign for West Irian was becoming more militant. Including Singapore might threaten the inter-communal deal in the Federation. But – as a result of a by-election in Singapore – he came to think that the PAP government was a guarantee against something worse that would come about when the constitution was further revised in 1963. Including the Borneo territories might balance off the inclusion of Singapore. In May 1961 the Tunku spoke openly of ‘a closer understanding’ among the peoples of Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak. The British had made little progress with bringing the Borneo territories together since 1946, though it was not thought they could survive on their own: the development they had undergone, economic and political, tended indeed to make them more distinctive. Sarawak and North Borneo [Sabah] joined the new ‘Malaysia’ in 1963. Brunei stayed out.

The creation of Malaysia was both opposed by Indonesia, and, by that very means, supported. Its opposition was not, at least overtly, based on a claim to territories Malaysia incorporated, though there were occasional public references to Borneo and to Timor. Despite the radical hopes of mid-1945, Indonesia’s frontiers, nationalists generally agreed, were to be those of Netherlands India, no more and no less. In opposing Malaysia Indonesia, it seems, was acting not as an expansionist power, but as a state in a world of states. Its position in Southeast Asia was being changed by the construction of a new state. Its security and its influence were affected, and those were real issues even apart from their manipulation by internal
politics. The fact that the role of the colonial power seemed unusually large – so that Malaysia could be presented as a neo-colonial invention – presented, too, a contrast with the struggle through which, in part at least, Indonesia had won its independence.

Independent Indonesia had indeed been created more by conflict than by collusion between nationalists and the colonial power. The Dutch had recognised that, if they were to return to the Indies, they would need the support not only of the British, as in the past, but also of the Americans. They had not, however, realised the extent to which they would need to win the support of theIndonesians. Nor were they mentally – any more than physically – ready to return when the war ended and two days later Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed independence.

The Dutch government certainly rejected the approach of the last Governor-General, Tjarda van Starkenborgh, who believed that the first step was to restore imperial rule. That policy, as J.H. Logemann, the Minister for Overseas Territories, put it on 9 October 1945, was ‘simple in principle, being based on the assumption of an unshakeable Dutch authority standing above all groups and opinions, striving to achieve an objective fairness and justice’. It failed, however, ‘to take account of the relative strengths and interrelations of social forces at the present time’. Within the Indies, social forces had been stimulated that rendered untenable ‘a gradualist policy of the kind whereby the tempo was set by Dutch administrators and whereby they ultimately decided what was and what was not good for the Indies’. Moreover, ‘the whole world is concerned about what is happening . . . Under these circumstances, we cannot create a stable government without the positive cooperation of a fundamentally important number of Indonesian nationalists.’ But the Dutch were no longer able to find collaborators of the kind they sought.

The British had, of course, reached the conclusion that it was only on the basis of collaboration with the nationalists that the Europeans could return to Southeast Asia. The question was the terms of the collaboration. Could it admit the prospect of early independence? Dominant in the Allied South East Asia Command, the British were able to bring some pressure to bear. They offered the example of India and Burma. But, shocked by the strength of the nationalist movement, the Dutch found it difficult to deal with its leaders, particularly men like Sukarno who had ‘collaborated’ with the Japanese. In October Mountbatten looked for ‘some form of agreement with the Indonesian Republic’, but van Mook did not feel ‘that he could run the risk of Dutch prestige . . . being further lowered by making public promises and starting arrangements for conferences before sufficient strength to back his promises had arrived and while he was unable to offer protection to any Republicans of moderate outlook who might be willing to come and talk with him’. He was searching for a pattern of collaboration backed by strength, but at that point the
Dutch had none of their own, and their concept of moderates was not that even of the moderates themselves.

Nor, as Logemann implied, was the context what it had been. In the colonial period the Dutch had sustained their rule through such a pattern the more readily because the Indies had in a sense been isolated from the outside world by the Anglo–Dutch relationship: no state took up the Indonesians’ cause. Now the position differed outside Indonesia as well as inside. The guarantor of the old colonial system, Britain, had itself recognised the need to come to terms with nationalism. Other states, too, had more of an interest in Indonesia, the US, the Soviet Union, Australia, India. Indonesian leaders – Sjahrir among them – recognised that change, too. They differed among themselves as to the way it should be used to achieve independence, which powers should be relied upon, and the extent to which it should be combined with the use of force in reversal of the colonial pattern. The Dutch, for their part, failed to recognise or accept the change in attitude among their allies as well as among their subjects.

The national movement was to frame, insist on and attain the goal of complete independence, though within a Netherlands–Indonesian Union. It did that through a mixture of struggle and diplomacy, the former leaving behind a legacy of violence, heroism and sacrifice; the latter, less obvious, less celebrated, of shrewdness and persistence, accurate perceptions of the region and the world: the combination effective, though not achieved without internal dispute and acrimony. Independence, internationally recognised in what became the customary ways, including United Nations (UN) membership, was coupled at home with a sense that there was still much to do to build state and nation, while some options, such as federalism, were ruled out by their utilisation by the Dutch. New differences appeared within the elite. There were those who looked towards a patient state- and nation-building, and they had at least the temporary advantage offered by the prosperity brought by the Korean War. There were also those who wanted to meet the popular expectations roused by war and independence, not indeed by social revolution, but by a continuance of the revolutionary struggle against colonialism. The continuance of the Dutch connection through the Union and of the Dutch retention of West New Guinea gave them advantages. The creation of Malaysia – that eminently non-revolutionary state – was to be presented as another form of colonialism, which had, like earlier forms, to be ‘confronted’.

‘Indonesia’s fate ultimately depends on the fate of Anglo-Saxon capitalism and imperialism’, Sjahrir had argued in his pamphlet Our Struggle in early November 1945. Its power must not be mobilised behind the Dutch, who had ruled the Indies since the early nineteenth century ‘by favor of the English’. Indonesians should aim to increase world confidence ‘that we are capable of disciplined ordering of our state and nation’. A Sjahrir cabinet was installed on 14 November. He impressed Lt. Governor-General van Mook, and talks followed. Its installation was also an assertion
that Indonesia was qualified to be a nation among nations, designed to impress the British, not merely the Dutch. Sjahrir’s diplomacy was criticised in the Republic by those who believed in struggle. He had to contain them, but also to show that they were a threat of something worse, and that his level of collaboration was thus the best the Dutch, and their long-standing supporters, the British, could hope for.

Back in the Netherlands van Mook articulated a federal concept, designed to rationalise a scheme in which the Republic would be accepted in Java and Menangkabau, and the Dutch concentrated on Borneo, Sulawesi and Maluku, where they would face far less opposition. Indonesia, he also argued, should have its own army and be represented in the UN: Indonesians believed that the Dutch had neglected their defence in 1941–2; and neighbouring countries had already won representation in the UN. Cabinet colleagues criticised proposals that seemed to threaten the unity of the Dutch empire. There was also a dispute over timing. Van Mook wanted to stipulate a time ‘after which Indonesia could decide on its own destiny’. Logemann and Van Roojen, minister without portfolio, felt it was important to stipulate conditions that must first be fulfilled. A ministerial committee drafted a formula to present to the British. It was very different from van Mook’s proposals. Indonesia would be organised as a federal commonwealth under a Dutch Governor-General, who would appoint ministers bound to implement policies determined by the Volksraad. The commonwealth would be a partner with the Netherlands in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. That would have a cabinet made up of eight Dutch and five commonwealth ministers, and it would administer foreign affairs for the entire kingdom. The Kingdom would support Indonesia’s admission to the UN. After 25 years, the structure of the kingdom would be reviewed on the basis of a voluntary partnership.

The reason for presenting a formula to the British was to persuade them to retain their troops in Indonesia – they were anxious to withdraw them, particularly as the majority were Indians – and to continue their support for the return of the Dutch – for which they felt some moral obligation. At a meeting with British ministers at Chequers at Christmas 1945 van Mook argued that conditions should be created under which Sjahrir would feel safe from extremist pressure. ‘He could then be squarely faced with the choice of accepting or rejecting the proposals of the Netherlands Government as the basis of negotiation. If he rejected them, it would mean that the extremists had won the day.’ The proposals, though tabled, were not, however, discussed. A communiqué was issued, declaring that the British government was acquainted with the ‘consistent and liberal policy’ of the Dutch, and affirmed its obligation ‘to establish without delay conditions of security’ in which the Indies government could continue negotiations with ‘representative Indonesians’.

Back in Batavia, van Mook sought to make the Dutch proposals more attractive, dropping the title of Governor-General and abandoning the
25-year period. No mention, however, was made of the Republic, and the proposals elicited a lukewarm response. On 26 February van Mook tried to strengthen Sjahir’s hand by an elucidation that promised that the period of transition would end ‘within the lifetime of the present generation’, and presented the Crown representative as responsible to a government of the Netherlands in which Indonesian cabinet members would have seats. Sjahir, however, met strong opposition to continued negotiations and resigned. Forming a second cabinet, he returned to Batavia, insisting on a treaty that would recognise the Republic.

Early in March van Mook submitted four articles for consideration. Under these the Netherlands government would recognise the Republic as exercising de facto authority in Java except in areas under Allied military administration. The Republic would agree to the landing of Dutch troops. It would collaborate with the Netherlands government in the creation of an Indonesian federative Free State of which the Republic would be a partner. The Netherlands government would consult with the Republic and representatives of the areas outside Republican control on the political structure of the future Indonesian state and its relations with the Netherlands Kingdom. Indonesian delegates in Batavia sought recognition of the Republic’s authority over Sumatra and South Sulawesi as well as Java, but no longer of all Indonesia. In discussions the Dutch representatives accepted only Sumatra, but agreed that the appointment of Indonesian representatives to the discussions about the future Indonesian state from non-Republican areas would be carried out in consultation with the Republic. Van Mook himself did not accept those points, but thought the positions of the two parties were sufficiently close to justify continuing the discussions in the Netherlands.

Van Mook was, however, unable to win support even for points he was ready to concede. About to face an election at home, the Dutch ministers did not wish to be accused of dismantling the kingdom. They met the Republican delegation at a country house in the Hoge Veluwe in Gelderland, but told them they could not accept a treaty, that, of course, implying that the Republic was a state. Moreover, the draft protocol the Dutch submitted instead limited the Republican claim to Java and denied the Republic a voice in the appointment of representatives from outside Java. It used the term ‘Commonwealth’, not ‘Free State’, which, Logemann claimed, implied that Indonesia would be freed of any links with the Kingdom. Expecting substantive negotiations, the Republicans were disappointed, and the talks got nowhere.

After the Hoge Veluwe talks, the Dutch cabinet considered a draft protocol. It spoke of a federal free state of Indonesia, to be part, with the Netherlands, Surinam and Curacao, of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Under it the Dutch government would recognise the Republic de facto in most of Java and take note of its claim to Sumatra. Sumatra, like other parts of Indonesia, was to have an opportunity to indicate its wishes on its
status in the free state. The Republic was to collaborate in building that state. It was to maintain order and to receive Allied and Dutch troops, with the task of relieving prisoners of war and internees and removing Japanese. There were also provisions for the appointment of delegates to an imperial conference. Those from Sumatra would be appointed by the Dutch after discussions with the Republic. The Republic would be informed about those from other territories. The protocol was presented to Sjahrir on 19 May, two days after the elections, with the cabinet now a caretaker government. Sjahrir’s proposal, put forward in June, envisaged a treaty between the Dutch and the Republic, recognised de facto in Java and Sumatra. The Free State was to be in alliance with the Netherlands, not part of it, and the word ‘federal’ was not included. The two parties were moving further apart, not coming together.

The new Dutch cabinet set up a commission-general to send to the Indies. Its guidelines, relayed to the British on 6 August, were not very new. The Netherlands government would be prepared to recognise the Republic as the de facto administration of Java, provided it would participate in a political structure to be established in Indonesia, in turn to be a full partner in a reconstructed Kingdom of the Netherlands. A preliminary survey would determine whether the population of Sumatra wished to join the Republic or preferred its own autonomous membership. The members arrived in Batavia on 18 September, and the third Sjahrir cabinet was formed on 2 October. Lord Killearn, Britain’s Special Commissioner in Southeast Asia, was present as a third party and declared the first tripartite meeting open on 7 October. The British troops were due to leave the following month.

At van Mook’s suggestion the commission set out goals for the negotiation. The ultimate goal was to be a Union. Willem Schermerhorn, its leader, believed the Dutch crown must head it. Sjahrir objected to its heading a voluntary and equal partnership, but Schermerhorn assured him that it would not be a superstate: the Netherlands itself would be opposed to that. In return for accepting the Union, Sjahrir was offered de facto recognition of the Republic in Java, and in subsequent discussion Sumatra was added. The Republic agreed in return to a proviso that any territory would have the right to opt for a separate status in the proposed United States of Indonesia (USI), the federal state, which the two parties were to cooperate in forming by 1 January 1949. In Linggadjati the Dutch met Sukarno and Hatta. Sukarno accepted the draft when van Mook agreed to use the word ‘sovereign’ to describe the USI, instead of ‘free’. Back in Batavia the Republic secured the addition of an arbitration clause.

On their way back from a visit to Indonesia in May 1947, Dutch ministers told MacDonald that Sjahrir was failing to carry his people with him in ‘loyal implementation of Linggadjati’. An ultimatum was issued on 27 May, requiring a response by 10 June. Its basis was the collaboration of the Republic in setting up the new structure, its acceptance of an interim
federal government alone able to conduct foreign relations, a joint gendarmerie, and a joint organisation to control imports and exports. A conciliatory response was met only by a new ultimatum. Sjahirir was forced to resign, but Sukarno sent another conciliatory response. Van Mook now put written questions, seeking 100 per cent response: did the Republic accept the Crown’s authority in the interim government? Did it agree that the USI was sovereign, not the republic? Did it accept joint responsibility for law and order? Did it agree to the return of estates? The Republic’s response was positive, except over the gendarmerie. ‘In the old days’, as a British official in The Hague put it, ‘a unilateral request to be fulfilled 100 per cent backed by threat of force and an ultimatum might have had some effect but not so in the new era of relationship with Eastern peoples’. Sjarifuddin’s new government offered some concessions, but not enough. A ‘police action’ began on 20 July. It secured the estates, but it was politically counter-productive, not only in Indonesia but outside.

It brought about the intervention of the UN, though in the moderate form proposed by the US of tendering good offices, through a committee of three, to help the parties reach a settlement. Good offices did not, in fact, suffice, and the committee put proposals to the parties at Christmas. Those included provision for free elections and a constitutional convention. A further agreement was finally signed on board the USS Renville on 17 January 1948. It provided that sovereignty should remain with the Netherlands until, after a stated interval, it handed over to the USI, but that the Netherlands might confer rights and responsibilities on a provisional federal government. The USI was to be a sovereign and independent state in equal partnership with the Kingdom of the Netherlands in a Netherlands–Indonesian Union, headed by the monarch. The Republic would be a state within the USI. Within 6 to 12 months of signature, a plebiscite would be held to determine whether the populations of Java, Madura and Sumatra wished to form part of the Republic or of another state in the USI, though the two parties might agree on an alternative method for ascertaining their will. A constitutional convention would follow, but any state that decided not to ratify it could negotiate a special relationship with the USI and the Kingdom.

The Dutch pressed ahead with creating provisional federal institutions and states, while the Republic wanted a complete understanding on the form of the USI before a discussion of transitional measures. Negotiations foundered over the question of commanding the armed forces during the transitional government. The Dutch government announced that agreement was impossible, and proceeded to set up an interim federal government. The Republic was given an ultimatum on joining it. The 24-hour deadline passed, and the second ‘police action’ began. It would result, Dirk Stikker anticipated, in the ‘elimination of hot-heads and obstructionists’, the emergence of ‘genuinely democratic government’ in the Republic, cooperation with the federalists and the formation of an interim government.
The result was, however, quite different. The Republican leaders were taken prisoner, and the Dutch occupied strategic sites, but guerrilla warfare continued, throwing power to the military leaders, and still more to local units. It also affected the loyalty of the federalists, and so did the international reaction. That was far more intense than on the occasion of the first ‘police action’, partly because in the mean time the worldwide communist threat had grown, while the Republic was, as the American Acting Secretary of State put it, ‘the only Government in the Far East to have crushed an all-out communist offensive’, the outbreak at Madiun in September. Despite its European priorities, the US threatened the Netherlands with a reduction in Marshall aid and a deferral of military equipment assistance. The Dutch had no alternative but to return to negotiations, now on a more unfavourable basis than ever. At The Hague Round Table conference of 1949, they conceded the independence of the federal Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI) without either firmly establishing the Netherlands–Indonesia Union or securing useful guarantees of their interests. Indeed, they could secure the necessary two-thirds majority in the States-General only by not transferring West New Guinea.

The subsequent struggle over the future of that territory was related to the struggle for Indonesia’s independence in more than one way. It was not simply a question of a successor-state’s claim to inherit previous frontiers. It was a legacy of the struggle itself. Independence had been won by perdujuan and diplomasi. The former had involved a mass backing and offered a means of mobilising it. It had won, partly, however, because of favourable external factors, which nevertheless were hard for nationalists openly to celebrate. It was easier as a result for those whom Herb Feith called ‘solidarity-makers’ to claim success, and harder for nation-state builders to pursue a more sober course. In the Netherlands the issue became entrenched in the politics of another nation-state, presented with the prospect of finally lowering its flag in Asia.

Ho Chi Minh’s proclamation of independence was coupled with an appeal for foreign support, even evoking, albeit modifying, the American declaration of independence. The Western powers did not respond, even to the extent that they did in Indonesia. The French – all the more, perhaps, because of their humiliation in the European war – were determined to regain their empire: few in French politics could advocate anything that looked like abandoning it. The British wanted them to return, but were unable or unwilling to press them to the extent that they pressed the Dutch to adopt a more positive approach to nationalism. Nor – despite Ho’s appeal – were the US ready to intervene on his side. Even if he was a nationalist, he was also a communist. The French encouraged that view of him, and the development of the Cold War turned American indifference into hostility. Ho could now look for support to the Chinese
communists, who proclaimed their new republic in October 1949. That had its drawbacks, however. Increased aid flowed across the frontier, but the US became more determined to avoid another ‘loss’ to communism. For their part the Chinese, though unable to accept Ho’s defeat, were also unwilling to endorse an outcome that would mean Vietnam’s dominance over Indo-China.

More than in any other Southeast Asian countries that sought independence, the aspiration to create a unified nation-state could in the Vietnamese case draw on an earlier sense of unity, created by the monarchy in face of and in partial imitation of the Chinese empire. Even when Vietnam had been de facto divided, the Nguyen and Trinh regimes had acknowledged a single emperor. Making Cochin-China a separate colony was a French innovation, and the divisiveness brought by the colonial power only intensified the wish to regain Vietnam’s unity and to consolidate it in the new form of a nation-state. But French rule had nurtured a communist rather than a nationalist leadership, and the short Japanese interlude had not reversed the trend. The basis on which a nation-state might become independent was thus at odds with its international position. The US indeed sought to prevent its success. It was not until 1975 that the Vietnamese – after a long and bitter struggle – could establish a unified state. Then it had to tackle the incorporation of the people, including those who had supported a non-communist regime in the south. It had also to take account of the embattled idealism of its fighters, while coping with an outside world rather different from that in which other Southeast Asian regimes had become independent.

Two nationalisms had faced each other in 1945, the Vietnamese on the one hand, the French on the other. The combination of defeat and humiliation with aspirations to grandeur made for a rigidity of approach among the French, which was supported by the obstinacy of the colons and the failure of weak postwar governments to control their subordinates overseas. It was also reinforced by the traditional French approach to empire. Unlike the British, the French could not readily envisage an association of autonomous peoples or dominions. ‘Lacking any sort of powerful dynastic bond such as England and the dominions possess in the king, France and her possessions, in order that their association or their union be durable, needed to develop between them a bond as strong if not stronger, but a republican bond.’ French citizenship was awarded to non-Europeans, though in a limited way, and the citizens represented in the French Assembly: in 1936 it included 19 deputies from colonial areas. There was no written constitution that covered the colonial possessions. The postwar attempt to draw one up only emphasised the problems: the result was both self-contradictory and formulaic.

It took place, indeed, at the same time as France was negotiating with the Vietnamese at Fontainebleau. Should Vietnam be one state? should it be ‘free’ or ‘independent’? By undermining the confidence of moderates
in the second constituent assembly that a French Union could be based on free consent, the arguments at Fontainebleau contributed to the adoption of a more rigid structure. A loose Union might be but an antechambre de sortie. In turn the constitutional discussions made for rigidity at Fontainebleau. The assembly debates also enhanced the public’s concern and deepened its emotional commitment. ‘National feelings, whipped up by the war, were becoming extremely irritable as soon as it appeared that France’s future as a great power was at stake’, Philippe Devillers commented. ‘Public opinion, while ready to accept any transformation – even a radical one – in the colonial system, was, on the other hand, absolutely unwilling to permit the slightest attempt at secession. . . . But to the public, the word “independence” inevitably evoked the idea of secession.’

After the military clash at Haiphong in November 1946, Saigon wrote off Ho Chi Minh, but Paris still hoped for a compromise. Philippe Baudet, chief of the Pacific division at the Quai, told Ashley Clarke at the British embassy that ‘the French Government had decided to push on with the negotiations begun in Paris even if this course entailed the use of forcible measures to maintain the situation in the meanwhile. They believed that Ho Chi Minh genuinely desired to reach an understanding with France although he had been somewhat overwhelmed by the elements of the extreme left.’ Separating Ho from his organisation was, however, an unrealistic notion, not unlike the notion of supporting Sjahrir or Hatta by suppressing extremists. Moreover, Jean Sainteny, who had negotiated the pre-Fontainebleau Franco–Vietnamese accords and was now sent back to Indo-China, was given nothing to offer.

Meeting in Haiphong on 16–17 December, French military leaders decided that the Viet Minh government must be destroyed or weakened. That government had, after the Haiphong incident, adopted a plan for a rising in Hanoi, followed by a withdrawal. It was not, however, anxious to carry it out and it certainly sought to avoid incidents. Incidents increased, however, and war began on 19 December. The ‘Tonkinese Vespers’ were blamed on the Viet Minh, but the French must share responsibility. They were tempted to use force. Misjudging the political context within which they now had to work, they alienated those who might have collaborated with them and destroyed the ground on which they might have stood. Yet the Vespers began a war that they could not win.

In March 1947 a new High Commissioner, Emile Bollaert, sent Paul Mus to Hanoi. The French, Baudet said, hoped to group ‘some more acceptable elements’ round Ho Chi Minh, but the terms they offered were unacceptable. Bollaert turned to the former emperor Bao Dai, but it remained difficult for the French to offer enough independence for a regime alternative to Ho’s to have any chance of mobilising support. In the Baie d’Along accords of June 1948 France recognised the independence of Vietnam, ‘whose right it is to bring about freely its unity’. Vietnam
adhered to the French Union and agreed to respect French rights and interests. Once a provisional government had been established, representatives of France and Vietnam would agree on arrangements in the cultural, diplomatic, military, economic, financial, and technical areas. In March 1949 an agreement was annexed to an exchange of letters between Bao Dai and President Auriol. It offered, as the British Foreign Office saw it, ‘token rather than real independence’, unlikely ‘to entice away from Ho Chi Minh those nationalist elements . . . who are opposed to a Marxist programme for Viet Nam and yet who wished to see a genuinely independent state’.33

Though recognised by the UK, the US and others, Bao Dai’s regime never secured a firm hold. The Americans, persuaded by their experience in the Korean war, were convinced that they could nevertheless create a stable non-communist regime in the south. ‘[I]n the land of the blind, the one-eyed are kings’, President Eisenhower told the National Security Council in October 1954. ‘What we want to do is simply to authorize O’Daniel to use up to x millions of dollars to produce the maximum number of Vietnamese units which Prime Minister Diem can depend on to sustain himself in power.’34 Much more was needed. A state had to be created as well as an army, and in face of nationalism, rather than with the support of it.

By the late 1950s most Southeast Asian states had secured independence, Laos and Cambodia included, while Thailand had avoided losing it, despite declaring war on the UK in 1942 and taking over parts of Burma and Malaya in 1943. Though traditions and circumstances differed, they faced similar tasks, building states and building nations. Too often, their leaders fell back on building regimes.
Nationalism – idea not ideology, taking many forms – has not only been means to create a state: it has also been a means to sustain one, evoked in a struggle with other states or as a means to consolidate a regime or both. Independent Southeast Asian states deployed it in all those ways. The Thais, who had never lost their independence, had employed it in modernising their monarchy. The newly independent states, too, found it a useful instrument, though it was sometimes more a means of evading change than facilitating it. The end of Japanese and colonial rule left none of the states well equipped to manage independence, and it was tempting for elites to consolidate the regime of the day through nationalism rather than to engage in effective state-building. Intentionally or not, they might, however, help in nation formation.

The imperial powers had engaged in state-building, though they could never create what were now seen as real states, only transitional ones. That task could be done solely by independent leaders, standing for independent ‘peoples’. Yet what imperial rule did could be more or less useful to an independent state, whether or not it was so intended: it could provide an administrative structure, though that, and even more its personnel, might have been discredited by association with the rule of the colonial power; it could provide transport infrastructure, economic development, and education, though none of these might be ‘national’ in range or focus. What colonial rulers permitted their subjects to do, and what they provoked them into doing, might help to form the state and the nation as well. At independence there was still much left to do, and there was something to undo.

‘[T]he transfer of sovereignty from a colonial regime to an independent one is more than a mere shift of power from foreign hands to native ones’, writes Clifford Geertz; ‘it is a transformation of the whole pattern of political life, a metamorphosis of subjects into citizens.’ The administrative structure would be too ‘colonial’ in structure and spirit, education too limited, communications, agriculture and industry too oriented to the interests of the imperial power. Its practices, intentionally or otherwise, may have been divisive, and its departure, though perhaps the occasion of
a unifying struggle, may have sharpened the apprehension of minorities at
the prospect of majority rule. How should the task be completed? How
should these things be changed? If the idea of ‘nation’ provided no ideo-
logy, it provided ever more prominent example. What other idea could
form the basis of a modern independent state in a world of states increas-
ingly independent and ‘national’ in demeanour? After independence
intellectuals and rulers had ‘to create a nation to legitimize the state’.2
Nationalism would modernise Burma, claimed J.S. Furnivall, long-term
guru of the young Burmans, making it possible ‘to capture the imagina-
tion of the people and to create a new environment and a new common
society’.5

Even so, what the colonial powers had done and what had happened
under their rule had left a legacy, some at least of which could be turned
to account. There was something to ‘transfer’, if not ‘power’. ‘[T]he state
in Africa and Asia is a purely imported product, a pale imitation of the
diametrically opposite European political and social systems, a foreign
body which is moreover overweight, inefficient and a source of violence.’4
The judgement is too generalised, and makes too little reference not only
to precolonial but to colonial history. Nationalism, as Breuilly points out,
is more highly developed where a colonial state has been developed ‘as a
public realm’, and the nationalist movement organised itself ‘through as
much as against the institutions of the colonial state’. Some colonial states
in Southeast Asia had gone further than others. But none of the ‘new’
states were in the condition of those in Africa, where tribalism resulted
from ‘a desperate search for bases of political action in the absence of
those appropriate to taking over the colonial state’.5 Westernised elites in
Southeast Asia generally tried, say Chan and Evers, to perpetuate ‘the
political system of a somewhat “decolonized colonialism” ’.6 But even they
may be too dismissive.

Though the idea of ‘nation’ had been adopted in Southeast Asia,
however, nations themselves did not exist: only concepts of them. Displac-
ing the French monarchy in the name of the people, the revolutionaries
of the late eighteenth century still had to go on to create the nation they
had assumed to exist: their answers were innovative and improvisatory,
though precedental; their course erratic and violent, involving civil strife
and insurrection and foreign war. Now the Southeast Asian states had no
need to improvise: they had only to imitate. But that involved great stress,
too: in some respects more. The model had been laid down and its iter-
tion had made it prescriptive. Within the frontiers innovation was limited,
and expansion beyond them was ruled out: they, too, were prescribed.
The Southeast Asian states had to become nation-states like other nation-
states in a world that was clearly becoming a world of nation-states. The
outcome was determined, but the method, with its advantages and
disadvantages, could not be replicated.

It was thus necessary to create the nation – to which there was no
conceivable alternative – at the same time as building the state – which could only be done on a national basis. To create a state that might be inherited by a nation or by leaders standing for a nation is not the same as building a nation. What the ruling powers had done, together with the unanticipated outcomes of what they did, helped to produce an elite that aspired to replace them, and to call on the masses to confront them. That extended the realm of the national idea, but it stopped short of creating a nation, even in those cases in which the resistance of imperial powers prompted a commonality of opposition. It may have created no more than a mass movement, with heightened expectations attached to the concept of independence, less able to confront the problems of the future than the problems of the past.

The task of state-building had become the task of nation-state-building. The fact that the nation had to be built at the same time as the state did not make for flexibility, but the reverse. There was, too, a time factor. Colonial rulers had discredited the notion of preparing for independence. They had made it seem but an excuse for delaying it. It is after all impossible to offer experience in conducting an independent government, though some may have got nearer to it than others. In any case there was now a sense of urgency. Independence had been secured. It had been secured in a world where states had to provide for their own security and development, though possibly in alliance or cooperation with others, and there was no time to be lost. Not only had the masses been inspired by promises. The system of states was itself an ‘international’ system. Rivalry and insecurity had promoted the concept of the nation-state in the nineteenth century. They were still factors – albeit in different circumstances and different senses – after World War II. A state had to provide security and to meet its obligations to other states as well as to its people. Those that could not, it was at first thought, should not exist. Even that problem was later bypassed.

Given the legacy of a divisive colonial past, contemporary examples, the pressures from inside and outside, aspiration and insecurity, governments put a premium on strong government. Maintaining territorial integrity was, of course, the essential task in a world of independent states. To realise a better future through economic development required, too, a strong government, able to create stable conditions, to negotiate for aid in the Cold War world, and to engage in planning, then seen as a necessity for development post-depression, post-Stalin, postwar. In such a context less attention was given to devolution than centralisation. The creation of ‘national’ military forces – more or less a novelty, though in some countries owing much to the Japanese phase – was justified by the need for security that all nation-states felt. But – as in independent Thailand – they also assumed an ambitious internal role. Unless civil institutions were built up, an army might extend its domestic range even beyond the constabulary function. It would, like Seeckt’s Reichswehr, assume a role as
guardian of the state, not merely or even mainly, as its protector, a state within a state: it would assume an independent role at home, as much as, or more than, defend the independence of the state abroad, itself in fact seldom threatened in the Cold War period. The entrenchment of the army indeed made it more difficult to build up civil institutions that might counter or contain or control it.

Nationalist movements were in some sense implicitly and explicitly committed to democracy. Like the French revolutionaries, they had claimed power in the name of the ‘people’, and the imperial governments had been able to resist their claim only by arguing, if not arranging, that they were not ready. In what ways, however, were the ‘people’ now to be involved? They had been mobilised in mass movements, not themselves always squarely aiming at a modern nation-state. But how was this ‘power’ to be ‘transferred’ into the organs of a nation-state? It was difficult to argue – as Sun Yat Sen had done, and indeed Quezon and the Promoters of the 1932 coup in Siam – that the people were not ‘ready’. Europe, however, offered more than one example: that of the Führer or the Duce who stood for the people, rather than invited their participation, ‘a perverse offshoot from democratic roots’, as Rupert Emerson put it;7 that of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Communist party version; and the real thing, nurtured with difficulty even in fertile soil. The people might be mobilised in mass parties, nationalist, communist or otherwise, provided a single leader could impose agreement or several leaders work out compromises among themselves, and at the same time continue to retain popular support. The alternative was more difficult, yet a better guarantee not only of the rights implicit in a democratic claim, but of stability and development. International opinion tended at first to endorse the argument that development came first, chronologically and in terms of priority.8 Arguably that was wrong. It was never too soon to begin the practice of democracy that independence mandated.

The colonial states, moreover, had not left the ground entirely unprepared. Subjection to colonial rule as a school of democracy was not entirely a paradox, Emerson thought, even if part of the argument rested less on the positive contributions of colonial rule than on ‘the democratic implications of the nationalist drive to oust the colonial rulers’.9 Some of the colonial states had initiated democratic practice, though little had been done to provide underpinning from a civil society. Independent Southeast Asian leaders were often too ready to dispose of what they had inherited than build upon it. If democracy was attempted, it was impatiently, with little of Rizal’s give and take. The legacy of the colonial state was not amplified, its civil society institutions, such as they were, not elaborated, participation not increased. Instead, its more repressive legislation was re-utilised. Despite the rhetoric, the focus was often on the regime, not the state or the nation.

The mass of the people had high expectations of independence, partly
born of Southeast Asia’s popular millennialism. To a limited extent, those expectations were met, but only at times of prosperity, and only spasmodically. And prosperity did not necessarily alleviate asperity. If, again, the periods of prosperity won time, it was not used. The Korean War boom only postponed dealing with the problems of Indonesia and Burma, for example. The longer period of prosperity initiated by shifts in the industrial economies of the US and Japan was again used to build patronage-based power, but not to create participatory institutions. Arguably ‘development’ damaged them, though really making them more necessary: ‘transparency’ is not sufficient on its own. Those who are or believe themselves to be deprived – relatively or absolutely – may be driven into rebellion, or – perhaps further provoked by repressive measures – even into secessionism. The claims the national rulers had made are then repeated against them.

Writing on decolonisation in the 1950s, Sir Ivor Jennings commented somewhat irascibly on self-determination – ‘On the surface it seemed reasonable: let the People decide. It was in fact ridiculous because the people cannot decide until someone decides who are the people.’ In fact, it was decided in the process of decolonisation: the people were those within the colonial boundaries. They had to be turned into citizens, a process for which, writing on Thailand, Michael Kelly Connors has coined the term ‘democrasubjection’, ‘the subjection of people to imaginary forms of their own rule’. That might involve ethnic standardisation, for which, as Vic Lieberman has pointed out, there was ‘no intellectual impulse’ without a theory of popular sovereignty. A sense of politico-ethnic community – constructed or not – was compatible with a monarchical or colonial state. It could be in contention with a nation-state.

Newly independent states had indeed to build on such legitimacy as antecedent nationalist movements had acquired. Monarchs had focused loyalty: how was it to focus on ‘the people’, majority or minorities? It was a question the colonial regimes could hardly answer, but on which Western precedent gave some help: you needed flags, anthems, symbols, rituals, histories, museums, national days. Instituting them could be divisive in itself, but, even if not, they would not be sufficient. To build a modern nation-state and to promote development, it was necessary also to take decisions over language and over education. Those might be more divisive still. There were no simple answers, but some Southeast Asian regimes did better than others. Did they go beyond regime-building and carry out the nation-building of which they boasted? A regime might promote national language, national feeling, national flag, national anthem. But without real political participation, they might be hollow, even if not accompanied with discrimination against, say, Chinese ‘aliens’. Most countries introduced constitutions that provided for it. Were they committed to it?

‘A constitution is an instrument by which settled and peaceful procedures may govern the political life of a state’, Minogue writes. The prototype – and most successful – is that of the US. He draws attention to the
political bargaining needed in a new nation(-state) composed of several peoples, such as Kenya or Malaysia, which, as he says, makes the provisions for suspending and amending the constitution ‘the crux of nationalist politics’. All the new Southeast Asian states adopted written constitutions, as indeed had Siam before the war. Not all were based, or needed to be based, on the explicit bargains that Minogue has in mind. They were, however, evidence of the aspirations of the leaders. They generally invoke the people. Their provisions and the implementation of those provisions are evidence of their readiness or otherwise to develop the involvement of the people. A constitution, moreover, is insufficient in itself. Political conventions are also necessary, unwritten as much as written, though in only a few countries do they actually substitute for a written constitution.

Three times independent, the Philippines has had more than three constitutions. ‘Filipino citizens!’ proclaimed Aguinaldo’s manifesto on 31 October 1896. ‘We are not a savage people, let us follow the example of civilized European and American nations. . . . Let us march under the Flag of the Revolution whose watchwords are Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity!’ A revolutionary government would establish order as the movement gained headway. ‘The form of government shall be similar to that of the United States, in spirit, deriving its powers from the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.’ Against the opposition of Bonifacio, the government was established at Tejeros in March 1897. A provisional constitution for the Republic of the Philippines – known as the Biyaknabato constitution, prepared by Felix Ferrer and Isabela Artacho – drew on the Constitution of Jimaguayu, Cuba, of 1895, adding four articles that constituted something of a bill of rights. It was adopted for two years by ‘the representatives of the Revolution’, acting in the name of the republic ‘and by the power delegated by the Filipino people, interpreting faithfully their desires and ambitions’.

When he returned to the Philippines after the US–Spain war, Aguinaldo established a dictatorial government, displacing the Biyaknabato constitution. In June, despite Mabini’s caution, he became convinced of the need to declare independence as a means of rallying support. The declaration – markedly more grandiloquent than the one Sukarno and Hatta were able in the shadow of Japanese rule to issue in Jakarta decades later – asserted

the independence of our territory and the recovery of our sovereignty. . . . And summoning as witness of the rectitude of our intentions, the Supreme Judge of the Universe, and under the protection of the Mighty and Humanitarian North American Nation, we proclaim and solemnly declare, in the name and by authority of the inhabitants of all these Philippine Islands, that they are and have a right to be free and independent. . . .
Mabini’s influence was more evident in the decision on 23 June to abandon the dictatorial government for a revolutionary government. That also involved establishing a Congress, which convened in September, electing Pedro A. Paterno its president. Aguinaldo invited the members – in words prepared by Felipe Buencamino – ‘to write with their votes the immortal book of the Filipino constitution as the supreme expression of the national will’. Mabini feared that the conservatives – currently rallied to the cause – wanted to limit Aguinaldo’s power, even at a time of crisis. His draft was indeed rejected. A new one, prepared by Felipe Calderon and Cayetano Arellano, drew on the constitutions of Belgium, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Brazil and France. Members of Congress were to ‘represent the whole nation’, but the electorate was to be, as specified in a decree of 18 June, those ‘most distinguished by their education, social position, and honorable conduct’. Calderon indeed wanted to limit ‘the military element, whose ignorance was indisputable’. The constitution also emphasised the role of the legislature rather than the executive. It was proclaimed on 23 January 1899. ‘There is nothing lacking, therefore, in order for us to be recognized and admitted as a free and independent nation’, Aguinaldo declared.

In meetings with the Americans in Manila in January, the Filipino commissioners sought recognition of their independence, though prepared, on that basis, to accept an American protectorate. The Americans claimed that Spanish sovereignty had passed to them as a result of war. They denied that the Filipinos exercised sovereignty: they had not been recognised as belligerent or independent and could hardly be said to have divested themselves of the character of subjects. ‘Sovereignty is a mere abstract right of a state to exercise jurisdiction over all matters arising within its territorial limits and to enter into relations with other states and it can hardly be said to exist in the absence of Government which is the means through which jurisdiction must be exercised and sovereignty manifested.’ Sovereignty, the Filipinos echoed earlier American words, ‘is inalienable and issued directly from the people’. The Filipinos ‘had decidedly expressed their will of exercising, as they actually exercise their own sovereignty and destroyed by force of arms the controlling power and established a government by means of which they announced to the world the exercise of their full jurisdiction. Therefore, the right of the Filipinos to be respected is indisputable, although the government they have established for the maintenance of the social order has not been officially recognised. Peoples issuing from a colony to be afterwards constituted into a nation by their own will, without the help of other peoples, have found themselves in the same situation.’

These were significant issues, not without reference to the history of the US itself, but the Filipinos suspected, it seems rightly, that the Americans were playing for time. Within a few days, in any case, the conflict had begun. In August 1900 Aguinaldo conferred powers to negotiate on
Mabini, who had been captured in December 1899. ‘If American sovereignty ... offers the same guaranty as that which self-government can offer’, Mabini had told Taft on 1 August, ‘I see no inconvenience in recognizing this sovereignty for the sake of peace’;23 ‘an impossible condition’, says Majul.24 Taft was not bargaining anyway. ‘The sovereignty that the United States proposes to give is the same that Russia or Turkey would propose to give if they should occupy the Philippines, with the only difference that the exercise of this sovereignty will ever be inspired by the spirit of the Constitution of the United States. Following the mandates of this Constitution, the [US] Commission will endeavour to establish in the Philippines a popular government within the limits recently approved for Porto Rico.’25 In a further conference, Mabini suggested ‘that not only the men in arms but also the mass of the people would receive with joy a form of government like that of the South African Republics before the war, a government placed upon such a foundation, however, that a war like that waged between the English and the Boers would be impossible’.26 No agreement was reached, and Aguinaldo turned to guerrilla war.

The war would, Mabini hoped, remind the Americans that they were once in a similar position, fighting the British for their rights. The French had helped them; the Filipinos had hoped for American help. They had, he asserted, the right and capacity to govern themselves. Government was a practical art and resulted from experience. If the Filipinos allowed the Americans to govern the country, they would not have the chance to demonstrate that they could govern themselves. Spain had been able to rule them for three centuries because they then ‘lived without the consciousness of national solidarity’. Times had changed: the Filipinos had been exposed to ideas from other nations and briefly tasted independent life.27

In 1934 the US Congress provided for a ten-year interim Commonwealth. A constitutional convention was elected, and it decided to draft a constitution both for the Commonwealth and the subsequent republic.28 The constitution combined rights and duties, protection for the individual and intervention by the state. It imitated the American model in structure, except, initially, in respect of a unicameral legislature, ‘though it ran in a spirit distinct from, if not contrary to, that of the American’.29 Quezon himself interpreted it as ‘reversing’ American philosophy: ‘the good of the state, not the good of the individual, must prevail’.30 J.R. Hayden anticipated ‘an irresponsible autocracy’, ‘in harmony with the instincts, traditions and past practices of the Filipino people ... the natural system ... in their present state of political development’.31 But in the 1930s post-depression governments were in general interventionist, even in the US.

The constitution included a number of principles. First, the Philippines was a republican state, and sovereignty resided in, and government authority emanated from, the people. Second, the prime duty of the government was the defence of the state, while all citizens had to render
military or civil service. Third, war was renounced as an instrument of policy. Fourth, ‘the natural right and duty of parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency was to receive the aid and support of the government’. The promotion of social justice was to be the concern of a bill of rights, parts of it drawn from the US constitution, parts from Calderon’s.

The defeat of the Japanese, and the return of MacArthur, displaced the 1943 constitution and restored the prewar one, already amended to include a Senate. In 1959 David Wurfel felt able to write: ‘A constitution which has weathered war and foreign occupation, internal rebellion, and the death in office of three presidents has become a part of Philippine tradition’. The changes of the following decade challenged it: the growing sense that the Philippines was ‘neo-colonial’, not truly independent; the economic crisis, as the advantages of ISI ran out; the desire of President Marcos to secure a second term. By the end of the 1960s there was in metropolitan Manila ‘a widely shared sense … that the 1935 Constitution, written under American tutelage prior to the Philippines becoming a commonwealth, should be replaced with a truly Filipino charter reflecting the politics and government of an independent nation in the 1970s’.

‘The view prevailed that the old constitution somehow had resulted in the ills of Filipino democracy’, Jose Abueva wrote: ‘oligarchical rule, political abuses, corruption, worsening social injustice, persistent underdevelopment’.

In June 1971 the elected delegates of a new constitutional convention met in Quezon City. It was surrounded by controversy and divided between those who wanted the constitution explicitly to exclude a third term for Marcos – the 1935 constitution, as amended, allowed only two – and those who supported him and sought to do away with the presidential system and enable him to become prime minister in a parliamentary system. The parliamentary system was adopted, but only after Marcos, invoking a provision in the 1935 constitution, had declared martial law in Proclamation 1081 of September 1972. A now acquiescent ConCon approved a parliamentary constitution. Shrouding himself in legalities, Marcos secured a constitutional basis for continuing beyond his second term as president. Under transitory provisions he became both president and prime minister until such time as he decided to call an Interim National Assembly. No plebiscite ratified the change, as the 1935 constitution required. Instead 40,000 citizens’ assemblies were convened, in which a show of hands was called for. Subsequently, however, Marcos used a number of referenda and plebiscites to increase and consolidate his power.

A combination of military revolt and street protest – ‘people power’, it was termed, not people’s power – brought him down after he had attempted to falsify the results of the 1986 election. The combination preempted more extreme alternatives, and, as James Rush put it, ‘gave new life to the political center, the undeniably elite-led center with its complex
democratic vision of itself and its fervent belief that elections can bring
things aright’. On 25 March 1986 Cory Aquino, widow of Marcos’ assassi-
nated rival and real victor in the election of the previous month, pro-
claimed that ‘the new government was installed through a direct exercise
of the power of the Filipino people assisted by units of the New Armed
Forces of the Philippines’, in defiance of the 1973 constitution. The basis
of the regime was, therefore, not the election, held under the 1973 consti-
tution, but the revolt. The proclamation displaced the 1973 constitution
by an interim ‘Freedom Constitution’. Aquino appointed a 48-member Constitutional Commission to draw up
a new one that, if ratified, would become definitive. The 109-page docu-
ment, designed, as the preamble put it, ‘to build a just and humane
society’, emerged on 12 October 1986. It established a number of funda-
mental principles: the supremacy of civilian authority; the ‘inviolable’ sep-
aration of church and state; the state’s obligation to promote a ‘just and
dynamic social order’ and commitment to ‘social justice’; the ‘sanctity of
family life’; an independent foreign policy. It restored presidential
government – with a single six-year term – and a bicameral legislature. It
remained centralist and emphasised the family. But it called for land
reform, a commission on human rights, and universal high school educa-
tion. It was approved by 76 per cent of the almost 22m votes cast (out of
25m registered voters). That was a vote for Cory, and the constitution,
though often vague and contradictory, clearly reflected a reaction against
the abuses of the Marcos era. Yet it also reflected an entrenched view of
the Philippines state and nation, supported by popular participation.
Would the myth even now be matched by reality?

The restoration of democracy ‘also contributed to an increase in Philip-
íanale nationalism. This is due to the pride most Filipinos felt in evicting
Marcos, the manipulation of nationalism for domestic political purposes,
and the increased activism of nationalist groups.’ But, as Timberman says,
that was often focused on the US, which had supported Marcos, and still
held bases in its former possession. ‘Philippine nationalists . . . have been
more successful at criticizing real and imagined foreign influences than at
establishing an alternative vision of Philippine society that has broad
appeal.’ There was no consensus on what it means to be a Filipino. ‘Taxes
are unpaid, corruption flourishes, notions of civic duty are weakened.’ The pride in the Philippines as a leader in the Malay world – which dated
back to the nineteenth century – had been renewed and extended by the
success of 1986. Was its promise realised in the Republic itself?

The first Republic had provided itself with a flag, sewn by Marcela M.
Agoncillo, with the sun surrounded by eight rays to commemorate the
first eight provinces to rise against Spain, and Jose Palma composed a
national anthem. The words were in Spanish. What indeed was to be
the language of the new state? Spanish, spoken only by the elite, was the
language of the colonial power. Tagalog was the language of most of the
revolutionaries, but not all, and certainly not the language of the majority of ‘Filipinos’, among whom the friars had consolidated a number of regional languages and so constituted ‘Tagalogs’, ‘Cebuanos’, and other such ‘identities’.

The Calderon constitution of 1898–9 made Spanish the official language for the time being. All the Philippine languages were declared equal. The American government prescribed English as the common medium of communication. ‘Had the Philippine government had the happy foresight in 1900 to declare one of the vernaculars a national, common, and official language of the archipelago, the Gordian knot would have been untied’, N.M. Saleeby wrote. ‘Such action would have been the most fortunate and greatest single accomplishment that the government could have done.’

Felipe E. Jose, a delegate to the constitutional convention of 1934, spoke in the romantic terms of the nineteenth century of the need for a national language.

The language is the soul of the nation. A country may be politically free and independent, yet if it does not have a national language of its own that is used by its government and its people, it is devoid of a soul, of a spiritual light. We may be declared politically free in the future, but the fetters that bind the soul of our nation will not be broken unless we can also have a national language in which we can express our thoughts, ideas, and sentiments as a nation.

But what was it to be? Jose was a Tagalog and spoke in Tagalog. But could it be Tagalog? Tagalogs were not a majority: even if they had been, the adoption of their language as the national language would not have been better accepted by others.

In January 1936 Quezon inaugurated the National Language Institute. It recommended that Tagalog should be the basis of the national language, and in December 1937 Quezon proclaimed ‘the national language based on the Tagalog dialect as the national language of the Philippines’. But the national anthem continued to be sung in English until 1963, and the presidents generally used English in their formal speeches until the 1960s. Macapagal then acknowledged the national language at the start of his inaugural, while Marcos switched codes on and off during his speeches. From 1959 the Tagalog-based national language was called Pilipino. By 1970, 56.2 per cent of the population were able to speak it. One cynic called it ‘the fourth colonization of the Philippines’. In the 1960s Renato Constantino echoed the 1930s. ‘In exchange for a smattering of English, we yielded our souls.’ Education in English had captured the Filipino’s mind. He was also echoing the nationalism of the 1950s, personified by Claro M. Recto. ‘Many of our countrymen, deluded
by a flag, the name Republic, a foreign office at home and embassies abroad, a seat in the United Nations, and other visible symbols of sovereignty, consider themselves free and independent, unaware we are in many ways tied and fettered, politically, militarily, economically, and culturally.45 He was expressing a sense of incompleteness. But there were other divisions within Philippine society, those between rich and poor, for example, from which Rectista nationalism indeed risked distracting attention. The New Society, inaugurated with the proclamation of martial law in 1972, ostensibly planned to deal with them, but in the event the Marcos regime, despite the hopes of technocrats, magnified the excesses of the old system rather than displacing them.

If there was cynicism as well as idealism among some ‘Filipinos’, among others the alienation was still more complete. They saw themselves, as they had been seen by the Spaniards, as ‘Moros’. While using Christian indios against them, the Spaniards had not fully succeeded in overthrowing the Muslim sultanates to the south, and the Americans faced violent resistance in Sulu. The prospect of independence, however, seemed alarming, too. Retention of colonial control might be better than subjection to a government elected by what was bound to be a majority of Christian Filipinos. In 1926 the US Congress put on record a Declaration of Rights and Purposes by the Moro leaders: in the event of independence without provision for ‘our retention under the American flag’, they would declare themselves ‘an independent constitutional sultanate to be known to the world as the Moro Nation’.46

Though Quezon abolished the Sulu sultanate and promoted Christian settlement in the south, some accommodation was nevertheless reached, and Muslims took part in elections. Increased migration from Luzon and the Visayas postwar renewed and intensified Moro alienation, however. Congress set up a committee to examine the ‘Moro problem’, and subsequently created a Commission on National Integration. That was more or less ineffectual, though adding to the number of educated Muslim leaders. But, while it cited the violence in Mindanao as a rationale, Marcos’ proclamation of martial law in 1972 only escalated it and promoted secessionism. For it centralised power in Christian hands, cutting out legitimate political activity even for the moderates.

However conservative Philippines constitutions were, they were also revolutionary: they invoked the people as the source of authority, and in 1986 that was in a sense at least reaffirmed by popular action, used to overthrow the 1973 constitution. No such legitimacy could perhaps attach to a constitution bestowed by a colonial power, even though it might in fact be based on wider participation. Yet, while ‘non-cooperation’ marked the Burman nationalism of the 1920s, even then Burmans were shaping their future positively as well as negatively. Some discovered a model for a Burma Free State in the new Irish Free State. At the time of the Simon Commission,
separationists offered a constitution for a Burma Free State, a member of the Commonwealth, with a governor-general. It would have a parliament or Wunthanu, with a chamber of deputies or Hlutdaw elected by adults 21 or over, and an upper house or Byedaik of honoured citizens.47

The India Round Table Conference of 1930–1 decided without much debate on Burma’s separation from India. The Secretary of State declared that ‘[t]he prospects of constitutional advance held out to Burma as part of British India will not be prejudiced by this decision, and . . . the constitutional objective after separation will remain the progressive realisation of responsible government in Burma as an integral part of the Empire’.48 If that were too vague for the anti-separationists, their view was not entirely negative. Before they left for the Burma Round Table conference, the factions agreed on basic demands: only a fully responsible Burmese government, installed by April 1932, could restore peace, enlist popular cooperation, and halt social and economic disorganisation. Burma, the anti-Separationists declared at the conference, was ‘bound to India by holy ties of suffering under foreign yoke, and nothing less than Dominion status shall cut those ties.’ ‘We demand responsible government, and we are determined to achieve it. We consider it our birthright to rule ourselves fully’, said Tharrawaddy U Pu.49

Thein Maung, a Ba Maw supporter, reminded the British ‘that it is safer to go forward than to stand still, and to confer institutions perhaps somewhat prematurely rather than to arouse discontent by withholding them. The success of the working of representative institutions depends, not so much upon their logical excellence, as on their being able to attract and make use of the forces of public opinion’.50 At the close of the conference, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, indicated that the government would be prepared, when satisfied that ‘the people of Burma’ wanted separation, to set up a representative legislature in Burma and a ministry responsible to it, reserving to the governor the scheduled areas, financial policy, security, and the civil service. The decision should follow a general election ‘at which the broad issue had been placed before the electorate’.51 In the absence of a clear expression of Burmese opinion, the matter was put before the British parliament, but Burman leaders were invited to appear before a Select Committee. The Committee recommended separation, and a new constitution was approved on 30 May 1935 and became operative in March 1937.

After the war the returned governor, Sir R. Dorman-Smith, sought to carry out the executive-led reconstruction policy of the White Paper of 17 May 1945. He was not prepared to accept AFPFL dominance of his Executive Council, and initially the British government backed him. In the ‘fourth Anglo–Burman war’, however, the AFPFL was able almost to bring government to a halt, and Sir H. Rance, taking over, was allowed to concede the point. The Executive Council then put pressure on the British to speed up the programme for constitutional progress.
It will be our endeavour to transform the present Government well before elections into a National Government with status and powers (of such?). We intend also . . . to negotiate with HMG [His Majesty’s Government] so that coming general election may be for a Constituent Assembly free from participation of those not of Burmese nationality and with untrammelled powers to determine the future constitution of Burma.

The ‘guiding objective’ would be ‘the establishment of a Sovereign State in the very near future.’ In the discussions in London in January 1947 the AFPFL-dominated delegation essentially won those points.

The concessions the British saw themselves as making had another motive besides their concern for security. They hoped that a conciliatory attitude would help to induce Aung San and his colleagues to keep Burma in the Commonwealth. But it was not very likely that the AFPFL could take this further step, and the constituent assembly unanimously voted that Burma should be a sovereign independent republic. The constitution had been prepared in effect by a convention the AFPFL held before the assembly met. Aung San explained ‘that the AFPFL had had to examine the forms of Government employed by the USA, Great Britain and Soviet Russia and made a composite of all these forms thus constructing a new type of democratic government that best suited the Burmese. He added the proposed new form of Government had been drawn from Yugoslavia.’ An ‘odd mixture of Anglo-Saxon Democratic ideals – freedom, law, justice, international cooperation – and more modern Socialist doctrines of State Socialism in the economic sphere, free primary education, limitation of land holdings etc’, as Peter Murray put it at the Foreign Office in London, it was drafted by men with training in Cambridge and the Inns of Court, Tin Tut, in particular, also his brother Kyaw Myint, Sir Ba U, Justice E Maung, and Chan Htoon, the constitutional adviser.

In the name of the sovereign people, the preamble espoused the following objectives:

To maintain social order on the basis of the eternal principles of Justice, Liberty, and Equality and to guarantee and to secure to all citizens justice, social, economic, and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action; Equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law.

It borrowed the provision for a president elected by the two houses of parliament from the French. ‘From American practice came the idea of promulgating a formal constitutional document based on the principle of popular sovereignty.’ Other borrowings from the US, says Cady, included a statement of fundamental rights, ‘the establishment of an independent
judiciary capable of determining the legislative enactments’, and a federal system. The name of the Chamber of Nationalities, an elected upper house in which 72 out of 125 seats went to non-Burmans, was ‘of Communist origin’. The socialist provisions in Chapters 3 and 4 borrowed from the Yugoslavs.\textsuperscript{56} 

In 1952 Chan Htoon observed that ‘our constitution, though in theory federal, is in practice unitary’.\textsuperscript{57} The structure of the Union was not like the US, Switzerland, or indeed India. There were state councils, but their legislative powers were limited, and they consisted of assemblies of the Union MPs for each state. A Union minister for each state was be nominated by the prime minister after consultation with the state council, and those ministers were empowered to summon or prorogue the councils. Chapter 10 allowed, except in the case of Kachin State, for secession after ten years. But that was a time bomb, and in any case the provisions had failed to reconcile the Karens, who went into rebellion. Later attempts to modify them helped to bring about the collapse of the civilian regime itself.

Burman nationalists had been anxious to inherit all Burma, including non-Burman peoples in the Union. Aung San’s definition reflected their aim.

A nation is a collective term applied to a people irrespective of their ethnic origin, living in close contact with one another and having common interests and sharing joys and sorrows together for such historic periods as to have acquired a sense of oneness. Though race, religion and language are important factors it is only their traditional desire and will to live in unity through weal and woe that binds a people together and makes them a nation and their spirit a patriotism.\textsuperscript{58} 

The colonial power had been aware of the problem, but – perhaps itself part of the problem – it had no solution. Conscious of ‘ethnic’ difference and making use of it, for example in military recruitment, the British dealt with constitutional advance by providing special constituencies for ‘plains’ Karens and by keeping the ‘Scheduled Areas’ – Karenni, the Shan states, and the Kachin and Chin tribal areas – under the Governor’s control and outside the ambit of parliamentary Burma under the 1935 constitution. Christian Karen leaders had cherished the prospect of a separate state in Tenasserim, federated to Burma, but run by Karens with British assistance. At the end of the war – in which Britain had benefited from the loyalty of non-Burman peoples – the Karens renewed this objective. But, as Sir Henry Knight foresaw, the British government was unlikely to agree to ‘any such fission in these days when the voice of the majority is considered as the voice of God’.\textsuperscript{59} 

Committed as they became to Aung San and the AFPFL, the British
were unable, as they had planned, to keep the Scheduled Areas apart until they were ready to join Burma. They could do little more than ease their conscience through the Panglong conference of 1947 and trust in the statesmanship of Aung San. ‘Karenistan’ was never a viable proposition, but it is not clear that the British fully realised the seriousness of the Karens’ opposition to the new Union of Burma, nor the extent to which their sense of isolation was increased by Burma’s leaving the Commonwealth. No ‘state’ could be constructed within the Union, though the constitution provided for it, and reserved 20 seats for Karens in the lower house. Concessions, the AFPFL feared, would be followed by demands from the Arakanese and Mons, and as Bernard Ledwidge put it, Burma would be reduced to a ‘loose and powerless federation’.60

Early in 1949 the Karen National Defence Organisation began an open rebellion, which was contained with difficulty, but not suppressed. Moreover, other ‘minorities’ became increasingly frustrated with the progressively more centralised and Burmanised form of government in Rangoon, which they protested was taking too little account of their needs’.61 Nu pushed Buddhism, but as his conflict with his opponents in the ‘Stable’ faction of the AFPFL developed, he expressed his readiness to create Mon and Arakanese states and to enhance Shan autonomy.

That was, it is usually claimed, a factor in the army’s decision to overthrow him. ‘Federalism is impossible; it will destroy the Union’, Ne Win declared.62 Minority leaders had taken part in legislative politics in Rangoon, though that, as Mary P. Callahan puts it, ‘probably did more to reinforce ethnic identity than it did to create a sense of shared purpose, identity, and future’.63 The now predominantly Burman army, by contrast, had been sent to the frontiers to deal both with communist insurgents in minority areas and with the intrusion of KMT troops. Of the three major institutions in the state – AFPFL, bureaucracy, and army – it became ‘the only one capable of building nation-wide structures of authority’, she comments.64 It was not going to abandon the task.

A Shan, Chao-Tzang Yawngwe, offers a different interpretation. In the mid to late 1950s, he argues, the AFPFL’s adherence to the parliamentary system was paying off. The period cannot be portrayed as one of civilian incompetence and crypto-communism, and the caretaker government of 1958 was just that. If Karens had rebelled, others stuck to the Panglong spirit. ‘The 1961–2 federal movement was a sign of the growing confidence of non-Bama in the federal structure and parliamentary system of Burma.’65 The non-Burman states sought a solution to military abuses and wanted to renegotiate the terms of association. The records of the Taunggyi federal conference of 1961 did not demonstrate a rejection of the federal structure nor a desire for secession. It was misrepresented by the coup-makers of 1962.

This time Ne Win’s army took over and displaced the constitution, and his Revolutionary Council abolished the state governments. The Socialist
Republic of the Union of Burma adopted a new constitution in 1974. Its preparation had been a long process, during which the drafting committee had solicited popular opinion and comment, the argument being ‘that the 1947 constitution had been drafted by lawyers and conservative politicians without the participation of the people, and therefore had been incapable of achieving socialism and national unity’. The state, as Taylor puts it, was now ‘in form not dissimilar from any other one-party state’.

The Lanzin or Burma Socialist Programme Party was set up, and, under the Law to Protect National Solidarity, other parties were banned. In fact, it did not operate as a party, but as a stamper of approval.

Authoritarian rule might in Samuel P. Huntington’s terms be seen as a prerequisite for ‘development’; whether or not that was so, it did not guarantee ‘development’. The army drew upon the left-wing tradition which the AFPFL had endorsed in the 1940s in part out of conviction and in part as a means of outbidding opposition. It formulated a programme, announced on 30 April 1962 as the Burmese Way to Socialism. Its ideology was set out early in 1963 in *The System of Correlation of Man and his Environment*, a mix of Marxism and Buddhism. But as a recipe for development, Burmese socialism did not work. In 1971 income per capita was still below 1938–9 levels.

In his book, *The State in Burma* (1987), Robert Taylor argued a case for Ne Win. He pointed to the weakness of the newly independent Burmese state. ‘The reassertion of the predominant position of the state after 1948 was attempted initially by recreating the pattern of the colonial state and increasing its representative quality.’ That, he argued, failed. After 1962 the military leaders chose ‘to force the state upon society with the few weapons at its disposal’. The other option it rejected: opening ‘the society to external institutions and forces such as the world economy and military alliances with more powerful states’. Whatever credibility can be attached to this interpretation, it surely obscures the point that, like other authoritarian rulers, Ne Win was, despite the introduction of a new constitution in 1974, building a regime as much as if not more than a state or a nation. The extent to which that could achieve the objectives that the regimes of the 1950s had failed to achieve was surely doubtful.

Like other writers, Taylor seems to support his interpretation by an appeal to an authoritarian tradition. Michael Aung-Thwin goes further: he wants ‘to interpret the coup of 1962 more than anything else, as an effort to restore meaningful order to a psychologically disoriented society, thereby resurrecting a cultural identity that had been made ambiguous (and thus its worth made ambivalent) by a period of meaningless order’.

One must question whether we are not discovering an invented tradition that a regime finds convenient. Whatever its validity, it shapes up differently in modern circumstances, deployed by Ne Win rather than Aniruddha: it ‘means’ something else.
The Dutch, unlike the British, had a written constitution or Regeringsreglement. That made the idea familiar to the Indonesians, though it made it harder for them to set up an independent state. The Indonesian constitution was in one sense a revolutionary one: it was not the result of concession from the imperial state or negotiation with it. Initially, indeed, it emerged under Japanese patronage, though it owed strikingly little to Japanese ideas. It did, however, reflect a strain in Dutch thinking that owed something to organic theories of the state put forward by German theorists, rather than the more common French and American examples, in the form of the ‘integralism’ of Supomo. Only in face of the victorious allies, and the need to win over the British and the Americans, was it liberalised, as urged by anti-collaborationist groups, students, Sjahrir’s ‘underground’, though their motives were not necessarily merely tactical.

Sukarno had dissolved the Independence Preparatory Committee on 29 August 1945. Its place was taken by the Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat (KNIP, or Central Indonesian National Committee). Section 4 of the transitional regulations of the constitution provided that, before the election of the regular representative organs of government, the People’s Congress, the Council of Representatives and the Council of State, ‘their competence shall be exercised by the President assisted by a National Committee’. Its 135 members were appointed by Sukarno and Hatta, including members of the Preparatory Committee and other prominent Indonesians.

Early in October 50 of the now 150 members of the KNIP petitioned the president to give the body a legislative rather than a merely advisory role. Both Sukarno and Hatta agreed, and a decree was issued on 16 October. It was also stipulated that KNIP would delegate its powers to a permanent Working Committee, Badan Pekerja, responsible to KNIP as a whole. Sjahrir was chosen chairman, and Sjarifuddin vice-chairman, and they chose the other members from among their supporters. KNIP was itself enlarged to 188 so as to include more influential leaders, including several Sjahrir supporters. An early move – approved by the president – envisaged the creation of a multi-party system, the parties to be formed before the elections to the Council of People’s Representatives, scheduled for January 1946. In November cabinet was made responsible to KNIP. Sukarno dismissed his cabinet and asked Sjahrir to become prime minister. He then formed a new cabinet, responsible to KNIP and its somewhat expanded Working Committee.

A presidential decree of 29 December 1946 increased the membership of KNIP by 250 per cent to 514. Sukarno had long wanted to make it more representative, but the desire to secure ratification of the Linggadjati agreement with the Dutch, concluded the previous month, was ‘an extremely important consideration’. It raised the question of the president’s prerogative. Sukarno argued that, ‘until we are able to leave the composition of the representative bodies to the electorate’, it was the task

Popular sovereignty
of the president, because he was ‘regarded as the representative of the whole people’. Vice-President Hatta said that he and the president would resign if KNIP rejected the president’s decree. That resolved the issue, though hardly established the principle. The Renville agreement provoked another crisis. On Prime Minister Sjarifuddin’s resignation, Sukarno appointed Hatta to form a presidential cabinet, one responsible directly to the president, only indirectly to KNIP. That was in the event to last until the Dutch transferred sovereignty after the Round Table Conference (RTC) on 27 December 1949.

In the course of the struggle the Dutch had taken up the federal idea once advanced by H. Colijn, but never pursued prewar, and set up a number of states intended to form part of a federal Indonesia, of which the republic would be but a part, though a large part. The RTC agreement envisaged a federal Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI), including the republic and 15 others, the draft constitution of which was brought to the knowledge of the Dutch. Drawn up by representatives of the republic and federalists, it provided for a Senate, with two members from each state, and for a House of Representatives, made up of 50 members from the republic, and 100 from the other states according to their respective populations. The president would be elected by House and Senate in joint session. With their concurrence he would appoint a committee of three for the purpose of forming a cabinet, one of whom would be prime minister.

Federalism was tarred with the Dutch brush, whatever social or political reality it might correspond to, and it was additionally discredited by the belief that officials from Pasundan, one of the federal states, were involved in the discreditable Westerling affair. The states collapsed or were pushed, and a unitary state emerged, the Republic of Indonesia, with a provisional constitution revising that of RUSI so as to harmonise with that of the old republic. The single-chambered legislature incorporated members of the two houses of the RUSI legislature, of the Working Committee of the KNIP, and of the High Advisory Council of the old republic. This House was temporary, to be replaced by an elected one, and a constituent assembly would also be elected.

Elections, perhaps unfortunately, were not held until 1955. Then two were held, one for the parliament on 29 September, one for the constituent assembly (Constituante) on 15 December. For both the turnout was astounding, but the outcome was disappointing. Elections, as Feith says, could not be ‘the panacea for Indonesia’s political ills which many government and party propagandists claimed they would be’. The appointed parliament, indeed, had represented a wide range of opinion, while the elected parliament showed up the demographic dominance of Java and the power of the parties the Javanese supported. By 1956–7 the regions were challenging Jakarta under local military leadership, and early in 1958 an alternative government (PRRI, Revolutionary Government of
the People of Indonesia) was set up in Padang, supported by politicians who broke with the other parties in Jakarta and wanted to put pressure on the government, and also, covertly, by the Americans and the British. Those events gave the president an opportunity to implement what he called ‘guided democracy’. But in fact he had to balance off the increased power of the army by a risky association with the PKI.

It was in this tumultuous context that the Constituante pursued its task: its 544 members sat continuously from 10 November 1956 to 2 June 1959. There was substantial agreement on the human rights that the constitution should guarantee. ‘Even at a time when anti-western sentiment was at its height, fundamental agreement could be reached about human rights. . . . It was a Proclamation of domestic freedom by Indonesian citizens, on a par with Indonesia’s declaration of external freedom, the Proclamation of 17 August 1945.’

The constitution itself was not, however, finalised, nor implemented. All parties, as A.B. Nasution puts it, had committed themselves to the ‘ethical features’ that characterise a constitutional state ‘based on the acceptance of human rights and on controls over the exercise of executive power’. But members of the Constituante also had ideological goals or ideals that conflicted with the idea of a constitutional state. Two concepts were advanced, the integralist one, put forward in 1945; and the Islamic one, rejected in 1945, when the Muslims had been persuaded to drop the ‘Jakarta charter’. The concepts were, however, at odds not only with a constitutional state, but also with each other. The assembly was deadlocked. The president dissolved the assembly by decree on 5 July 1959 and proclaimed the restoration of the 1945 constitution. Well before Suharto took over, the Indonesian elite had moved away from the kind of party and parliamentary government with which they experimented after 1945.

Indonesians had secured for themselves some advantages in creating a nation-state out of the colonial state they inherited from the Dutch. Those included the adoption not only of a flag, but of a national language, the language, moreover, not of the majority Javanese, but the lingua franca of the archipelago. After independence, that language was propagated by education far more extensive than the Dutch had offer – their neglect in a sense provided an opportunity – as well as by the media: only three of the 358 newspapers published in the mid 1960s were in ethnic languages. Taking further steps had proved more difficult.

If the elite shifted away from participation in the late 1950s, Sukarno himself had always preferred mobilisation – ‘theatrics’, indeed, in McVey’s phrase. He continued to focus on outside enemies, and the West Irian and Konfrontasi campaigns went well beyond theatrics. Those he coupled with Guided Democracy, ‘something of a compromise’, as Ruth McVey puts it, ‘retaining the symbolism of the Revolution and the masses while restoring much of the power of the pamong praja (the territorial
administrative corps) and entrenching military participation in all levels of decision-making'. The succeeding Suharto regime – though calling itself a New Order – was in some sense a continuance of the old.

The ‘strong state’ that emerged from the wreckage of Guided Democracy was thus not built on new ground but on a consensus which had been slowly and painfully laid . . . the new regime had a cadre of political, administrative, and military personnel whom experience had convinced that popular participation in politics must be strictly limited . . . and that what mattered was the material accomplishment of ‘development’ rather than the realisation of a national essence or an international ideal.

The power of the ‘strong state’ rested not merely on ‘ruthless military suppression of opponents’, but also on ‘a broader elite consensus on what needed to be done’. That there was a continuity between the Old and New Order – in which Guided Democracy finds its place – does not mean, however, that the New Order itself continued unchanged. ‘Development’ certainly proceeded apace, but it was combined with depoliticisation and increasing authoritarianism. Villagers, as the influential Ali Murtopo put it, would not ‘spend their valuable time and energy in the political struggles of parties and groups, but will be occupied wholly with development efforts’. The New Order – seen indeed as an authoritarian development regime, Huntington-style – enjoyed economic as well as political backing from outside, though the oil boom was crucial. In 1984 the MPR granted Suharto the title Father of Development (Bapak Pembangunan). The title was a proud but curious one, suggesting in itself that economic advance was being combined with ostensible traditionalism.

The basic ideas announced in the 1945 constitution, pantjasila, now became an ideology, and in 1985 the ‘sole ideology’. ‘The principles of the Panca Sila were generally humanitarian and egalitarian . . . but that did not prevent their being employed to endorse coercion and hierarchy.’ Late in 1978 Suharto had set in motion a vast programme of education, P4, the purpose of which, its progenitor, Ali Moertopo, claimed, was ‘none other than to Indonesianise Indonesians, by which I mean to make Indonesians truly Indonesian’. It was designed to develop ‘full comprehension and implementation’ of pancasila.

‘We could not return to Parliamentary Democracy which had failed to support national development. On the contrary we were looking ahead to improve the application of Pancasila Democracy in parallel with achieving a more developed stage from our development in general.’ Suharto evoked again what Sukarno had evoked, mufakat and musyawarah. ‘We do not recognise opposition as in the West.’ Supomo’s
integralism re-surfaced in the mid 1980s, and by 1987 was incorporated in P4.80

Unlike the Dutch colonial and Japanese regimes – with which the New Order was sometimes compared – it sought democratic legitimation. Participation was not entirely abandoned. Instead it was shaped by ideology and controlled by organisation. Elections were not designed to change governments, but to endorse them. The government developed the concept of the ‘floating mass’, implying that participation was limited to a vote in the general elections. Parties were – as Sukarno would have said – ‘retooled’, required to adopt the sole ideology (asa tunggal). Golkar, started in 1964, became the government’s party, distributing patronage and funding from the enormous amounts now at the disposal of the state as a result of foreign investment and exports. No provision was made for underpinning democracy. Post-Suharto Indonesia was to be ‘heir to a systematically disorganized civil society. Years of political engineering and state surveillance eroded the confidence of civil organisations and effectively prevented the emergence of coherent coalitions of reformist forces.’91 A regime had been built, but a state had not.

The origins of the constitution of neighbouring Malaya were very different from those of the Indonesian constitution. The Union of Malaya had been replaced by the Federation in 1948, inter alia re-emphasising the component states as a guarantee that it was a Malay polity. The Alliance’s triumph in the 1955 Legislative Council elections led it to advance its timetable for merdeka, and a Malayan delegation – the membership and objectives of which had been the subject of preliminary argument between the rulers and the politicians – went to London early in 1956. The talks reached agreement on ways in which the current practice could be modified and also accepted the proposal made by the Alliance for an independent constitutional commission. That was given terms of reference: the establishment of a strong central government, with states and settlements enjoying a measure of autonomy; ‘a common nationality’; and ‘the safeguarding of the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities’.92 The idea of an independent commission seems an extraordinary means of drawing up a constitution for a nation-state. But it was perhaps not only a recognition that the nation-state was now the common formula, but also a means of dealing with the special challenge multi-communal Malaya offered to the pattern. Even though it had terms of reference, it might seem not only more expert, but also more objective and so more acceptable, abroad and at home.

The commission, the London conference agreed, should be chaired by Britain: Lord Reid took the role. Britain, Australia, Pakistan, India and Canada were each to nominate a member: only Canada did not. The commission held 118 sessions in Malaya, and then wrote its report in Rome. Much of the work was in fact done within the Alliance, which could thus
present the commission with inter-communal compromises already agreed upon. ‘The representations of other political groups and associations were not ignored, but their influence in most cases was slight.’ They – and particularly the ‘ultra-communal political leaders’ – provided the main criticisms of the report when it appeared. The Tunku supported the report as ‘the best compromise under the circumstances’.93 But he was hard pressed to defend it before United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) meetings, particularly because it had opposed special privileges for the Malays, other than on a temporary basis, and had not included provisions for them in the draft constitution.

The draft went to a Working Committee of 11, four representatives of the rulers, four of the Alliance, the High Commissioner, the Chief Secretary and the Attorney General. Then it went to the Conference of Rulers and the Legislative Council. Among the issues was, of course, ‘citizenship’, crucial in any modern state, especially so in Malaya. One issue was the fate of those who were citizens of the UK and colonies. Could they have dual citizenship? The Alliance had opposed it. The Reid report envisaged a Commonwealth citizenship. The compromise was that the oath of allegiance required of citizens included a renunciation of loyalty to foreign nations and states. The general provisions worked out by the Alliance were ‘liberal’, and it was clear that the proportion of non-Malay citizens would steadily rise. The counterpart was the inclusion in the constitution of guarantees for special privileges for the Malays. Islam became the official religion. ‘ “[E]very person has a right to profess and practise his religion” and may propagate it, except that “state law may control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the Muslim religion”.’94

The rulers of the nine states in the Federation were fitted into a democratic, parliamentary, federal system, rather than abolished. One unusual step was the creation of an elected monarch: the Conference of Rulers was to choose one of its number to be Paramount Ruler (Yang dipertuan Agong) for a term of five years, normally following seniority. The rulers were not powerless, though that had been the thrust of the Reid report, and their role was indeed to be contested in later years. The consent of the Conference was required on matters affecting the ‘special position of the Malays or the legitimate interests of other communities’.95

The Reid proposals for the national parliament were incorporated in the constitution without controversy. There would be a wholly elected House of Representatives and a Senate partly elected by the state legislative assemblies and partly nominated by the Paramount Ruler. The real power of the Senate lay in the matter of constitutional amendment, as Means points out:96 that required a two-thirds majority in both House and Senate. The Senate was also supposed to provide a bulwark for states’ rights against federal power. Given Alliance dominance, however, it became a rubber stamp.
‘A Federal constitution defines and guarantees the rights of the Federation and the States’, the Reid report declared; ‘it is usual and in our opinion right that it should also define and guarantee certain fundamental individual rights which are generally regarded as essential conditions for a free and democratic way of life.’ It had difficulty reconciling equality before the law with special rights and did not include the latter in the draft constitution. The Alliance government secured changes in its proposals for judicial review in respect of legislation on residence, free speech, peaceable assembly, and forming associations. Other ‘fundamental liberties’ were qualified in the constitution itself. Parliament also had emergency powers. ‘Thus, the preservation of certain fundamental liberties and the maintenance of the federal system rested to a large extent upon the self-restraint of parliament.’ The LegCo approved the constitution by unanimous acclamation after 11 hours’ debate on 15 August, and merdeka, within the commonwealth, was proclaimed on 31 August 1957.

The extent to which or the ways in which Malaya could function as a nation-state were unclear. It was based on an elite-led inter-communal compromise behind which lay the notion of Malay politics and Chinese business. That sustained a federal system, though with a strong central government, and a democratic form of politics, modified by the dominance of a single inter-communal inter-party Alliance. No revolutionary struggle had created a sense of identity. If there were any struggle, it was Malay, not Malayan. The inclusion of Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah in the ‘Greater Malaysia’ of 1963 further complicated the problem.

Winning the 1964 elections partly on the basis of the external threat of Indonesia’s confrontation obscured the need to deal with internal problems. The challenge the PAP now offered showed them up – a ‘Malaysian Malaysia’ – but the Tunku’s answer was to expel Singapore, and so, he hoped, preserve the inter-communal bargain. The campaign for the 1969 elections expanded inter-communal tension, however, and the outcome was greeted with serious riots in Kuala Lumpur. Another emergency was proclaimed. Parliament was suspended and extraordinary powers were given to a National Operations Council (NOC), headed by Tun Razak, the Tunku’s deputy. Seven of its nine members were Malays, and its period of rule – during which it sought the views of a Consultative Council, not unlike the Advisory Councils the British had used – endeavoured to meet Malay demands through formulating a New Economic Policy and making Malay the language of education and government. ‘[M]uddling through … in the vague expectation that the euphoria of independence … would sustain a general feeling of cooperation and harmony’ was replaced by ‘much more purposeful and organized political engineering’.

On independence day 1970 the NOC had promulgated a national ideology, Rukun Negara, including Belief in God, Loyalty to King and Country, Upholding the Constitution, Rule of Law, Good Behaviour and
Morality. Then the Tunku had announced the government’s intention to reconvene parliament, and to introduce a series of constitutional amendments ‘to remove sensitive issues from the realm of public discussions so as to allow the smooth functioning of parliamentary democracy; and to redress the racial imbalance in certain sectors of the nation’s life and thereby promote national unity’. The status of Islam, the status of Malay and the Malay rulers, Malay special rights, were to be beyond question. Parliament accepted the changes, designed, said Razak, now premier, ‘to ensure the working of the parliamentary government suited to our present conditions’. In effect, however, the rules of the game were altered. What could not be discussed openly had to be settled behind the scenes: ‘access to those inner councils of the government where these sensitive issues were indeed discussed became a prerequisite to political effectiveness’. Opposition – curtailed by the emergency – was further limited. The Alliance became the Barisan Nasional. ‘Paternalistic leadership and controlled politics were assumed to be essential for the resolution of the country’s communal imbroglio.’

Mahathir Mohamad, a Malay ‘Ultra’, had lost his seat in 1969, and called for the Tunku’s resignation. The Tunku managed to have him expelled from UMNO, but, after being ‘mothballed’, he became a minister under Razak, deputy to his successor, Hussein Onn, and prime minister in 1981. The book he wrote in his short exile from politics, *The Malay Dilemma*, suggests the extent to which Ultra policy had become central. ‘I contend’, he wrote, ‘that the Malays are the original or indigenous people of Malaya and the only people who can claim Malaya as their own and only country. In accordance with practice all over the world, this confers on the Malays certain inalienable rights over the forms and obligations of citizenship which can be imposed on citizens of non-indigenous origin.’ He argued for a programme of ‘constructive protection’ for the Malay bumiputera, the kind of thing indeed that NEP implemented, though the rukun negara itself ‘never caught on’, and was not embedded in the restructuring like its model, Indonesia’s pancasila.

Even in the 1970s, however, Mahathir was changing focus. In his second book, *The Challenge* (originally *Menghadapi Cabaran*, KL, 1976), he began ‘to reorientate Malay nationalism . . . outwards: away from the divided state of Malaysia to the divided states of the world’. Malay values were changing because of the adoption of wrong values from the West. ‘Mahathir’s redefinition of the problems facing the Malay community in *The Challenge* turned him inward on to the Islamic core of the Malay community, and, simultaneously outward on to the West.’ The work prefigured the Look East rhetoric of 1981–2. That, indeed, seemed to go further still, not only in enjoining a developmental work ethic, but in playing down ‘constructive protection’. ‘[B]umiputras will work together with non-bumiputras with equal responsibility.’ That implied a success for the NEP, but also held out the prospect of ‘genuine, Malaysian, inter-
‘Development’ – though based on a somewhat authoritarian model – might promote inter-ethnic collaboration, if indeed that did not in fact depend on it. The ‘privatisation’ of the mid-1980s and the concept of ‘Malaysia Incorporated’ – though borrowed ideas – provided ‘the material basis for a new vanguard – a “Malay state–Malay capital” alliance leading “non-Malay capital”’.113

Singapore, kept apart from Union and Federation, had become self-governing in 1959. To undercut the communists’ line that they represented national liberation, the British had hastened constitutional change, but would not offer Marshall merdeka. They were prepared to change the status of Singapore from colony to state, replace the governor with a high commissioner, allow a fully elected assembly and Singapore citizenship, but would not concede control of internal security in an island they still saw as a major base. The Labour Front government secured a compromise in 1957. But the rival People’s Action Party swept the polls in the election of 1959.

The next obvious step was merdeka, but neither the British nor the majority of Singapore parties could envisage that on any basis other than ‘merger’ with Malaya. That the Tunku had ruled out early in 1955, and at the end of the year he said he would agree to it only if Singapore became an ordinary unit in the federation, rather than the confederation Marshall sought.114 In 1961 – apprehensive about the course of Singapore politics – he changed his mind. Negotiations with Lee Kuan Yew, the PAP leader, covered the special position Singapore would have among the component parts of the new expanded federation. Those, of course, curbed its autonomy, as Lee’s opponents stressed. The negotiations did not make it clear how the new structure would work.

The 1957 federation, cumbersome as it was, worked because the Alliance made it work, and itself held together. Adding Singapore in as something other than the normal state was constitutionally quite difficult. The politics of managing the new structure were still more problematical. The Alliance had entered Singapore politics in the election of 1963. The attempts UMNO made to rebuild support on the island contributed to the riots in September 1964. In turn the PAP pursued ‘Malaysian Malaysia’, and the Tunku decided on expulsion. MPs in Kuala Lumpur were not told until half an hour before the sessions began. The Constitutional Amendment bill was approved two hours later by the Dewan Ra’ayat 126 to 0 and later the same day by the Dewan Negara. Singapore became – after all – an independent state. A nation? On what other basis could it be constituted? Lee was already using the word ‘National’, for example, celebrating the first anniversary of self-government on ‘National Day’, replacing Queen’s Birthday.115

Malaysia’s task was further complicated by the incorporation of Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah), but they were dealt with quite differently.
Since 1946 they had been crown colonies – though Sarawak had a constitution and principles derived from the Raj’s constitution of 1941– and their constitutional advance had been limited. Clearly it was necessary to consult their peoples, even apart from Indonesia’s insistence on it. Members of the elite were brought into the process of making Malaysia, and the views of the people were assessed by the Cobbold commission, and then, in face of Indonesian and Philippine criticism, by a mission sent by the UN secretary-general.

The aged Raja Vyner reminded readers of The Times that Sarawak had for a long period been ‘an internationally recognised sovereign state’. Its citizens could not be permitted ‘to become the mere inhabitants of a State debased in character by having a Head of State inferior in status to that of the present Rulers of the States of Malaya’. In fact Sarawak had a governor, like Sabah, not a ruler. Both states did, however, secure some distinctive privileges in the expanded federation, though over time the central government eroded them. It constructed Alliance-style regimes. Indeed, though originally intended to balance the inclusion of Singapore, the inclusion of Sabah and Sarawak in fact enabled the Barisan Nasional to retain the two-thirds majority prescribed for constitutional change. It permitted UMNO ‘to remain in power, prolong the terms of the “historic bargain” and promote Malay political primacy’. The regime survived: so did this extraordinary state. Whether it was or could be a nation was yet in question.

Unlike its neighbours, the sultanate of Brunei did not become part of Malaysia. It remained under British protection and it also remained a monarchy. Sovereignty rested in the sultan, and it was his prerogative to grant a constitution. The advisory committee Sultan Omar Ali appointed in 1953 toured the state and visited the peninsula. Its report borrowed mainly from the Kelantan constitution, but it ‘resonated with nationalistic fervour’. ‘With regard to religion, inhabitants and language common in Brunei’, the committee concluded, ‘the policy of the Government should be that of “Islam Democracy” and the Government shall always have a sovereign Sultan who has full authority in the country.’ In the constitution promulgated in 1959, the London Times commented, the Sultan had ‘introduced changes democratic in form but so protected by safeguards that Brunei must continue to be what it is to-day – a fairly enlightened Muslim autocracy.’ That was a sound forecast.

In Brunei, a form of concentrated power in the hands of the Sultan emerged unscathed despite British machinations to transform the status of the Sultan from an Absolute Monarch to a Constitutional Ruler. Generally, it was the British practice to introduce universal suffrage and democratic institutions before they finally withdrew from their colonies. In Brunei’s case, however, these principles did not take
root, and Britain had to stand guard until the Brunei monarchy solidified its position.\textsuperscript{121}

The revolt of December 1962, put down by British forces, had helped Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin to evade both democratisation and inclusion in Malaysia. In 1964 he accepted a revived Legislative Council, including ten directly elected members, and elections were held in March 1965. He would not appoint a responsible cabinet, however, and some have seen his abdication in 1967 as a device to avoid Britain’s pressure for democratisation. When the Labour government prepared to abrogate the 1959 agreement, the new sultan Hassanal Bolkiah turned the tables by reconstructing the legislative council, ending the election of members. Even so, the Heath government approved a new protection agreement in 1971. Finally – as relations with Brunei’s neighbours improved – the sultan accepted a new treaty early in 1979, under which it would gain full independence in 1984, and he then assumed the honorific of ‘His Majesty’ in place of ‘His Highness’.

The Sultan proclaimed independence on 31 December 1983 – the year in which Mahathir curbed the remaining powers of the Malay rulers on the peninsula – declaring the state to be ‘a sovereign, democratic and independent Malay Islamic Monarchy based on Islamic teachings’.\textsuperscript{122} A cleric, Uztaz Badaruddin, the director of information, laid out the foundations of the state ideology that year.\textsuperscript{123} It was set out more fully as the state philosophy on Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah’s 44th birthday in 1990 as Melayu Islam Beraja (Malay Islamic Monarchy). Only in the following years was it ‘elevated to its status as an ideology’.\textsuperscript{124} The reference to democracy in the declaration is given no institutional meaning.

In Cambodia, another Southeast Asian monarchy, the course of events was, of course, very different. The returned French were anxious to give the appearance of encouraging constitutional development within the new French Union, and King Norodom Sihanouk indicated that he intended to introduce a constitution. In September 1946 a consultative assembly was elected by male suffrage to consider the proposals of a Franco–Khmer constitutional commission that had been established at the end of 1945. The majority belonged to the Democratic party of Prince Youtevong, who had spent many years in France. ‘They considered the basis upon which they had been elected reason enough to reject their formal consultative status and to assume instead a genuine consultative role.’ The assembly discarded the proposals of the Franco–Khmer commission and created its own constitution. ‘[M]odeled on French practice and completely alien to Cambodian experience’, the constitution was promulgated in May 1947. The king accepted it. But he was later able to use its ambiguities: article 21, for instance, stated that all powers emanated from the king.\textsuperscript{125}
The French were slow to transfer greater powers to the kingdom. That evoked Democrat criticism and prompted militant action, and it became evident that the Vietminh, France’s Vietnamese antagonists, were also involved. The king determined to outbid them all by himself securing Cambodia’s independence. The assembly refused him full powers. He dissolved it and declared a state of emergency. Then he went to France and to the US, arguing that only full independence would win his people’s support against the communists. In June 1953 he went to Thailand, and then back to Cambodia, but to Battambang, not to the capital. He returned to Phnom Penh, substantially successful, on 8 November. The following day, Cambodia celebrated independence. It was a success against the colonial power, but also against the major political party. Would the successful monarch now proceed to share power?

The answer was negative. Buoyed by a referendum on his crusade, Sihanouk planned to make changes to the 1947 constitution, submitting them to a further referendum. Members of the post-Geneva International Control Commission counselled against the proposals, and Democratic Party opponents sought to exploit the issue. He decided that elections would after all be held on the 1947 basis. But, after behaving like Bismarck, Sihanouk turned into King Magnus: he abdicated and decided to form a mass political movement, Sangkum Reastr Niyum, ‘entering the political arena carrying an aura of majesty that would be a substantial advantage against his opponents’. Its victory was overwhelming: 83 per cent of the vote gave it all the seats in the assembly. The victory was, however, not achieved without intimidation and violence.

The king was in a strong position to pursue his masterly diplomacy on the international scene. But internally the kingdom was fatally weakened, as his overthrow was to reveal. ‘By treating Cambodia as a personal fief, his subjects as children, and his opponents as traitors, Sihanouk did much to set the agenda, unwittingly, for the lackadaisical chaos of the Khmer Republic and the horrors of Democratic Kampuchea.’

Bao Dai had been in quite a different position. He accepted the role of Citizen Vinh when Ho Chi Minh seized power at the end of the war. When the French sought to set up a counter to the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRVN) in 1947–8, he became a part of their ‘Bao Dai solution’. But the French had never allowed the Nguyen monarchs sufficient power for them to be more than figureheads, and even now Bao Dai was called Head of State, not Emperor. He struggled to win from the French more powers for his government, but with scant success: he was regarded as uncooperative at a time when cooperation was essential.

After Geneva – when Vietnam was de facto divided – the US put its faith in Bao Dai’s prime minister, Ngo Dinh Diem. On 23 October 1955, a ref-
erendum was held. Three days later the Republic of Vietnam was declared a sovereign state, and Ngo Dinh Diem the first president. On 28 November he appointed a constitutional commission, which consulted foreign experts, ‘notably American and Philippine’. The task was, however, turned over to an elected National Constituent Assembly in April 1956, though its committee included members of the commission. Vietnam, the president proposed, should be a republic with sovereignty vested in the people, the powers of executive and legislature separate, and the judiciary independent. That was the form it took, but it was not a duplicate of the US constitution, nor the Philippine.

Hardly surprisingly, it was indeed strongly inflected by a sense of emergency. The president, directly elected by universal suffrage for five years, and eligible for election for two more, was vested with executive powers and with the ‘leadership of the nation’ (Article 3). His powers to veto and to legislate by decree were greater than those of the US president, and he could organise referenda. The first president could also suspend civil liberties during his first term. Article 42 permitted the National Assembly to delegate legislative authority to the president in time of emergency. There were no guarantees of judicial independence. The constitution included a bill of rights, but their exercise was subject to ‘the legitimate requirements of general security, morality, public order, national defense’ (Article 28).

Precedents could be found in Latin American constitutions for much of this, or in that of the Weimar republic. The constitution was also influenced by Diem’s ‘Personalism’, derived from the philosophy of the French Catholic Emmanuel Mounier. Democracy, he had told the assembly, ‘is neither material happiness nor the supremacy of numbers’, but ‘essentially a permanent effort to find the right political means of assuring all citizens the right of free development’. ‘The State recognizes and guarantees the fundamental rights of the human person in his individual capacity and in his capacity as a member of a community’, ran the constitution. ‘The State shall endeavour to establish for all equal opportunities and the necessary conditions for the enjoyment of their rights and the performance of their duties’ (Article 5). The family was recognised as ‘the foundation of society’ (Article 25). The duties of the citizen were further defined in terms of the anti-communist nature of the Republic: to defend its principles, including ‘the republican form of Government, the democratic regime, national freedom, independence, and unity’ (Article 28).

To the north lay Southeast Asia’s only communist government, Vietnam, drawing, of course, on yet another European tradition. That in practice recognised the state in what was still a world of states, but it put no priority on state- or nation-building. The focus was rather on the party regime. ‘In Marxist theory’, as Melanie Beresford writes, ‘. . . systems of law are
designed explicitly to ensure the continuation of class rule. Constitutions of capitalist countries are deemed to be instruments for reproducing the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie while those of socialist countries are for preserving the dictatorship of the proletariat. The socialist constitution ‘has no real legal function’ and often bears ‘little relation to the actual functioning of the system’. But a written constitution could ‘signify the need of a Party newly installed in power to create a modern state along Western lines’.136

That was true, Beresford suggests, of the constitution the DRVN adopted in 1946.

The Vietnamese constitution of 1946 ... provided the revolutionary regime with an identity equivalent to those of other nation-states in the modern world – with national boundaries, clearly defined citizenship, modern parliamentary system and elections and relations of state and civil society defined by a system of rights and obligations.

But ‘much of the constitution conflicted with the actual functioning of the system by Party rule, hence its main role must be seen not as regulating state–society relations (as in the West), but primarily as an instrument legitimating the establishment of the Vietnamese nation state’.137

The 1946 constitution, adopted by the newly elected National Assembly in November, provided for a unicameral legislature – a People’s Parliament – a president and a cabinet – the Council of Ministers. It bore little resemblance to the Soviet constitution of 1936: designed ‘with an eye on French politics’,138 and on the need to rally broad support, it evoked the US declaration of independence, and drew on French law. The crisis that burst upon the regime that same month meant that the Assembly did not transform itself into a People’s Parliament. In fact it met only rarely, its powers in the hands of its Permanent Committee, interlocking with the Party.

An intense debate accompanied the drafting of the 1959 constitution. The regime had consolidated itself in the north, but the Diem regime threatened its attempts to secure the south. The conclusion was that the north should proceed with collectivisation and industrialisation, and so put itself in a position to support a higher level of combat in the south. The new constitution explicitly declared the aim of making a communist society in Vietnam.139 Elections – the first for 13 years – were held in May 1960. ‘Even by communist standards, the elections are flagrantly rigged’, the London Times wrote. ‘Candidates are screened, and many voters, labelled “unpatriotic”, have been disenfranchised.’140

The 1980 constitution followed the reunification of the country in 1975. It borrowed from the Soviet constitution of 1977, formally assigning a role to the communist party. Article 4 states that it is ‘the only force leading the State and society, and the main factor determining all suc-
cesses of the Vietnamese revolution’. The structure also resembled that of the Soviet Union, except that Vietnam was a unitary not a federal state. The National Assembly was the counterpart of the Supreme Soviet, and the Council of State that it elected the counterpart of the Presidium. The highest executive body was, as in the Soviet Union, the Council of Ministers. Unlike the Soviet Union, however, Vietnam stressed the continued need for a vanguard party, the ‘general staff’ of the working class.

In Siam there was, of course, no struggle for independence. The struggle over the nature of the state and the role of its citizens took a rather different form. The 1932 coup against the absolute monarchy was ‘promoted’ by a relatively small bureaucratic–military group, who formed the People’s Party. There was no mass support, even of the kind that anti-colonial leaders had secured in other Southeast Asian states. Somewhat paradoxically, the king stood for the people, though he stopped short of the Magnus role, and abdicated instead. Prajadhipok (Rama VII) did not attempt to retain the absolute powers of his predecessors. He wanted a constitutional monarchy. Instead the ‘Promoters’ adopted a somewhat Sun Yat-sen style constitution – pictured as granted by the king after considering the people’s request – in which only half the members would be elected, while they nominated the other half, an arrangement to last either until half the population had completed primary school, or for ten years, whichever was the sooner. The king was willing to surrender his powers, but ‘not . . . to turn them over to any individual or any group to use in an autocratic manner without heeding the voice of the people’. His ‘desire that the people have a real voice in the affairs of the country . . . not . . . fulfilled’, he abdicated.

Rama VII’s misgivings were apt. In 1940 the constitution was amended to extend the role of the appointed MPs for another twenty years. The Promoters – led by Pibun and the military – promoted nationalism without participation. That focused, on the one hand, on transforming the behaviour of Thais, redefining Thai-ness and, on the other, on a pan-Thai movement, designed to recover ‘lost’ provinces. Pibun changed the name of the country to ‘Thailand’ as part of a strategy to reclaim parts of Laos. The change, as E.B. Reynolds puts it, ‘reflected an aspiration to bring all neighboring peoples ethnically related to the Thai under Bangkok’s rule’.

Postwar, the transitional provisions were eliminated in the constitution of May 1946, while an upper house was added, elected by the lower. The provisional constitution of 1947 made it a nominated body. The definitive constitution of 1949 provided that the king should nominate it. The ‘silent coup’ of 1951 brought back the constitution of 1932. From 1958 the strong man, Sarit, ruled with a purely nominated assembly, invoking a new version of Rama VI’s ideology, Nation, Religion, King, coupling it with ‘development’. He argued that democratic rule did not require
elections: it involved governing in the people’s interest, ‘a Thai way of democracy’.  

Though he invoked Rama VI’s nationalist ideology, his regime became a model of authoritarian developmentalism, the theory of which Samuel Huntington was to articulate in *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale, 1968). The novelty for Thailand lay not, of course, in military intervention in politics, but in its association – by contrast with Ne Win’s intervention – with economic development supported by the US. The Americans saw Geneva as a victory for communism. Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson tried to make Thailand a ‘pilot plant’: it presented, he declared, ‘an opportunity for American capital to demonstrate what private enterprise can accomplish in the development of a country’. But there was also to be a great deal of ‘public’ investment, as Thailand became base and bastion for the new struggle that developed in Vietnam.

After Sarit’s death in 1963, his colleagues, Thanom and Praphat, took over. In 1969 they experimented with a new constitution, and in 1969 they added an elected lower house to an appointed senate. They found power slipping out of their control, however, and in November 1971 carried out a coup against their own creations. But they were undermined by the new middle class that development had helped to create and by its offspring: in October 1973 a movement to restore constitutionalism, stimulated by a small group of academics, politicians and students, swelled into major demonstrations in the capital, and the dictatorship fell. A new constitution was promulgated, and elections were held in January 1975 and April 1976. That the regime was overthrown by right-wing violence in October 1976 did not mean that it had entirely failed. It marked a turning-point, as J.L.S. Girling says, because of its symbolic importance. Hitherto, military coups against the formal institutions of democracy had been accepted: ‘there was little or nothing that citizens could do – or think of doing – about the fait accompli.’ Now they would no longer be uncontested.

Indeed the hardline regime installed after the coup, that of Thanin Kraiwichian, did not last. A more conciliatory approach was followed by his military successors, Kriangsak and Prem Pitsulanon. The constitution of 1978 was more like that of 1932 than that of 1974: there was a wholly appointed upper house of 225 members, and an elected lower house of 300; the former was entitled to participate in a joint session with the latter on all important matters. But ‘Premocracy’ denoted ‘the emergence of civil society’. It relied on the ‘countervailing power of political parties, largely supported – and financed – by business, and the growth of professional associations and interest groups, which were intricately balanced by General Prem, himself under royal favor, with market-oriented technocrats and a variety of military factions’. Business boomed, and some Young Turks in the army attempted coups in 1981 and 1985, inspired by the ideas in Huntington’s first book: social justice must precede demo-
ocracy. But, with the king’s help, Prem survived. His gradualism was a better option: ‘although undemocratically appointed . . . he promoted democratic thinking and behavioural patterns.’ In 1988 he refused the invitation again to become prime minister. Chatichai Choonhavan became the first elected prime minister for 12 years.

In another work, The Third Wave (1991), Huntington presented democratisation as an end-product of development. ‘[E]conomic development – industrialization, expansion of literacy and education, urbanization, increased wealth, decreasing inequalities in income and wealth, the emergence of a bourgeoisie and a middle class – has generally played a critical role [in democratization].’ But, as Girling said, Huntington ‘tends to ignore the crucial importance – in Eastern Europe as in Latin America – of the “intermediary” role of civil society in relation to the economy and the state’. The Philippines, Girling added, evidences ‘the fragility of formally democratic institutions (which lack a representative social content) in the face of powerful and ambitious political and military leaders. Nor does the authoritarian record of the Indonesian “New Order” inspire confidence in any “automatic” transition to democracy once a certain level of economic development has been reached.’

In subsequent years other Southeast Asian regimes that had set out on a democratic course – with the idea of transforming the mass backing they secured in the anti-colonial struggle into a participatory role in the transformation of society – tended to follow a path not unlike the Thais. In general the constitutions they had drawn up had evoked the sovereignty of the people as the source of legitimacy and set up elected assemblies. Establishing the conventions that would facilitate their operation, and elaborating a civil society that would underpin it, were difficult tasks, in some cases at least – Indonesia in the 1950s, the Philippines in the 1960s – perhaps too readily abandoned by those most supportive of the ideas that inspired the constitutions. Governments became more authoritarian, tending to use nationalism as a means to consolidate the regime rather than to build either state or nation. Yet, strikingly, the democratic impulse remained alive, not only among the elite, but also among the masses. Even authoritarian regimes still evoked it, though emphasising ‘Asian values’ or ‘traditions’. Contestation helped to domesticate it.

Ideals had hardened into ideologies, even where, as in Burma and Vietnam, they were not already provided by localising international socialism or communism. Those on the right had indeed an international context as well: leaders were pressed and influenced, though they also chose. Western political scientists, as Ruth McVey puts it, rediscovered the ‘state’: a strong state was the essential condition of industrialisation. ‘Thus it is the state, not the nation, whose form must acquire content; the state can then stamp its mould on the population.’ But, if such a view was based on a reading of history, rather than on a rationale of the then
current US policy or then current needs of international capital, the reading was only partial.

Some nations in the West were indeed in part the creations of strong governments, but it was over a long period of time, and at first at least not intentional. Was that experience – or even the experience of Meiji Japan – relevant to other societies placed in quite a different context? Could it be an appropriate prescription in a short period when the idea of the nation was already alive and associated at home and abroad with participation? Arguably development itself would have been advantaged by association with the democratisation implicit and explicit in the nationalist movements, and was disadvantaged by postponement. The governments of the day, moreover, built regimes, not states. In some ways international aid and capital enabled them to avoid that task. They could survive on patronage networks and party disciplines, funded in effect by exports and foreign investment. They could ignore – at least for the time being – what a fuller reading of the history of states and nations in the West might have suggested – that states had strengthened themselves by securing popular participation, and that taxation and representation had been tied together.

If the regime-builders were not in fact dedicated state-builders, it is not clear that they were the nation-builders they claimed to be. What they did, and what happened, helped in a measure in nation formation, in ways that might recall the colonial period. But their growing authoritarianism, coupled with the ways in which they pursued development, also provoked threats to the state, even challenges to its integrity. Unhappy minorities became reluctant secessionists.
8 Challenges

‘A world of nations cannot exist, only a world where some potentially national groups, in claiming this status, exclude others from making similar claims, which, as it happens, not many of them do.’ The qualification Hobsbawm added to his generalisation is still valid, perhaps, even though the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, then at hand, has since come about. A world of states exists, banally seen as nation-states, but many of them contain more than one potential nation. If self-determination were applied, Beiner suggests, hardly any modern state would be ‘immune from having their legitimacy normatively subverted’. An ‘ambitious’ application of the theory might produce thousands of nations. ‘It seems a strange kind of normative principle that relies for its coherence on the willingness of most national groups not to cash in the moral voucher that the principle gives them.’ The convention that the states are nations is in a sense a limit on the anarchy that could be expected to result. But if states are yet to be nations, their builders must avoid provoking the would-be nations from claiming to create states.

The ‘forcible marginalization of many who were supposed to have shared in the fruits of liberation’ was a ‘standard outcome’ of anti-colonial nationalism in ‘artificial state frameworks’, Partha Chatterjee suggests. ‘[O]ne nation’s independence may be the beginning of another nation’s oppression’, as Wiebe puts it. Yet Southeast Asian experience suggests that the outcome, standard or otherwise, was not necessarily as prompt as these generalisations suggest. Nor – though the case, say, of Sri Lanka might imply the reverse – was it a necessary result of democratisation and majoritarian politics. It seems more likely that it was the authoritarian approach – to which Southeast Asian regimes increasingly turned in the generation after independence – that, together with the absence of civil society, brought an end to the patience that Hobsbawm noted.

Equally, the displacement of authoritarian government and the creation of a more democratic system do not necessarily guarantee secession. Though an independent Timor Leste has emerged, and the transition to democracy in Indonesia is bound to be conflictual, it need not lead to the breakaway of Aceh or Papua. Indeed, in the longer term, it might
provide a solution and one more permanent than authoritarianism could offer.

‘Development’ – often coupled with authoritarian government – had not proved a panacea. Discussing ‘separatist nationalism’, Breuilly pictures new states with scarce resources and many claims. Nation-building is often about ‘rationing’ and separatism about challenging or manipulating the process. Yet it seems from Southeast Asian experience that it might be just as or even more likely to result from a perceived maldistribution of extensive resources. Economic prosperity can assuage political asperity. But it may not do so, particularly if the regime is greedy or opaque or both.

In any case new movements are in general unlikely to join the list of ‘successful’ nationalisms. Not only are the leaders of the existing independent state sure to resist their claims to independence by every means in their power or beyond it, but other independent states will lend them no support. The logic of this could only be what some would consider illogical. There could, perhaps, be some form of compromise, such as the creation of a federal state, but, while there have been and are, of course, viable federal states, they have not based the separation of powers on a ‘national’ principle. Alternatively, or in addition, the state could rest on what is sometimes called ‘civic nationalism’. Citizens have a wide range of ‘rights’, including the right to live within their ‘culture’, but no group of them has the right of self-determination. The ‘nation’ is ‘multicultural’, not ‘unicultural’. The perpetual referendum of which Renan wrote rests upon the mutual acceptance, if not ‘celebration’, of diversity.

Those are, however, difficult positions to adopt even in long-established states. ‘New’ states – such as those in Southeast Asia – tended to find them too risky. Such ‘soft’ alternatives would not, it was thought, serve to build a state and a nation in a hard world, in which independence was newly won and development had seemingly to be driven by government, in which the expectations of the masses had been raised, and in which big decisions about the future had to be taken. Moreover, colonial powers had sometimes used such structures for their own advantage, either to make their arbitral role more necessary, or to manipulate one group or one territory against another.

If that was how the independent Southeast Asian states began, it was difficult to change. The ‘failure’ or jettisoning of democratic experiments and the problems in the way of equitable development offered no leeway. On the contrary, they seemed to stress the need for central authority, and indeed increasingly to convey that to the military, unchecked by civilian politicians or civil society. Armies may practise their own forms of devolution, but are unlikely themselves to sponsor breaking up a ‘national’ state.

In the 1990s the Southeast Asian states, like others, were thrown open to ‘globalisation’. That comprised changes both in the political and economic spheres, overlapping rather than wholly coinciding. First, with the
collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War politics of the postwar world came to an end. No longer were the world of states and the transactions among them inflected by the relationships of two superpowers, largely at odds, but partly in agreement. Now one power, the United States, was overwhelmingly more powerful than any others. But there were more than one in the second rank and no longer were conflicts among other states promoted but also contained along recognised lines. Second, more commonly, ‘globalisation’ is used to apply both to the changes brought about by electronic communication and the increased mobility of capital, and to the kinds of policy that they are alleged to require or effect.

The two changes are not unrelated. Prasert Chittiwanapong has defined globalisation as ‘the freer flows of information, goods, services, capital, technology, values and cultures, including social problems like pollution and aids’. The word, he adds, ‘carries a specific emphasis on the nature of the dismantling of barriers to the flows of information, goods, services, capital, technology, values and cultures. The emergence of a “borderless world” has become possible because of scientific revolutions in the field of information and telecommunications.’ It differs from ‘internationalisation’: that carried ‘no emphasis on the disappearance of national barriers’. But globalisation is also a policy – like imperialism resented as well as admired – and the assertion that it is an inevitable process is, at least in part, rhetoric in support of that policy. The fact that the wealthiest and most technologically advanced state – the US – is likely most to benefit from it makes it seem above all an American policy and the process appear as ‘Americanisation’. For other states, too, the implications are both strategic and political as well as economic.

In another sense, indeed, the two processes are at odds. One might say that there are two forms of ‘globalisation’. One takes the form Prasert defines, an encompassing change in the economic, cultural and social sphere, part of a long process of change as well as a programme, incomplete, but apparently gaining momentum. The other comprises the creation of a world of nation-states, accepted as norm or objective, but incomplete as a process. A political victory for the concept of the nation-state is, as James Mayall put it, combined with unprecedented economic interdependence. The two changes are sometimes at odds with each other, sometimes in support of each other. The recent advance of ‘globalisation’ affects the state and the nation and the chances of their identification. Characteristically it will both enhance the prospect and derogate from it. It is not necessarily a bonus for revolution, nor yet for autocracy; not necessarily a means of maintaining the state, nor of breaking away from it. Can it serve to promote compromise?

‘Regionalism’ – not the regionalism within a state, but the regionalism among or above states – should be considered in that context. Typically it involves the reaction of states to the globalisation they face, both on the political and economic fronts. It serves the interests of states, even as it
assumes or reduces some of their powers. But again it may do more than that. States in ASEAN have assured each other that they will not subvert each other. But it may be that their common interest in avoiding instability and intervention could boost the kind of confidence that might make the completion of the nation-state project a less fraught one.

The colonial states in Southeast Asia were not the creations of world economic change, but responded to it, as did Siam. New nation-states a century or more later did the same. The former sought to win investment and secure revenue and so build the state. So did the latter. But has the relationship changed with the changed nature of ‘globalisation’? If the colonial state was dependent on an imperial power, the independence of the nation-state was said in the 1950s and 1960s to be qualified by neocolonialism or alternatively by world communism. Has it since been diminished further by the forces of globalisation? Is it indeed ‘out of date’? The debate, Greg Bankoff and Kathleen Weekley suggest, is polarised between those who argue that contemporary world economic integration represents merely the extension of patterns of production and exchange begun as early as the sixteenth century, in which the nation-state retains fundamental power, and those who assert that globalisation constitutes an entirely novel set of arrangements in economic, political and cultural fields, wherein national governments are losing power to influence the fortunes of nation-states and to control cultural production within them.  

Their summary statement takes account of economic change, but perhaps not sufficiently of political change. There were no nation-states in the sixteenth century. The economic and political trajectories are best seen not as entirely coincident but as intersecting. States and the development of the world economy have enjoyed a complicated relationship over the centuries, at times drawing together, at times pulling apart. It seems likely that that will continue, and that the polarities of which Bankoff and Weekley speak are just that. But that does not preclude some kind of modifications or adjustments to the concept and, even more perhaps, the practical reality of the nation-state.

Those adjustments could be coupled – involving only a seeming paradox – with the assertion and promotion of nationalism in other fields, cultural and sporting in particular. Amid economic and political change, the national idea takes yet another role, fulfils yet another purpose, becoming the cover or bridge for compromise between state – and people – and global forces. The risk is that it provides once more, not a means of resolving problems, but of covering them up. ‘If we want to maintain our existence as a nation with genuine political and economic sovereignty in the face of globalisation forces ... then we have to do something to address all kinds of distortions that have plagued us’, Megawati Sukarnop-
utri declared in 1997: corruption, collusion, abuse of power. \(^9\) ‘Globalisation has blurred international boundaries, leading to a global convergence of value systems but also a demand for effective national management to ensure our competitiveness with other nations’, General Wiranto commented the following year. \(^{10}\) Perhaps that was less encouraging. What form would that ‘national management’ take? Would it welcome participation? Would it welcome minority ‘cultures’? Prasenjit Duara is not optimistic. Newly independent nations – aiming at development, equality and global justice – rejected racial or ethnic nationalism and adopted a model of equal citizenship rights for all. They also sought to regulate the flow of capital and resources, ‘not only to gain strategic advantage in global competition, but also to stem the erosion of social institutions and relationships, mainly caused by the free flow of capital’. More exclusive formulations were not far below the surface, and now nation-states prioritise global competition over balanced development. Globalisation, Duara thinks, is not weakening nationalism, but transforming it ‘in unpleasant ways’, intensifying what he calls ‘ideologies of immanence and authenticity’. \(^{11}\)

At the same time, one might comment, some nations are reaching out to their diaspora, and yet others welcoming chosen non-national migrants to their midst. Michael Porter’s concept of the competitive advantage of nations attempts to marry the two forms of globalisation. It may lead to further attempts to homogenise the nation, but it may also lead states to value those characterised at least since colonial times as having special talents – Sikh or Ibo\(^{12}\) – or being involved in networks of their own, like the Chinese, or even those minorities that also have something to contribute, if only to the staring tourists from other nations arriving at an international airport on a plane belonging to one of the global airline alliances.

Majorities have no obligation to guarantee the survival of minority cultures. ‘They may well be struggling to survive themselves, caught up in a common competition against commercialism and internationalism.’ \(^{13}\) They might, however, have an interest in so doing. Equally, the onset of globalisation in the 1990s may offer the minorities additional strategies of survival that stop short of secession. That might contribute to a reconstitution of the nation-state as conceived in Southeast Asia at the time of independence, based on participation and on equal citizenship.

In 1986 the Philippines had abandoned the authoritarian New Society of Marcos, and returned – figuratively as well as literally – to ‘People Power’. In 1998 it was to celebrate the first republic’s independence. Marking the creation of the first ex-colonial state in Southeast Asia was a cause for celebration. But the centenary celebrations – so brilliantly analysed by Bankoff and Weekley – provoked doubts and demonstrated divisions. Their criticism is telling. ‘The remedy to . . . failures of the national identity project cannot simply be to intensify efforts at the
ideological or symbolic level – as the Filipino government found out during the centennial celebrations. Ideological hegemony is not reproduced simply as a set of ideas; those ideas must infiltrate people’s lives in material forms in order to constitute the reality they are supposed to represent. The most politically stable nation-states are those whose nation-making is also state-making, where the citizens daily live a connection with the material rewards of their imagined community. Top-down rhetoric and ritual would be inadequate, even if orchestrated by a government that had overthrown Marcos. ‘For many Filipinos, ideas of the nation are not reflected in their experiences of the state.’

Fewer than 3m Filipinos pay income tax. A bill to require all citizens to lodge tax returns was, however, attacked by civil liberties groups and by those who represented the poor: the state should collect from the rich more effectively. Their approach challenges the very idea of a functional nation-state. To those whose conception of the latter has long included the idea of a universal taxation system from the proceeds of which are built many fundamental institutions of shared national life, the story about the protests is puzzling at first, but only so long as we assume that the notion of a national community actually exists to the extent that a majority of citizens is prepared to contribute to an ephemeral national well-being.

Aquino’s successor, Fidel Ramos, a 1986 ‘rebel’, wanted not only to ‘rejuvenate the economy’ but to ‘regenerate society’. He promoted ‘Filipinism’, a word Laurel had used in the Japanese republic. It evoked Rizal, the ‘first Filipino’, and an international conference was held on his life. The centennial of 1898 was ‘elevated to the central reference point in the country’s history that marked “the beginning of true nationhood”’. ‘[T]he state came to regard the centennial celebrations as an opportunity for channelling citizens’ energies into a construction of a shared sense of national belonging and a common national history’. Accuracy was less important than appropriateness and appropriation. ‘That the Ramos administration ultimately failed in this endeavour is symptomatic of the inadequacies of such crude tools of social engineering to meet the challenges of ethnic and minority difference in a world of increasingly plural and fractured identities.’

In Burma unrest under Ne Win’s rule was quelled by violence, but the economic failure of the regime, and the encouragement offered by People Power in the Philippines, encouraged pro-democracy activists. Demonstrations at Rangoon University in March 1988 were followed by new clashes in June, and in July Ne Win resigned. Demonstrations continued. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) seized
power, but, as a piece of strategic liberalisation, promised elections. When they gave SLORC’s opponents, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San’s daughter, a landslide victory, it refused to transfer power, despite Saw Maung’s undertaking to do so. It persecuted the NLD and its leader, and began a prolonged attempt to draw up a new constitution through a largely appointed convention.

If the regime so notably failed to bring prosperity to the Burmans, or to integrate state and society, its handling of the ‘minorities’ was at best ham-fisted. A real attempt was made to recruit minorities into the central committee of the BSPP, but increasingly it was a matter of violent conflict. After the implosion of the Communist Party in 1989, however, SLORC sought ceasefire agreements with breakaway factions, and by 1995 only the Karen and Mon were standing out. The unity of the Karens was broken when the Buddhist element capitulated and turned on the Christians. A new Mon party made a ceasefire agreement, and Khun Sa, leader of the Mong Tai army, capitulated in January 1996.

Even as the election campaign had been under way, the regime set up the Border Areas and National Races Development Central Committee on 25 May 1989, and on 30 May that was followed by the appointment of a 21-member Commission of Enquiry into the True Naming of Myanmar Names. On 18 June that ‘rushed out’ the Adaptation of Expressions Law on 18 June 1989. That required the use in languages other than Burmese of the word ‘Myanmar’ instead of ‘Burma’, and ‘renamed’ many towns, the capital itself becoming Yangon. SLORC ‘presented the name changes as a testament of its patriotic spirit, its goodwill for the country, and as a milestone in the history of the revolution that would bring the ethnic groups of Burma together . . . in its view it represented the final liberation of Burma from colonialism, and a return to ethnic harmony’. Echoing Ba Maw’s wartime plans to end the special treatment of minorities and create a single Mahamaha or Great Burma nationality, it was a blow at Aung San Suu Kyi, since it was a blow at all things English. But it was also directed at the minorities: what is important, said Saw Maung, was that not only all foreigners but all Burmese should accept the renaming: ‘all Myanmar citizens should possess the spirit of true Myanmar citizenship no matter what race’. ‘The nation should be one in which only Myanmars reside and which Myanmars own.’ Myanmification was, as Houtman puts it, an ‘attempt to Burmanise Burma’, to ‘crowd out all alternative concepts of unity that various ethnic groups and foreign languages might have expressed throughout history’.

Suu Kyi rejected it, but it was not easy to offer an alternative view of the nation. ‘The forty-year history of [ethnic] relations has been a chapter of misfortune verging on the tragic’, the NLD had declared in 1989.

Along Burma’s extended borders from the extreme north to the far south there are no less than thirteen groups of insurgents – a situation
which is sapping the strengths and resources of the nation . . . we must seek a lasting solution to the problems of the ethnic minorities. . . . It is the aim of the League to secure the highest degree of autonomy consonant with the inherent rights of the minorities and the well-being of the Union as a whole. 22

The statement was bland. Nine years later the ceasefire forces all refused to support the NLD’s call for a ‘people’s parliament’. The people in those areas feared it would lead to renewed fighting. 23

Thai politics had been partially parliamentarised, but the way Thais took part made it ‘corrupt’. Capitalist cliques – in Bangkok and, still more significantly, in the provinces, where the godfather-figure of the chao pho allied with the local politician 24 – turned the new system to account. Their power declining, the military had grounds for criticism and, they believed, for action. In 1991 the regime of the former general Chatichai was overthrown by Sunthorn Kongsompong, the supreme commander, backed by the commander-in-chief, Suchinda Krapayoon. ‘[I]n an uncanny throwback to the Sarit era . . . the existing constitution was abrogated, parliament was dissolved, and martial law was declared.’ The evidence of corruption was ‘so blatant that the public . . . gave little show of support for the fallen regime. Indeed, many in business and the professions openly approved of the coup. 25 Moreover, it installed an effective caretaker government under the diplomat/business leader, Anand Panyarat-chun. A new constitution, designed by a constitution-drafting committee approved by the National Peacekeeping Council, was pushed through without difficulty, and military-backed parties, STD (Samakki Tham Party) and its allies, won the elections of April 1992.

‘It was at this point, with the reawakening of civil society and the beginning of doubts by business, that the military’s plan began to unravel.’ Allegations of drug-trafficking prevented the leader of the military-backed parties from becoming prime minister. Suchinda was appointed, though he had promised not to enter politics. ‘In angry reaction, in May 1992, the non-military parties, strongly supported by the public, staged massive demonstrations headed by Chamlong [Srimuand], charismatic former governor of Bangkok, ex-military “Young Turk”, and an ardent Buddhist.’ Troops fired on the protesters. Public outrage meant that ‘the king was at last compelled to intervene’. Suchinda had to resign. ‘[T]he military – and not civil society – [had been exposed] as the divisive factor in Thailand . . . an extraordinary turnaround from the time when the military’s claim to be the guarantor of national unity – against civilian dissidents – was widely accepted.’ 26

Anand was recalled as caretaker. His task, as he put it, was ‘returning sovereignty to the people’, ‘demilitarising the political process and decommercialising the armed forces’. 27 New elections were held. The
democratic parties won a narrow victory. In June 1993 the Chuan Leekpai government abrogated the Internal Peacekeeping Directorate Act of 1976, which empowered the military to put down ‘civil unrest’, and under which Suchinda had claimed to act in 1991 and 1992. Constitutional changes followed, but they were relatively minor. Disappointed with them, and apprehensive of unrest, the Parliamentary President, Marut Binnag, set up the Democratic Development Committee (DDC). Its report, *A Proposed Framework for Political Reform in Thailand*, was completed in April 1995, but the government shelved it. In his election programme that year, however, Banharn Silpa-Archa (Chat Thai) promised to work on the reform guidelines the DDC had proposed. Becoming prime minister, he had to take up the cause ‘in order to offset the damaging effect on urban public opinion, as well as on military, administrative civil service, and business leaders, of certain of his appointments’.

The Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA), chaired by veteran politician Uthai Pimchaichon, was set up to draft a new charter, with Anand as president of the drafting committee. The election of the charter-writers, the *Bangkok Post* pointed out, ‘has helped ensure the drafting is free of political influence from those in the executive and legislative branches’. The draft would go through a public hearing process, and after rewriting would go to parliament, which would be able only to reject or approve of it. If it rejected it, there would be a referendum. ‘Public participation is therefore a key difference this time compared with the past.’

The new charter declared that ‘sovereign power belongs to the Thai people’. New basic state policy guidelines required the state to protect and patronise Buddhism and other religions and promote good relations among believers of all religions. They also required the state to ‘encourage the people to take part in the setting of policies, in making political decisions at all levels and in monitoring its power’. The state was also required to decentralise power.

Voting was a duty: failure to vote without proper reasons would mean loss of the right. The House of Representatives was to include 500 MPs, 100 from party lists with the whole country as constituency, and 400 from single-seat constituencies. MPs had to be graduates and members of political parties. MPs who became ministers would lose their parliamentary status. The 200 members of the Senate, no longer to be seen as the upper house, were to be directly elected by province, not nominated. An election commission was introduced, one of its tasks to arrange new elections and referenda in case of fraud. The charter also introduced a human rights commission. The constitutional court became an independent body and the powers and autonomy of the Counter Corruption Commission were increased. The king signed the constitution into law on 11 October 1997.

The change was accepted during the economic crisis, and partly because of it. ‘If we looked around’, the Senate President told Michael Kelly Connors,
we could see that the people had placed their hope in the constitution... if we rejected the constitution the people’s hope would be exhausted and it would create a severe crisis... if the constitution passed there would be problems but they would be in the future, but if it didn’t pass the problems would break out then and there and the country would not survive.32

‘A combination of economic crisis and political manoevring had made of Thailand’s despised and misunderstood politicians reluctant reformers’, as Connors puts it.33

Thailand, as Anand Panyarachun told an audience in Manila,

has the dubious distinction of having had 15 constitutions since the inception of its constitutional monarchy 65 years ago. Some of these constitutions have been discarded as a result of coups d’état, some have been distorted through ill-advised amendments. The common feature of all these 15 constitutions is that they have all been drafted by those in power, and not through any process of consultation with the people.

The CDA changed that. ‘People’s participation in the process of decision-making has been an important concept in the political reform process. We feel that it is necessary to instill a sense of ownership among the people of this important social contract between the state and the people.’ There were other requirements: the elimination of absolute poverty; the provision of education, skills and opportunities, to enable people to ‘function effectively in society and secure a livelihood’, and provide an informed electorate, ‘the key to good governance’; the development of civil society, where – he complimented his hosts – the Philippines was a role model.

Some in Asia, Anand concluded, claimed ‘that democracy is economically inefficient and that “enlightened authoritarianism” is a more effective means of generating economic growth’. He offered a caution. ‘While a strong hand may guide a nation out of hardship, even the most compassionate authoritarian leader is likely to be vulnerable to the corrupting influence of power.’ Constitutionalism, it had been implied, was ‘antithetical to Asian values... an alien intrusion carrying the seeds of chaos’. But it was ‘the key to law and order in the best sense of that term. Strong and effective leadership in this region must be based on the will of the people and must respect individual freedom.’ He suggested that each Asian state should establish an independent representative body to review its national constitution and assess the extent to which it met the requirements of constitutionalism. ‘By that means Asia would come to lead the world in our continuing struggle for law, and for order.’34

There was another connection with the crisis, perhaps less obvious but
more fundamental. ‘[T]he state has been designed institutionally to supply public services and patronage in a top-down fashion at the height of its officials’, Christensen and Ammar wrote in 1993. It was increasingly unable to procure coherent, effective policies for a more complex and demanding society. As industrialization and massive urbanization proceed, the old institutions and ways of conducting policy will no longer do if the country is to remain competitive globally while also distributing the gains of growth more equitably among all sectors of the population.\(^{35}\)

Capital itself was seeking other ways of doing things, looking for ‘good governance’, if not necessarily for democracy.

In his brilliant book, Connors sees the reform and democracy movements of the 1980s and 1990s as ‘new attempts to construct pliable subjects’.\(^ {36}\) Perhaps that demeans them. If Thai democracy was to work, the people had to be empowered to take part: it could not be put off forever. Nor could increasingly active NGOs be a substitute, though they might be a complement.\(^ {37}\) The better criticism might be that the 1997 reforms reflected a Bangkok view, an elitist view, a view that disliked the way that people in the provinces had begun to take part. They may be too good to work. Looking back 30 years later to the 1973 crisis, M.R. Sukhumband Paribatra, who had been deputy foreign minister under Chuan, declared that the current prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, often acted in ‘ways reminiscent of the days of military rule’. His government was popular because it was decisive. ‘Popular sentiment is fickle. The people cannot always be relied upon to lend active support to the principles and practices of democracy.’\(^ {38}\)

In neighbouring Cambodia by contrast, democracy was ‘planted’ as a result of an international agreement, the Paris agreement of 1991, which brought the Khmer Rouge regime to an end. Yet few of the conditions that favoured it were present: ‘there is only international support, and possibly anticipated economic growth, which speaks [sic] in favour of a sustained democracy as was outlined in the Paris agreement.’\(^ {39}\) And international support diminished with the departure of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and the rise of ‘Asian values’. ‘Unlike other democratizing East Asian societies, Cambodia has entered the process backwards: the processes in South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand have evolved gradually as a result of societal change.’\(^ {40}\) The new institutions were something rather off the international peg.

Cambodia has had fewer constitutions than Thailand, but – following the old monarchy and the phase of French protection – the Cambodians have ‘run the gamut from constitutional monarchy, to presidential regime, to radical Marxism-Leninism, to Soviet-style Communist Party
rule, to the new “liberal democratic” constitutional monarchy. The constitutions had been, in David Chandler’s phrase, ‘decorative’. Would the new one be more than that?

Under article 12 of the Paris agreement, “[t]he Cambodian people shall have the right to determine their own political future through the free and fair election of a constituent assembly’, which would draft a new constitution and transform itself into a legislative assembly. ‘This election will be held under United Nations auspices in a neutral political environment with full respect for the national sovereignty of Cambodia.’ In spite of some Khmer Rouge disruption, 4,267,192 voters turned out, 89.56 per cent of those registered, nearly all of those who were in zones to which UNTAC had access. Hundreds of voters managed to come in from areas under the Khmer Rouge.

The veteran Sihanouk convened the Constituent Assembly the following month, June 1993. UNTAC and agents or groups supported by the US, France and other governments had made an effort to prepare political parties for constitution-drafting. Reginald Austin, head of the Electoral Component of UNTAC, former Dean of the Law School at Zimbabwe, gave a presentation to the Supreme National Council in September 1992. A constitutional seminar was held in March/April. ‘All Cambodian parties and many Cambodian NGOs were invited to participate in discussions around presentations made by UNTAC staff and several Cambodian and outside experts.’ In the post-election period the Human Rights Component of UNTAC focused on ‘constitutional literacy’. At a forum three Cambodian activists – a monk, a representative of women’s organisations, and the head of an indigenous human rights organisation – were included in a panel with ‘three Asian experts who had been active with popular organizations during the drafting of other constitutions in the region’. The Cambodian groups formed a coalition Ponleu Khmer (‘Cambodian Illumination’) to lobby the Constituent Assembly for strong human rights provisions. ‘The strategy was implemented with a remarkable degree of courage, initiative and perseverance.’

The draft prepared by Drafting Committee of 12 – five from the Front Uni Nationale pour un Cambodge Indépendent, Neutre, Pacifique et Cooperatif (FUNCINPEC), the monarchists, five from the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP), the communists, one from the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP), successor to Son Sann’s Liberation Front – was kept secret from the other members of the assembly as well as the NGOs, but its contents were leaked. ‘It was even rumoured that Prince Ranariddh, the Chief of State in the provisional government . . . wanted to resurrect the 1947 monarchical constitution.’ Ponleu Khmer denounced the secrecy. ‘All citizens have the right to know about what will be written in the constitution. The people have the right to oppose what they think is inappropriate or should not be in the constitution.’ ‘While the principles stipulated in the constitution are good, for example that “[t]he power
comes from the people”, there is no check on the power of the president.45 In the end there was not much participation. Two drafts were taken to Sihanouk in Pyongyang. It was decided to return to a monarchy. Sihanouk then counselled his people to reject it. The assembly begged him to change his mind. He did.46 On 24 September 1993 he ratified the constitution. Yasushi Akashi, the Special Representative, left two days later, giving UNTAC 9 out 10.47

There had been no hint, Stephen Marks says, that the stated objective of the Paris agreement, establishing a ‘liberal democracy, on the basis of pluralism’, would ‘entail the restoration of the king’. UNTAC did not expect it, whatever Sihanouk’s hopes or FUNCINPEC’s. But ‘[h]istorically and sociologically, one might doubt whether any form of government other than monarchy would emerge from a process of political self-determination in which opposing factions needed to compromise and the general population was consulted’.48 The real question was whether the constitutional provisions on the monarchy were compatible with the functioning of a liberal democracy. The constitution provided that ‘[a]ll powers shall belong to the citizens. The citizens exercise their power through parliament, the royal government and the tribunal.’ ‘Cambodia is a kingdom in which the king abides by the constitution and multiparty liberal democracy’, says Article 1, and Article 7 insists that ‘Cambodia’s king reigns but does not wield power’. But, as Marks put it in 1994, democracy was ‘fragile’. The population had neither the education nor the experience with democracy to influence the platforms parties adopted or the candidates they chose. Moreover, aside from the election of MPs, ‘the constitution does not provide for levels of democratic participation, such as direct voting for offices in the local and provincial governments’.49

‘The viability of the constitution’, he added, however, ‘is not so much a matter of how it is drafted as it is a question of conditions that allow for the consolidation of democracy, including historical experience with democracy, a developing economy and a peaceful transition’. Cambodia had almost no experience of democracy, ‘although there is no doubt about the enthusiasm with which Cambodians participated in the elections and aspire to enjoy human rights and honest government.’ Marks saw more hope of democratisation from below than from the top, building on the involvement in the 1993 elections and constitutional drafting process.50

Such doubts increased in the following years. In 1996 Ojendal suggested that ‘democracy’ had been seen as ‘a more efficient way of solving political problems than a return to authoritarianism would bring’.51 The pattern fitted the concept Bell and Jayasuriya advanced of Asian ‘Illiberal Democracy’, ‘primarily about problem solving rather than accommodation of a plurality of interests . . . a technocratic and managerial approach to politics appears in the guise of political liberalization’. Barring ‘any unforeseen political outbursts’, the pattern would continue, allowing the
existence of a co-opted opposition, repressing that outside the consensus, using the ‘degree of democracy’ ‘as a managerial tool for problem solving’, as a means of boosting legitimacy, and as a means of optimising trade and aid.\textsuperscript{52}

In the event, Ranariddh and the royalist party, whom UNTAC had pressed to enter a coalition with the CPP’s Hun Sen, though they had won a majority, were overthrown by him in July 1997. Elections were, however, held on 26 July 1998, and about 90 per cent of registered voters went to the polls. CPP won 64 seats, FUNCINPEC 43. FUNCINPEC and Sam Rainsy’s Party began to organise protests in front of the National Assembly, recalling Tiananmen and People Power, and violence ensued. Some, however, thought the elections had been free and fair. Others, pointing to the local domination of the CPP and its action since the coup, took a different view. Sorpong Peou suggests that CPP felt secure enough to allow the elections themselves to run smoothly. ‘But for Hun Sen’s CPP to run the country effectively, it will need co-operation from the opposition parties. This is a tall order. With exclusive control over the military, security, and judicial institutions, the CPP will be tempted to break any stalemate by force.’\textsuperscript{53}

Both the Khmer Rouge and the subsequent coalition that it dominated had claimed that Vietnam intervened in Cambodia in 1978 in order to establish or re-establish the Indo-China Federation. The Permanent Mission to the UN said in a memorandum of August 1985 that ‘for almost seven years already Vietnam’s activities in and relating to Kampuchea . . . have aimed always at the same and only goal, that is the annexation of Kampuchea into Vietnamese “Indochina Federation” which would become later on the Great Vietnam’.\textsuperscript{54} The Socialist Republic of Vietnam denied that it aimed to create a federation. In the Vietnam war the DRVN had recognised that, as Vo Nguyen Giap put it, Indo-China was a single battlefield, and Laos and Cambodia were indeed keys to winning the struggle for Vietnam itself. The final triumph of the Vietnamese was not, however, an opportunity for reconstituting either a federation or a single party. What had emerged were three independent states, ruled by parties aiming at national renovation. There was, as MacAlister Brown saw, no chance that federation would follow the communist victories either by voluntary acceptance or by Vietnamese imposition. Selling the idea ‘would be to work against the grain of history and would require diplomacy of extraordinary skill. The disadvantages would overwhelm the promised benefits in the mind of any nationally conscious Lao or Khmer leader.’ ‘There seem to be no contemporary examples of nations having enjoyed independence for a year or more voluntarily abandoning this condition.’\textsuperscript{55}

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam itself turned to market-oriented economic reform in the 1980s. \textit{Đoì mới} referred to political reform as well, and a few steps were taken to expand participation. Then turmoil in
China and the move to multi-party pluralism in Hungary and Poland cast doubt on the legitimacy of socialism and one-party rule, and political renovation became more urgent. The 7th Congress, however, rejected multi-party pluralism: democracy did not depend on that, said Nguyen Van Linh. But the 1992 constitution did legalise the separation of state and party, and declared that the party was ‘a’ not ‘the leading force of the state and society’.56

The 1980 constitution had reduced the provision earlier constitutions had made for montagnard minorities. The Soviet constitution allowed for secession. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) forbade it, attempting to accommodate national aspirations within a unitary state by creating autonomous regions, while promoting Han immigration. The 1959 Vietnam constitution allowed for autonomous regions, the 1980 constitution dropped them.57 Minorities lived in uncertain border areas, and, to their misfortune, had been targeted by both sides in the struggle for Indochina. Now the war was over. There was no need to offer concessions. The war suggested the need for ‘national’ unity.

In Singapore the minority was within the island, not on a land border, but it was related to the population of its peninsular and archipelagic neighbours in terms of religion and ‘ethnicity’: termed ‘Malay’, it included descendants of the original inhabitants and subsequent migrants from Malaysia and Riau; Javanese, descendants of craftsmen, pilgrims, prewar bonded labour, wartime conscript labour; and Baweanese.58 Its position in Singapore was weaker rather than stronger as a result of such affiliation with the island’s neighbours. From independence in 1965 the PAP government had an unspoken but widely known policy of excluding ‘Malays’ from the new armed forces and police. ‘It was presumed that a predominantly Malay security force could not be relied upon to protect Singapore’s interest in the event of internal racial strife or external aggression.’59 When the Malays reacted negatively to the visit of President Herzog of Israel in 1985, Lee Kuan Yew, the prime minister, asked: ‘Are we sure that in a moment of crisis, when the heat is on, we are all together, heart to heart?’60 ‘If there is conflict, if the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) is called to defend the homeland’, Lee’s son declared in 1987, ‘we don’t want to put our soldiers in a difficult position, where his emotions for the nation may be in conflict with his emotions for his religion.’61

The government did not target the Malay minority as a means of evoking the loyal support of the majority as, too often, Indonesian, Thai and Filipino leaders targeted the Chinese. Instead it lamented the Malays’ failure to espouse Singaporean values. Yet those values – set out, for example, in the National Ideology expounded by the future prime minister, Goh Chok Tong, in 1988 – included multi-racial tolerance. ‘Let us create one nation for all Singaporeans’, his Green Paper declared. ‘Even
though we belong to different races and worship different religions, let us feel that we are, first and foremost, Singaporeans. This is our home and here is where we belong.\textsuperscript{62} The logic that reconciled the two was, it seems, the maintenance of PAP dominance. The party was determined not to allow organised political opposition from the Malay community. The National Ideology was a weapon for the party, ‘nothing more’, critics said, ‘than a life-line for a party determined not to lose its hold over the electorate and fearful of the people’s increasing demand for democracy and human rights’.\textsuperscript{63}

Perhaps it was something more. Certainly the government did not simply allow national identity to develop: it frequently intervened, often invoking threats to security and unity. The fact was that building a nation was combined with building a one-party state, in which democratic institutions were used, not to promote participation, but to legitimate the party’s right to govern, and in which intelligent opposition was to be displaced by co-optation or repression. ‘National and PAP ideologies are inextricably mixed, especially on the issue of the island’s survival’, Regnier wrote in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{64}

‘[T]he emporium’s chronic vulnerability, its delicate geopolitical position at the heart of the Malay world, and the very serious domestic political disturbances from 1957 to 1963, left the PAP government team with almost no alternative but to go into high crisis management and form a kind of supreme command, as in the army, at least in the first years of independence’, he writes. He goes on to ask whether this reaction had to become institutionalised in an authoritarian style of government right up to the 1980s, and perhaps even into the 1990s? Opinions differ. For some, the ideology of the permanent struggle for survival reflects the very real dangers which punctuate the life of any emporium; for others, it only symbolises the PAP’s determination to stay in power by promoting its paramount ideology into something almost sacred.\textsuperscript{65}

1965 gave the PAP tabula rasa, as Cho-Oon Khong puts it: it could create ‘a political regime in its own desired image’.\textsuperscript{66} It co-opted the civil service, which became in turn a recruiting ground for the political elite. And the army officers assimilated, too. By contrast the local business elite were bypassed in the PAP’s development strategy, which forged an alliance between the state and foreign capital.\textsuperscript{67} That helped to deliver the prosperity through which the regime also sought legitimation.

Singapore certainly survived and prospered. But even those who admired the achievement wondered at the cost. That had to be counted not only in terms of the failure to create working democratic institutions in the years since independence but in the lack of provision for them in the future. Singapore, an entrepôt, had always lived on its wits. Was it to
continue to rely on a few brilliant leaders and their capacity to innovate and improvise? The PAP government combined continued political dominance with economic triumph, adding envy to the emotions of admirers and indeed of some critics, and, though rewarding them differentially, apparently pleasing most of its citizens. But did it trust them too little?

In 1991, the year in which the National Development Policy succeeded the New Economic Policy (NEP), Mahathir – perhaps with events in Yugoslavia in mind – launched Vision 2020, the date being the year in which Malaysia would become a fully developed country. Targets were set and challenges were elaborated. Those included ‘establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny; fostering and developing a mature democratic society; creating a fully moral and ethical society; encouraging a scientific and progressive society; and creating an economically just society.’

The first ‘challenge’ meant the end of the system of ethnic relations. The government’s aim was one ‘Bangsa Malaysia’ (Malaysian race). ‘It is clearly an attempt to strengthen national unity so that greater cooperation will improve Malaysia’s economic capabilities and competitiveness.’

The concept also referred to ‘a mature democratic society’. No supporter of the rulers, Mahathir curbed their constitutional powers, invoking the people in the process. ‘It was the rakyat who had protested against the Malayan Union ... it was the rakyat who wanted a democratic system that would enable them to choose their own leaders.’ He was, however, no supporter of democracy. ‘Many authoritarian governments have been elected by the will of the people who want strong no-nonsense administration’, he told an Oxford audience in 1985.

Though he remained in power until October 2003, he continued to use democratic forms. What form the nature of the state and the regime and the nation itself might take in 2020 was, however, unclear. Similarly the federalism of the system continued, though somewhat emasculated. The mixture of bullying, coopting and communalising that Mahathir applied in eastern Malaysia – bringing the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) government in Sabah down in February 1994, for instance – indeed had precedents, starting with the Tunku himself. They did not, however, provoke a separatist movement.

‘We are indeed moving towards greater freedom’, Moerdiono, the Suharto regime’s state secretary, declared in 1990, ‘but the rhythm must be arranged (diatur). It is like an orchestra, where each of the instruments has its own particular function to perform in accordance with the melody.’ Increasingly the regime was faced with changes, to which indeed its successful development programme contributed. ‘[T]he New Order has not simply expanded stability, deference, and control; it has also undermined these things. Though politically the regime denied the revolution, economically and socially it has had a revolutionary effect.’
it provided no mechanisms for dealing with such changes. ‘By the mid-1990s the combination of intense emphasis on social stability, state control, and capitalist development has resulted in what can best be described as dynamic paralysis.’74 ‘What is likely to keep the Indonesian state an overwhelming political presence for some time to come’, McVey had written in 1994, ‘is the fear that behind the facade of the strong state lies a weak one, and that any opening-up of political participation beyond the urban elite must be handled very carefully indeed.’75

Suharto had in effect built a regime, not a state, nor a nation. It depended on foreign investment, conservative ideology, political patronage, and military power. It lacked a reliable legal system, an objective police force, a salaried bureaucracy. Perhaps it had too much money at its disposal. It had, it thought, no need to tax fairly, no need to secure that political sanction for taxation which was to form a critical element in state-building in the West. It had also eroded the organisations of a nascent civil society. Change came far more dramatically in 1998 than even the most expert observers had thought possible. The disorder that accompanied it – though less than might have been expected – partly resulted from the lack of means of resolving disputes or accommodating change.

Most serious of all, the regime had applied its repressive approach when faced with demands for regional autonomy, which had been further constrained by the regional government law of 1974.76 The central government acted like the Dutch who considered us ‘not yet able and competent to be independent, telling us that a period of probation and transition was required’, Frans Seda said. ‘[W]e took it as an insult. But how is this colonial attitude essentially any different from the approach of current power-holders to the question of regional autonomy?’ There were shortfalls in human resources and finances, regional bigotry, problems that needed sorting out. ‘But they do not diminish the urgency for a breakthrough in the issue of regional autonomy, because this is a matter of survival for the unity and integrity of the Indonesian Republic.’77 The Suharto regime failed to respond. Its fall was accompanied by an unprecedented separatism.

Nationalism in late twentieth century Southeast Asia was not the perquisite only of the independent states and their ruling elites. There were ‘sub-nationalisms’ and ‘unsuccessful’ nationalisms, some of which were to seek independent statehood. In general it takes a great deal to overcome ‘scepticism about the attainment of sovereignty’,78 though once it has been roused, and once its leaders have secured an opportunity for fulfilling a ‘hegemonic’ project in respect of their followers, it is even harder to put down. The intensification of economic and social change, and the tendency to meet it by intensifying authoritarian rule, provided a perhaps essential spur in late twentieth century Southeast Asia. The independent states faced regional opposition in the early postwar decades, but it did not usually assume a separatist form: it sought to change the
framework or direction of the state rather than to break away from it. The approach was changed by the differential development and political exclusiveness that marked the late 1960s and beyond. None of these nationalisms have yet succeeded: the one possible exception proves the rule.

Comparison helps to give the reason. In many respect the ‘new’ nationalisms unsurprisingly resemble the old. Elite and masses are bound together by an idea, even though their perceptions of it may differ. That idea seeks the sanction of history, even though the sense of ethnic unity may have been constructed more recently. That unity is constructed in part by reference to others, if not by them as well, though no longer merely the Western colonialists. The example of others in what had become a world in which – at least rhetorically – there was no other form of the state than the nation-state was a powerful one, perhaps even more powerful than before. In this sphere, however, lay also the major difference, and it overrode all the similarities. ‘Nationalists’ struggling against ‘imperialists’ had received the support of other ‘nationalists’: the newly independent supported those who would be independent. But that no longer applied if ‘nationalists’ were struggling against nation-states who had become independent. The exceptional success was enjoyed only in East Timor. Its incorporation by Indonesia in 1976 had never been recognised by the UN. Its right to self-determination could thus be seen in terms of the dissolution of the Portuguese empire.

In May 1968 Datu Udtog Matalam, five times Governor of Cotabato, proclaimed the desire of the inhabitants of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan to secede from the Philippines and establish an Islamic state, calling the secessionist organisation the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM). He was an establishment figure aligned with the Liberalistas, pushed out when Marcos supported a Muslim Nacionalista against him. But, invented by his opportunism, separatism took on a life of its own. The growing violence in Mindanao, and the perception that the state favoured the Christian settlers who had moved south, produced three results, as Thomas McKenna argues. It attracted international attention: Libya threatened to aid Philippine Muslims. It prompted Nur Misuari to set up the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1971. And it led the ordinary Muslim to look for protectors other than the datus or traditional chiefs. New leaders might secure mass support.

Opposition to the Philippine state was not new in the south: it had continued throughout the Spanish period and only superior American force had broken it. Suggestions that the opposition was unified, or that it was based on a sense of ‘Moro’ identity, or indeed that it was inspired by Islam, belong rather to historiography than to history. The Moro identity, McKenna argues, was shaped only in the American period, and indeed by US policy, turning a pejorative Spanish term into a self-conscious identity.
The notion of a Philippine Muslim nation, Bangsamoro, has ‘little or no resonance among the movement’s rank-and-file adherents’. They followed, however, the leadership of Nur Misuari, educated under the assimilationist Commission on National Integration (CNI) programme of the 1950s, ‘[a]n unintended consequence’, as McKenna puts it. The irony was not unfamiliar in the history of nationalist movements. It was intensified and it was more tragic because the nationalist movement was directed not against an empire but a nation-state, against what Nur Misuari termed in 1977 ‘Filipino colonialism’.

The ‘secessionist movement’ was adduced as a reason for Marcos’ declaration of martial law in September 1972, though sectarian violence was on the wane, and Udtog had been silent for a year. ‘The imposition of martial law was, in fact, the proximate cause, not the consequence, of an armed Muslim insurgency against the Philippine state, and it led to an unprecedented level of violence and disruption in Cotabato and all of Muslim Mindanao.’ A major rebellion broke out in Sulu in February 1974. The town was bombarded. But force, Marcos realised, could not suffice. The other measures he took were predominantly symbolic. They sufficed, however, to damp down the struggle. Representatives of his government and the MNLF met in Tripoli and reached an agreement providing for autonomy and a ceasefire. Marcos implemented it on his own terms. The regional governments he set up were ‘essentially hollow, and productive of cynicism, frustration, and resentment’.

The draft constitution of 1986 promised an autonomous ‘Muslim Mindanao’. That alarmed sections of the Christian population, much increased by internal migration, but Republic Act 6649 provided for a plebiscite, and in that, held in November 1989, only four provinces voted for autonomy, and not a single city. In 1996, however, Ramos made a peace agreement with the MNLF, and Nur Misuari became governor of the Autonomous Region and chairman of the Supreme Philippines Council for Peace and Development. Were these to be instruments of an incorporation in the Philippines state that was not assimilationist?

In Aceh, by contrast to Moroland, the people shared the religion of the majority of the population of the nation-state, though their concept of it differed. The people, again by contrast to Moroland, had shared with the majority a struggle against the colonial power. Aceh had, however, a strong sense of identity, focused on a single sultanate, unlike Moroland. It had a long history, culminating in a long and bitter war with the Dutch terminated only in the early twentieth century. Acehnese nationalists might now deny that they were ever part of the colonial state, and even that they were part of the successor Republic, but that would be at the very least to exaggerate.

The Dutch had ended the war not merely by violence but by accommodation. The war emphasised Islamic leadership, that of the ulama. The
Dutch turned to the territorial chiefs, the uleebalang, and so, later, did the Japanese. The revolution was an opportunity for the ulama, led by Daud Beureu’eh, to overthrow them, and the Republic appointed him military governor in 1947. After independence, however, the central government’s policies worked to the advantage of the uleebalang, while Sukarno’s insistence that Indonesia was a national not an Islamic state provoked the ulama. In September 1953 Daud Beureu’eh proclaimed the Islamic State of Indonesia. ‘We do not want to separate ourselves from our brothers and sisters in other regions . . . but at the same time we refuse to be treated as stepchildren or left to live like slaves.’ The regional revolts after 1955 gave Aceh some leverage. Daud Beureu’eh aligned himself with the PRRI of the 1958 rebellion, but former associates negotiated with the government to establish the Special Province of Aceh, and in April 1962 the martial law administrator authorised implementing ‘elements of Islamic law’.

The New Order took a less conciliatory line. In other parts of Indonesia it relied on traditional groups and on extensive patronage. In Aceh the uleebalang were too weak to revive, but the expansion of secular education was producing a new elite, and they were seen as a ‘new uleebalang’.

The strategy was undermined, however, by the perception that the central government was exploiting Aceh. Its energy reserves were a bonanza for Indonesia in which Acehnese were not sharing. The Lhokseumawe Industrial Zone was an enclave, and few of the rewards of development, as distinct from the incident pollution, went to Acehnese. Golkar’s share of the vote declined in Aceh as it rose elsewhere. It recovered only after the appointment of an Acehnese as governor. But, as he said, the villagers tended to see the regional government, because of its association with the centre, as ‘just the same as the Dutch’.

That was the theme of the secessionist movement. The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) was founded in October 1976 by Tengku Hasan M. di Tiro, a businessman descended from an ulama hero of the Dutch war. ‘During the last thirty years’, his Redeclaration of Independence asserted in December 1976, ‘the people of Aceh, Sumatra, have witnessed how our fatherland has been exploited and driven into ruinous conditions by the Javanese neo-colonialists.’ ‘Indonesia exists on the principle of the territorial integrity of the colonial empire: and an empire is not liquidated if its territorial integrity is preserved. Thus Indonesia is still an unliquidated colonial empire with Javanese replacing Dutchmen as conquerors.’ Jakarta was itself in thrall to the Westerners, Indonesia ‘their best neo-colony’.

In the 1970s the activities of the movement were limited, and so was its support. The Indonesian army (ABRI) was able to break it up. But it re-emerged in 1989–90, some 250 of its 750 men trained in Libya, getting funding from Acehnese in Malaysia, also a place of sanctuary, and securing local support mainly from lower social strata. ABRI’s programme of terror and resettlement did not deal with the basic issues. Indeed it was
provocative, and the Acehnese technocrats – the new uleebalang – were ‘behind to Jakarta for their positions’ and unable to alter central policy. With the collapse of the Suharto regime, Acehnese leaders sought to advance their national cause rather than to join the reformasi campaign. In May 2000 President Abdurrahman Wahid negotiated a humanitarian pause with the GAM. Another was negotiated through the Henry Dunant Centre in December 2002, but it did not last. The army ‘went in’ again in 2003. It has, as Tim Huxley argues, a vested interest in such conflicts: they offer opportunity to the individual and they support the organisation’s case for a continued leadership role in the Indonesian state.

The notion that Tengku di Tiro enunciated in his Redeclaration was, of course, the very reverse of the policy that the colonial powers and the UN had followed. That policy, too, Indonesia had applied in West New Guinea. The Dutch did not make it over in 1949, and no agreement over its future was subsequently reached between the two parties. Somewhat paradoxically, Sukarno won public support at home for his campaign to secure West Irian, and support abroad from the Afro-Asian group at the UN, the clinching argument being simply that it was part of Indonesia. Somewhat paradoxically, too, the colonial power took up the cause of self-determination for the Papuans, asserting that its objective was to enable them to make a choice about their future. The two contradictory principles embedded in the state system and in the charter and declarations of the UN were thus put at odds, but it was not surprising that the Indonesians finally won their point. What Tengku di Tiro criticised was indeed the way decolonisation took place. ‘If we are ... to liquidate the empires of the past’, the Canadian J.W. Holmes told the UNGA First Committee in 1957, ‘I see no reason why we should impose forever on peoples now dependent a pattern of nationality for which the only justification would appear to be the imperial structure from which they have emerged.’ But decolonisation led that way.

The Dutch had speeded up the process that was to lead to the creation of a Volksraad, envisaged by their 1949 decree for the administration of New Guinea. Regional councils were created, the first elected one in 1959, and early in 1961 elections were held for a New Guinea Council. Pro-Indonesian parties took part, but most favoured Dutch rule, followed by self-determination. At the end of the year the Council agreed to name the country West Papua and on 1 December 1961 the Morning Star was raised alongside the Dutch Tricolour. It did not fly for long. The US had avoided coming down on one side or the other in the dispute. In face of Sukarno’s sabre-rattling and the support he was securing from the Soviet Union, however, the Kennedy administration now decided in Indonesia’s favour. After prolonged negotiations, the Dutch agreed to transfer the administration to an interim UN Temporary Executive Authority from 1 October 1962. The Indonesians were to take over on 1 May 1963.

At a meeting of the West New Guinea Council – to which the Dutch
referred the agreement, though only for advice – many spoke against it, a ‘death warrant’, as Nicholas Jouwe put it. Only 9 councillors supported it out of 28. The chairman called for another vote. Half walked out, including the 5 Dutch members, and the remaining 14 voted 12 for and 2 against.

Self-determination was confined to ‘an act of free choice’ – not even a referendum – to be held in 1969. The agreement did not provoke much criticism, however, at the UN, then much influenced by the Congo crisis, where the West was thought to have encouraged the Katanga breakaway. It was adopted 89.0.14. Among the abstentions was Dahomey. ‘[M]y government’, said its representative [Zollner], ‘cannot endorse arrangements whereby a people of 700,000 is transferred from one power to another under a bilateral treaty concluded without previous consultation with the party chiefly concerned, the Papuan people.’

Nor was any state likely to insist that the act of free choice should be genuine. The West, in particular, wanted to appear supportive of Indonesia’s new anti-communist leader, Suharto. The aim of the Bolivian diplomat, Fernando Ortiz Sanz, appointed as UN Representative for West Irian in 1968, was, as the British embassy put it, ‘to contrive a formula whereby the Act of Free Choice will result in affirmation of Indonesia’s sovereignty but will also represent a fair reflection of the people’s wishes and stand the test of international opinion . . . no easy task.’ An impossible one. *Musyarawarah* with consultative assemblies – preceded by ‘brainwashing’ from Ali Murtopo and Opsus (Special Operations) – produced what Ortiz Sanz called a ‘unanimous consensus’ for staying with Indonesia.

In fact resistance was already under way. Its standard bearer was Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM), and its founders Arfak people, many of them trained in the Dutch-created Papuan Volunteer Corps. But the guerrilla group, Tentera Pembebasan Nasional (TPN), was formed by an alienated Indonesian-trained intelligence officer from Biak, Seth Rumkorem. It was he who proclaimed independence in 1971. Papuan opposition was kept alive by the policies of the Indonesians, more colonialist than the colonialists themselves. Freeport exploited ‘Copper Mountain’ under an agreement of 1967 and timber was cut for trivial rewards. Opportunities were taken up by transmigrants from other parts of Indonesia.

In February 1999, after the fall of Suharto, ‘new urban-based pro-independence leaders initiated a “national dialogue” with President Habibie’. In December 1999 President Wahid visited Jayapura and indicated his support for the use of the word ‘Papua’ and the flying of the Morning Star. That was rejected by the MPR (People’s Consultative Assembly) in August 2000, and it demanded that he take stronger measures against separatist movements. Kongres Papua, meeting in May, had called for independence. That concerned Jakarta. The celebration of ‘independence day’ – 1 December 1961 – was curbed. The clampdown intensified in 2001 – in November Theys Elvay, the Kongres leader, was
murdered, apparently by Kopassus troops – while the new president, Sukarno’s daughter Megawati, warned the Papuans that they could not break free.99

In these years there was indeed speculation about the break-up of Indonesia. That was the result not only of the disorder precipitated by the downfall of Suharto, but also, more specifically, of the breakaway of East Timor. In important ways, however, East Timor was a special case and not a precedent. Though occasionally claimed by Indonesian nationalists, it had not been part of Netherland’s India, the basis of their state. The 1975 invasion – whether or not justified by security concerns – was supported by no such legal claim. Furthermore, the UN perceived the issue as one related to the decolonisation of a European empire. Fretilin, coming out on top of its rivals, União Democracyca Timorense (UDT) and Apodeti, had proclaimed independence on 28 November 1975. The UN was not convinced by the argument that the UDT–Apodeti alliance, allegedly representing the majority of the people, had asked for Indonesian help against their rivals. UN resolutions were, however, ignored. The Indonesians proceeded with an Act of Free Choice, administered by Murtopo, producing the desired result: East Timor became Indonesia’s 27th province. Informally that had US sanction – ‘We wouldn’t recognise FREITILIN [Frente Revolutionaria de Timor-Leste Independente] anyway’, Henry Kissinger had said on the day of the invasion – and the Australian ambassador advised ‘Kissingerian realism’.100 Crucially, however, it was, without UN involvement or sanction, unlike the incorporation of West Irian.

In this case, therefore, ABRI’s characteristic violence not only kept local resistance alive but also facilitated the internationalisation of the issue by a few able leaders. To widespread surprise, President Habibie promoted a prompt act of self-determination. He may have expected it to lead to integration, not independence.101 But it may perhaps also be argued that he recognised that East Timor would not necessarily form a precedent for dealing with West Irian, let alone Aceh, and that by proceeding briskly with the step he would indeed avoid a prolonged and disputatious process in which the fate of those territories might become involved. The referendum, held on 30 August 1999, went in favour of independence. ABRI could not accept the result, and contributed to the violence and destruction that followed. That led to the intervention of a UN force and the construction of another state that, like UNTAC’s Cambodia, testified to a globalist model of the nation-state.

East Timor was fortunate not only in that the UN had not sanctioned annexation in 1976. It also benefited from the contemporary belief – questioned back in the Cold War era, but enhanced in the age of ‘globalisation’ – that at least some small states should and could be made to survive and, of course, become nations. For Indonesia, however, that was
an additional source of apprehension. ‘[T]heories of globalization presume that states are an established given across the globe and ignore the point that in many parts of the developing world, states are only just beginning to establish effective political control over their legally defined territories.’ Trans-frontier flows of goods, peoples, and ideas are not necessarily seen in the positive way they might be in the first world.

Yet they need not be threatening. This book suggests that Southeast Asian leaders put too much emphasis on regime-building rather than on state- or nation-building. Their authoritarian approach undermined not only the democratic implications of their revolution and the constitutions they generally adopted on securing independence. It also undermined the longer-term prospects of ‘development’ itself, while using short-term gains to build extra-state structures or dispense with state structures. Though, again, democracy did not guarantee the tolerance of minorities that some ideologies endorsed – and it was all too easy to take up ‘ethnic politics’ – nevertheless it was better to start on the task rather than defer it: ‘democratisation might be the articulation of the ambiguities of national identity’. The collapse of authoritarian regimes only reveals – as in the case of Suharto’s – the extent to which they failed to solve problems, while removing any mechanism for habitually attempting to do so. As a result they were rarely strong states, even if they were strong regimes. Like the colonial governments, they neglected or opposed civil society organisations. Like them, but with less reason, they were therefore ‘transitional’.

Their failure was shown, too, by the emergence of secessionism. A state indeed needs a measure of strength if it is to avoid or find solutions to intergroup conflict. Those, as Hechter points out, are not necessarily provided by federation or cantonalism or elite cartel. They can only be provided, he suggests, ‘by institutions providing decentralized decision-making within multinational states’. The central state must be ‘a viable source of relevant collective goods’. At the same time it ‘can profit from the social control activities of its constituent groups’. Technology, he suggests, now makes such an approach more feasible. He does not add, though perhaps one might, that it also furnishes minorities with some sources of support that might enhance the possibilities of understanding.

Southeast Asian nations committed themselves to a regional approach, in part in order to limit the further interference of outside powers, in part in order to win economic advantages from them. ASEAN members also agreed to respect the frontiers of their states and to avoid interference and the encouragement of subversion. Again, however, it might be possible, within that framework, to make more positive use of the organisation, and indeed of the civil society contacts that are growing up within the region.
Part IV

Historiography

In historiography, as in life, the on-going search for lasting clarity and consistent categories represents the triumph of hope over experience.

Heather Sutherland
‘History in a certain sense is the Holy Book of nations’, wrote Nikolai Karamzin. ‘It is the chief thing, the indispensable thing. It is the mirror of their existence and their deeds, a tablet of revelations and laws, the testament of the forebears to posterity, the amplification and explication of the present and an example to the future.’ He was writing of Russia. But history could not only serve the state; it could serve in the creation of new states. For example, it helped the Czechs, then under the rule of the Habsburg dynasty, build up their claim to national existence. For them history, like music, was a means of sustaining their identity when its political expression was impossible. The historiographical counterpart to Bedrich Smetana was Frantisek Palacky, recovering the Czech past ‘virtually single-handed’. It was again a piece of sleight-of-hand, as A.J.P. Taylor recognised, ‘the classic legerdemain of nineteenth-century Austrian politics’: the nationalists were appropriating the achievements of dynasts and peoples of the past, and projecting back into the past the concept of the nation that they now wished to create, often writing indeed of national ‘awakening’.

‘As a tool of nationalist ideology, the history of Europe’s nations was a great success, but it has turned our understanding of the past into a toxic waste dump, filled with the poison of ethnic nationalism, and the poison has seeped into popular consciousness.’ The ‘critical history’ of Leopold von Ranke had been more or less coterminous with the emergence of the nation-state in Europe. The Gesellschaft für altere deutsche Geschichte, a private organisation started in 1819 by the Prussian statesman Stein and others to promote the cause of German unification, began the publication of a great collection of medieval sources, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. ‘Holy love of the fatherland inspires us.’ Could ‘objectivity’ stand the strain? There was a tension between the nation and the nation-state and ‘critical history’. The new historiography could support a ‘national’ history, but it could also undermine it. What should an historian – subject or citizen – then do? Had he been set free from the task of ‘court historian’ only to be faced with a new obligation? Or indeed with a conflict of obligations, between his loyalty to his ‘nation’ or his ‘nation-state’ and his
loyalty to an increasingly professionalised ‘discipline’ that concerned itself, in Ranke’s phrase, with ‘things as they really were’?

The year in which Ranke published his history of the Latin and Teutonic nations, 1824, was also the year of the treaty in which the British and the Dutch divided the Malay world in an unprecedented way, the year, too, in which the first Anglo-Burman war began. How was the history of other parts of the world to be fitted into ‘objective history’? How far would ‘objective history’ shape the perceptions of the past in other parts of the world? Indies native history should be included in the curriculum, Radjiman urged the Volksraad in Batavia in 1918. ‘For the native people to know this history is for them to know themselves. It is necessarily connected with regaining our self-confidence with regard to a judgment of what is good or bad for our future.’ Would Ranke’s concept itself survive these further pressures? Working that out was in itself an historical process, in part dependent on other historical processes, and like them also dependent in part on individual initiative. State-building and formation brought with it a Rankean type of approach to the past. Nationalists appropriated its achievements and imitated its methods.

The process was begun by the general processes of globalisation in the early nineteenth century – improved communications, printing, education, missionary work – and by the endeavours of scholars, travellers and administrators. It was continued as a largely capricious outcome of colonial state-building, its search for information, its provision of education, its wish to exhibit its wares, its responsiveness to the growth of metropolitan curiosity and professional development, its own endeavours. The structure of the Dutch regime prompted research into adat. The Chief Commissioner of British Burma, Sir Arthur Phayre, began a tradition of history-writing in the Western style. ‘Capricious’ outcome or not, there was of course the risk that this history, however objective it sought to be, would be ‘colonial history’. Much of it indeed set out to be just that.

It was continued, too, by the activities of the nationalist movements that were themselves in part the capricious outcomes of the activities of the colonial states. The past, even if uncovered by the Europeans, might be appropriated for use in contesting their dominance. Sri Vijaya, an early commercial empire based in southern Sumatra, was ‘rediscovered’ by the French epigraphist Georges Coedès in 1918, just at the time when an ‘Indonesian’ nationalism was taking shape, and the evidence of past greatness was welcome. French stress on the past glories of Angkor was a catalyst for Khmer nationalism. ‘If our people were capable of building Angkor, we can do anything’, Pol Pot was to declare in 1977. History could serve to inspire the elite. It might also be a means of rallying the masses, giving them a sense of the past but also a sense that they were participants.

With the establishment of the nation-state, the process became more
complicated still. The state itself took a stronger interest in national history. In part that was the more or less automatic result of its expansion of education, in which it was assumed that the teaching of history formed a component. That assumption was reinforced by a sense that history, as Radjiman had urged years before, could serve the purpose of nation-building. Indeed history – and what was later called ‘heritage’ – came to be part of the panoply of the nation-state. It needed heroes and sites of memory along with flags and development plans. But that involved a new series of problems, felt particularly by professional historians, whose numbers had increased both inside and outside the countries concerned. If a national history was to be written, how did it relate to the existing ‘colonial history’? Would the changes required involve a change of perspective or a challenge to the discipline itself? How would a local historian reconcile his duty as a citizen with his calling as an historian – his national and his international obligations – if they came to clash? Was the role of the ‘foreign’ historian to keep aloof or to play a part? Such questions had to be faced, moreover, in a ‘global’ context in which the Rankean concept of ‘objectivity’ had itself come to be challenged, though not overthrown.

The earliest nationalist movement in the region, like European movements, sought a ‘usable past’. Jose Rizal documented the lost Eden, as Ileto puts it, in his edition, published in Paris in 1890, of Antonio de Morga’s *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (Mexico City, 1609), the work of a Spaniard written soon after the acquisition of the Philippines. His introductory note was addressed ‘To the Filipinos’. ‘It is . . . the ghost of the civilization of our ancestors that the author will now call up for you. . . . If the book succeeds in awakening in you a consciousness of our past, now erased from memory, and in correcting what has been distorted and falsified, then I shall not have worked in vain, and on this basis, small though it may be, we can all set out to study the future.’

A generation after the creation of an independent state, he was echoed by Renato Constantino in *A Past Revisited* (1975). Historians must make ‘a systematic and patriotic effort to synthesize the experience of the past’ so that ‘a concrete vision of the future’ might be obtained. Rizal’s device had been simpler – to evoke the precolonial past – but was now insufficient. Synthesising a longer past was more difficult, for it was not a ‘national’ past. To make Lapu-lapu – who had killed Magellan – a ‘national hero’, as Usha Mahajani did, was to create a history that professionals might find useless, even harmful, even though a politico like Jose B. Laurel could call him ‘the first Filipino to hurl his defiance against foreign domination’. The search for national heroes could indeed be directly at odds with the cause of nation-building itself: it could be divisive. The 1998 celebrations went for inclusiveness, but the Ramos administration ruled out according Bonifacio a state burial and declaring him the first president, as petitioners requested: ‘the special and distinct national honor sought for him in this petition cannot be wholly and fully granted
... without doing injury to historical truths and realities and doing injustice to national interests and unity’.13

The pantheon of Indonesian *pahlawan nasional* (national heroes), built up from the 1950s as ‘an attempt to hold together the disparate and even centrifugal traditions of Indonesian history’, ranges widely: it is, as Taufik Abdullah puts it, ‘a family album’, but extending from Sultan Agung to Silas Papare.14

The past indeed offered Indonesian nationalists an ambiguous legacy. The Hindu–Buddhist empire of Majapahit is a case in point. Prapanca’s poem of 1365 depicted its prosperity and its glory. Without the Dutch expedition against Lombok in 1894, it would not have become widely known. But the philologist Dr J. Brandes was sent with the expedition in order to preserve objects of cultural interest from destruction, and the Nagarakrtagama was one of them. Translated by Kern, it was utilised in N.J. Krom’s *Hindoe-Javaasche Geschiedenis*, and its account of the empire found its way into school texts. It was at this time that a nationalist elite was emerging in Indonesia, and Prapanca’s account was an inspiration. Yet it was an ambivalent one. Muslim writers were particularly reluctant to see Majapahit as the symbol for the new Indonesia. ‘Did not the Sultanate of Demak and the Sultanate of Mataram under Sultan Agung resist the Dutch: is that not one of the proofs of the greatness they have left for our people?’15

Even so the independent state was determined to produce a ‘national history’, a concept put forward soon after the 1955 elections had, instead of promoting a new sense of unity, led to a series of regional challenges. The first Indonesian history seminar was held in Yogyakarta on 14–18 December 1957. Though it was organised by Gadjah Mada University and the University of Indonesia, the initiative had come from the Minister of Education, Sarino Mangoenpranoto, and his successor stressed the role of history in nation-building. The main debate on the philosophy of a national history was set out by Muhammad Yamin, another former minister, and by Soedjatmoko, a publicist and diplomat. Yamin advocated a ‘synthetic’ approach, in which the nationalist interpretation he advocated became the means of organising and presenting the facts.16

Nations seemed to need their myths, Soedjatmoko reflected, and ‘for quite some time the Indonesian historian will be confronted with demands for corroborative evidence for existing myths or for new myths’. At the same time, he would not enjoy ‘the comparative isolation of his nationalist colleagues of earlier times in other countries’, and his history would have to ‘stand up to other, non-Indonesian, accounts of what has taken place’. He would have, too, to draw on ‘several different types of historiography, among them the Malay, Macassarese-Buginese, Javanese, European, and modern Indonesian’. That could only make him more aware of the subjective nature of his enterprise, both in regard to ‘so-called historical facts’ and ‘general presentation’. ‘While in Western histo-
riography the question of historical subjectivity and objectivity became an issue only at the end of a long period of development, modern Indonesian historiography, in its infancy still, is already possibly too familiar with the subjectivity of man’s thought and vision.' The modern Indonesian historian would also have ‘to reconcile or transcend the different regional historical traditions, in a way that is acceptable not only to most modern Indonesians but also to those from the regions concerned.'

It is, he concluded, the task of the historian, ‘with the fruits of his endless efforts, constantly to feed and refresh historical consciousness as a creative impulse in the life of his nation.’ That was bound to create problems for its practitioner ‘at a time when such fierce and exclusive loyalties are demanded. . . . Yet he may find sustenance in the awareness that he is leading a breakthrough to a new vision of life and society for his nation, based on man’s willing assumption of his freedom and responsibility in relation to history.’

The second national seminar on history was held on 26–29 August 1970. By then the regime had changed, and the thrust of the seminar also differed from the first. It was less concerned with a discussion of fundamental issues than with preparing the way for writing the proposed national history as a collaborative work. The main specialism of the central figure in the enterprise, Sartono Kartodirdjo, lay in social-economic history. In approaching national history, however, he concluded that the socio-economic focus was insufficient on its own. He offered what he called an ‘integrationist’ approach. ‘Even though the plurality of Indonesian society is quite tangible, the national history which is to be constructed is definitely not just an aggregate of regional and local histories; but rather an amalgamation of those histories which function interdependently as parts of a coherent whole or system.’ The historian had to pay ‘special attention to interconnections between the parts, as well as to the networks built up by social, economic, political and cultural processes through the ages . . . the integration process gradually created a unity which is manifested in its ultimate form in present-day Indonesia.’ The ‘tracing of the process of integration will form a meaningful unity to Indonesian history.’

Twenty years after it appeared in 1975, Taufik Abdullah reviewed its achievement. More research had been done, new historiographical approaches had been adopted, and better information was available. Many of the old challenges remained, however, presenting themselves, it might be, in different forms. Several ‘silenced historical voices’ had now begun to be heard again. A national history had to give attention, not only to them, but to ‘shared experiences and commonly remembered events’. He suggested that a national history, a symbol of integration and unity, which ought to satisfy the requirements of critical academic scrutiny . . . should also be an intellectual
lens through which the nation can ‘make its peace with the past’. A
national history should be a lesson on how the nation has dealt with
the many conflicts and tragic events of the past, as well as a vision of
how it continues its march towards an ever-renewed noble dream.21

Thai historiography did not have to reckon with a phase of colonial
rule. It did, however, have to reckon with the impact of the West. History
‘had never been employed as a means to prove Thailand’s territorial sov-
ereignty, or to forge greater political unity under the semi-centralized
administration. All that was to change drastically with the arrival of colo-
nial regimes in Southeast Asia.’22 A Western-style historiography, which
came to be known as the prawatsat historiography, superseded the tamnan
or legendary accounts and the phongsawadan or royal chronicles. As
Kobkua Sawannathat-Pian suggested, it comprised three main schools, all
accepting Western methodology and philosophy, all aiming at a popular
national audience, but differing in emphasis. One school, associated with
Prince Damrong, emphasised the role of the monarchy in maintaining the
unity and independence of the state. A second emerged after 1932, associ-
ated with Vichit, and emphasised the concept of the nation. A third was
more emphatically ‘academic’.

Like the historians of Europe, Damrong and his colleagues eagerly
gathered material within Siam and overseas. The first library, the Vaji-
ranana Library, was established in the Grand Palace in memory of
Mongkut in 1881. It collected and printed many chronicles, and also
records in English. Refounded as the State Library in 1905, it acquired
new premises in 1917. ‘The Library . . . is evidence of the progress of our
beloved Thai nation’, declared Vajiravudh.23 He employed Coedès, who
published the inscriptions of Sukhrotai.24 By 1932 the library had 200,000
books, the origin of the present National Library.25

If history was important to the absolute monarchy, it was important,
too, to the People’s Party that overthrew it in 1932. It promoted a nation-
alist school of history, presenting Thailand ‘as a modern unified nation
under a constitutional system of government, which possessed a glorious
and heroic past encompassing its rulers and commoners alike’.26 Its
leading figure, Vichit,

focused on nationalism as the heart of all the [sic] historical events.
He put aside the role of the monarch, predominant in the writings of
the phongsawadan and of Prince Damrong. Thus Thai history was
interpreted according to the purity and glory of the Thai race . . . . His
interpretation of Thai history showed uncomfortable similarities to
Nazi and Fascist writings of the period.27

A different approach to Thai history – not included in Kobkua’s typo-
logy – was offered by the Marxist approach of Jit Phumisak, who wrote
both during the relative freedom of Pibun’s final years and in jail under Sarit, and whose works became ‘very popular’ after 1973. 28 ‘[V]ery much concerned with anti-imperialism and the collaboration of the Thai ruling-class with foreigners’, he divided Thai society into two classes, the sakdina, those who owned the means of production, and the corvee labourers and slaves, whom they oppressed. ‘The studying of history is the heart of studying social development, a major key which opens to right actions. The sakdina realizes this fact, therefore, they have controlled the study of history in their hands, and used this subject for their own class’s benefit.’29

In French Indo-China the Europeans imported the practices of their historiography. They founded the Ecole Française d’Extrême Orient in 1898, a title that reflected the larger imperial aspirations of the period, but produced distinguished works on the countries of Indo-China itself, not only, of course, on the modern period. It was not, however, merely historiographical example that produced modern Vietnamese historians. They were fired above all by the intensity of their desire that Vietnam and the Vietnamese spirit should survive. To that end it was necessary to borrow from the West but not to be swamped by it. It was also necessary to take an attitude towards the long-standing Vietnamese historical tradition.

‘Vietnamese take history very seriously’, David Marr wrote in 1979, ‘possibly more so than anyone else in Southeast Asia.’ And not only at the elite level. Even the poorest farmer in traditional Vietnam could recount his lineage, knew the basic ritual history of his village, and could identify ‘several Vietnamese culture heroes who had fought the Chinese, Cham or Khmer’. Local families and clans kept genealogical and biographical records. Local scholars wrote poetry ‘suffused with historical nuance’. The king and the high mandarins preserved detailed records and determined ancient policy guidelines.30 But if these practices were associated with a sense of identity, they were no more, though no less, than possible constituents of a sense of nationhood.

Furthermore, they did not conduce to innovation, nor even to the sense of change or the possibility of bringing it about, even at the highest level. Like the Chinese from whom they borrowed, the Vietnamese used an examination system for recruiting mandarins that, while deeply concerned with history, minimised change. ‘The bureaucratic chroniclers who were the original authors of Vietnamese documents often refused or were unable to recognize socio-economic change when they saw it. . . . Bureaucratized history was relatively changeless.’31 To use the past to promote change implied a recognition of change in the past that such records were designed to obscure rather than to describe or analyse.

The early twentieth century nationalist Phan Boi Chau may, Marr suggests, be ‘considered Vietnam’s first modern historian’. Stirred by Vietnam’s predicament, he was influenced, too, by concepts of progress and Social Darwinism, filtered through Chinese and Japanese
interpretations. He abandoned the old historiographical approach, based on dynasties, good and bad kings, wise and evil advisers, and
drew the conclusion based on comparative historical analysis, as well as personal observation, that the previous Vietnamese concept of the state, emphasizing a particular relationship between ruler and subject, had to be discarded in favour of a state defined in terms of citizenry, territory and sovereignty. Of these three components citizenry was the most important – people who were alert, increasingly well educated, and motivated by generalized patriotism rather than personal fidelity to a leader.\[32\]

‘[H]is vision of what the masses might be thinking and wanting to do was very limited.’\[33\] His interest in heroes was indeed in keeping with tradition. Much of the rediscovery of the Vietnamese past in World War I and inter-war periods also took a biographical form. ‘The focus was overwhelmingly on leaders of anti-foreign struggles, dynastic founders, and military figures.’ Some were even admitted into ‘the carefully screened and approved colonial school texts’, and after 1935 ‘censorship restrictions were eased enough to allow publication of a number of biographies dealing sympathetically if still cautiously with Vietnamese who had fought the French only decades earlier’\[34\] For the nationalists the heroes were sources of inspiration, exemplars of action. The historiography of these years paralleled their political adventurism.

Another strand in historiography paralleled the anti-colonialist resort to Marxism. ‘While the search for heroes occupied front stage, another type of historically oriented publication was marching in from the wings.’ That emphasised impersonal forces, broad trends. ‘Although some writers tried to assume a posture of scientific detachment, the underlying objective was obviously to add new conceptual weapons to the contemporary Vietnamese armoury.’ But how did they relate to Vietnam’s history? Forming the Vietminh in 1941, the Indo-Chinese Communist Party (ICP) determined to mobilise it as well. Ho Chi Minh set the tone by ‘pounding out on his portable typewriter’ a poem called ‘The History of Our Country from 2879 B.C. to 1942’, emphasising resistance to foreign aggression and the peasant-based Tay-son defeat of the Chinese in the late eighteenth century.\[35\]

In divided Vietnam these two historiographical trends were in a sense also partitioned. The *History–Geography Review*, published in South Vietnam from 1966, often focused on major figures, particularly those of southern origin, who fought against the Chinese or against the French. ‘In their evaluation of historical figures, historians in the South tended to glorify nationalism and to emphasize the role of historical figures and regions in the history of Vietnam as a whole.’\[36\] The *Literature–History–Geography Review*, later called *Historical Study Review*, was published in the
north from 1954. The history of war was the most popular topic, the object being ‘to strengthen the nation’s determination and to mobilize the people for resistance against the American invaders’.37

After unification ‘[t]he separation and consequent lack of communication between historians in the former two parts of the country slowly disappeared’, and in 1988 a conference was called to elect the Central Executive Committee of the Association of Vietnamese Historians. ‘The main achievement of Vietnamese historians in recent years has been the formation of a large group of historical researchers with a spirit of nationalism and expertise in different branches of history. These historians have restored the authenticity of national history by systematically editing a series of works on general history.’ Doi Moi, the Renovation Policy – with which, as Hue-Tam Ho Tai puts it, ‘History lost its capital H’ – revealed, they agreed, their limitations. ‘[T]here was a period when Vietnam was cut off from the outside world and the writing of Vietnamese history did not benefit from international exchanges and cooperation. Many new theories and methods of investigation did not reach Vietnam . . . there was also little interest in the study of foreign countries’ histories.’38

Burma/Myanmar was going down a different track. There, too, the colonial state had, partly purposely, partly capriciously, provided for the development of Western-style historiography. Phayre was the first official to engage with Burmese history, but by no means the last. The most famous of them was J.S. Furnivall, a member of the ICS in Burma from 1902 to 1925, who helped to found the Burma Research Society in 1910. His own contributions included *The Political Economy of Burma* (1931) and *The Founding of Leviathan* (1939) and he compared Burma and Netherlands India in *Colonial Policy and Practice* (1948). He advanced the concept of the ‘plural society’.39 But he was most remembered in Burma for his practical gestures of support to the young nationalists, providing adult education for the young graduates of the new university, and opening on campus the only real bookshop in the country.40 The University of Rangoon itself became a centre for the study of Burma’s history well before it was separated from India. There D.G.E. Hall – later to become the first professor of Southeast Asian history in London (1949), responsible for many graduate students from the region, and the author of the pioneering history of the region (1955) – laid the foundations not only of his own reputation but also of the academic study of the Burmese past, recruiting G.H. Luce from the English department, nurturing W.S. Desai’s research in the records.

Independent Burma established a Historical Commission in 1955. That remained in existence, but in 1991 the state set up the Universities Historical Research Centre to conduct research in Myanmar history and publish books and journals on it, headed by Ne Win’s wife, Ni Ni Myint.41 Attending a conference it held, Craig Reynolds was conscious not only of the formal censorship rules, set out in the Printers and Publishers Registration
Act 1962, amended 1989, but also of informal and self-censorship. Furthermore, history is encompassed by what Houtman calls Myanmafication. It was still, Reynolds thought, worth taking part. ‘The public sphere has been narrowed to the size of a pinhead; the marketplace of ideas is shut tight.’ He argued that ‘engagement’ would ‘do something about the size of that pinhead’. One way was ‘to find the little spaces where it is possible to speak even in the face of constraints that academics would not ordinarily accept’.42

In Brunei the ‘public space’ is far more than a ‘pinhead’, but the realm of historiographical debate is not without constraint, formal and informal. Like other new ‘nations’, it has an interest in the past. The Muzium Brunei, created in the 1960s, began its journal in 1969, ‘an important event in a State which has no seats of higher learning’, as the then Chief Minister put it.43 The Brunei State Archives were established in 1975 under the jurisdiction of the Museums Department, becoming the National Archives of Brunei Darussalam in 1983.44 In 1982, as ‘full independence’ approached, the Brunei History Centre was opened, concentrating on the study of Brunei history, the collection of documents, the publication of two journals. In 1985 a university was established, including a department of history.

There was indeed plenty to do: to find and utilise Brunei sources as well as foreign; to relate the history of the larger sultanate of the past with the smaller nation-state of the present; to train Brunei professionals. At the same time, it was necessary to take account of the development of the state philosophy, Malay Islamic Monarchy. In that context, the Vice-Chancellor of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam argued, ‘it is vital for Brunei to know its own history correctly and objectively’. Introducing the papers of the conference on national history and historiography the History Department held in 1994, he insisted that:

the study and teaching of history must not be reduced to the production of propaganda. Thus we expect that the historians of Brunei . . . [should?] be given the widest opportunity to research and write a full and uncorrupted history. Only then can we truly benefit from the lessons of history in developing and refining the philosophy of our modern nation-state, and ensuring the survival of all that is most positive about our society.45

A ‘Brunei-centric’ view of the past should not seek to present it as ‘uniformly glorious’, lest ‘we . . . blunt the thinking capacity and critical awareness of our students. In Singapore, it has been argued, a ‘regressive identity’, emphasising past glories and traditional culture, was ‘not really available’, and the PAP therefore chose ‘nonideological pragmatic values’.46 It also promoted ‘oral history’, establishing an Oral History Unit in 1979. It began with a project on political developments in Singapore
1945–65, paying special attention to the struggle with the communists, later going on to the 1965–74 period; and another on pioneers of Singapore, trying ‘to capture the pioneering spirit of Singapore’s successful entrepreneurs and their role in the economic and socio-cultural transformation of the nation’. The Unit moved beyond the elite. ‘It is important to record the experiences and views of our policy-makers and leaders, but at the same time we should not ignore the voices of the common man.’

That would influence the development of a national history. ‘Oral history will become more important as we seek to discover our roots and find our links between the present and the past.’ The Director emphasised the point.

The memories and remembrances of our ancestors and the landscape they fashioned is significant because it is our link to our past which explains and helps us understand ourselves and our present. More important, these memories and remembrances help us identify who we are, where we came from and can go from here. It is a past not documented in the official Straits Settlement records of the East India Company . . . or in the files of the Colonial Office in London.

The past they documented was ‘about the administrative and constitutional systems and political developments which defined us as colonial subjects and our island as a colony’. The colonial past had defined us today as a nation-state with fixed boundaries and citizenry conducting affairs within an agreed constitution. But the primordial ethnic affairs of our ancestors and the landscapes they fashioned are also still existing. . . . The challenge is to ensure that these primordial ethnic memories and sentiments help us to better understand ourselves and the world we are creating, without challenging the rational conduct of affairs as happened in our colonial past.

Speaking at the Brunei conference, Edwin Lee of the National University of Singapore welcomed the approach Yen Ching-hwang adopted in his A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya (OUP, 1988). He incorporated ‘two enterprising techniques. He visited the Chinese association houses to talk to the elders there rather like an oral history interviewer, and he read inscriptions on temple walls, like an archaeologist and/or epigraphist’. By contrast he decries James Warren’s approach from the ‘underside’. The coolies, says Warren, are ‘national – although still anonymous – heroes’. That Lee cannot accept. ‘National history may be defined as the record of leaders, achievers and other contributors, the sum total of all that makes up the nation, and that which expresses the
national essence. National history should rightly also be about values, 
ideals and principles. The problems of a historian working in the present 
but thinking back to the past surface here, with the added burden of a 
national agenda.’ Warren’s vision was

far removed from the world view that Singapore adopted at the start, 
in 1819, and has honoured ever since. It is a view of the world as a 
market-place, free but competitive, where there will always be winners 
and losers, rich and poor, elites and non-elites. Can the historian’s 
notion prevail against the competitive ethos that is the leit-motiv of the 
city state’s history?53

Yet the people had to be involved. Their ‘memory’ could be invoked. 
An oral history project on the Japanese occupation had indeed been 
inaugurated at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) back in 
1973, ‘given the value of oral history for this period on which there are 
few documentary records’, starting with the elite, then going beyond 
them.54 In 1992, on the 50th anniversary of the fall of Singapore, 
‘popular memory was rehabilitated and the collective experience of 
shared suffering and hardship during the war and the Occupation was 
crystallized into the founding myth of Singaporean nationhood. . . . A 
new politics of memory in the service of nation-building drew on the war 
as its defining moment’.55 Prime Minister Goh drew the lesson of this 
history – as Lee Kuan Yew had – continuing the PAP government’s 
emphasis on survival. ‘If we want peace, we must work for it, and if neces-
sary, fight and die for it. . . . We may seek the help of others, but, in the 
end, we must rely on ourselves. . . . Without struggle there is no Singa-
apore.’56

In Malaya and Singapore the colonial phase witnessed a growing 
interest in Western-style historiography, and institutions were estab-
lished that promoted it, among them the Royal Asiatic Society Malayan 
Branch and the Raffles Museum. The former published much of the 
work of the scholar-officials, the most productive of whom was Sir 
Richard Winstedt. The only tertiary institutions before the Pacific War 
were the King Edward VII College of Medicine, the Raffles College of 
Science and Humanities, and the Sultan Idris Teachers Training 
College. Postwar, the University of Malaya was established in Singapore. 
When Malaya became independent a branch was established at Kuala 
Lumpur, subsequently becoming the University of Malaya. Both that and 
what was to become the National University of Singapore had lively 
history departments.

‘The history taught at Raffles College was mainly British and European 
and no noticeable effort was made to encourage the students to take an 
active interest in the country’s history.’57 In 1918, however, history, called 
tawarikh, was introduced at the Malay teachers’ college, while Winstedt
and Daing Abdul Hamid bin Tengku Muhammad Salleh of Selangor produced the *Kitab Tawarikh Melayu* (The Book of Malay History) for use in the Malay schools for which the college trained teachers. By 1940 tawarikh was understood to mean ‘a record of true happenings. It was no longer the preserve of court literati and members of the ruling elite; it had been popularized’, though its focus was still fixed on kerajaan, government. The radical Ibrahim bin Haji Yaakob became ‘the first Malay to use history to advance his political cause’.

The first professor at the University of Malaya was C. Northcote Parkinson, and with C.D. Cowan, later Hall’s successor in London, he made ‘a radical change . . . turning his students towards Asia in general and towards Malaysia in particular’. One of his pupils, Wang Gungwu, reflected on the historian’s task after ten years of independence. History was ‘to be used responsibly and intelligently to help us in the task of building a nation’. No country could

do without a knowledge of its past successes and failures, the origins of its existing customs, laws and institutions, and the rationale of the hundreds and thousands of decisions made on the country’s behalf. This is the more so in a country desiring to move towards a more sophisticated democracy in an age when the needs and aspirations of the ordinary citizen are expected to be taken into account. For the *rakyat* [people] to participate in public affairs . . . they need to know the historical basis of what they have at the moment in the hope that they will know what to expect in the future.

To serve in that task, history must be as objective as possible. The historian ‘must be committed to believing that knowledge is practical and valuable only when it is accurate’.

It was a much less optimistic Wang Gungwu who, after the 1969 crisis, spoke at Flinders University in 1970. He spoke of a ‘precarious’ tradition of scholarship, of countries that did not need it, of governments that saw no point in it. In that context ‘much of Southeast Asian scholarship can be seen as ambiguous and weak’. The scholars were ‘torn between patriotism and the desire to impress their teachers and peers in the West, and are frequently neither patriotic nor original’. In addition, scholars were constrained by political instability, ‘a great enemy of free thought and significant scholarship’. A bibliography of Southeast Asia would testify to ‘the wide range of scholarly efforts over the past century’, but the bulk of them ‘written by scholars outside the region . . . Are they to be turned aside as having served their purpose, or as serving only the purposes of non-Southeast Asians, while the region’s own scholars continue the unequal struggle against their own history and politics?’ The situation was at best ‘transitional and insecure, hinged for the moment on the balance between the minimum of tolerance in the region for scholarship and the
minimum of interest outside the region for scholarship on Southeast Asia’.  

The ‘moment’, it might be said, has proved a long one, so far as scholarship on Malaysian history is concerned. In the region, the authoritarian trend did not destroy the practice of Western-style history, perhaps – like other introduced species – more vital than expected. In Malaysia the insistence on the use of Malay at university level tended to limit the international audience for what was written, but it may have tended to bring the two historiographical trends closer together. The recent Festschrift for Cheah Boon Kheng – ‘a truly Malaysian historian’, as Barbara Andaya calls him – suggests as much, with essays in both English and Malay, tied to his wide-ranging interests, in social history, in oral history, in ‘history from below’, in the Japanese occupation.

What does ‘Malaysian history’ signify at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Barbara Andaya concludes by asking.

On what basis should historians decide which ‘voices’ and which representations should be included in larger studies that look beyond a specific locality? . . . Will ethnicity continue to anchor historical research? Should historians be conceptualizing ways to bridge the historiographical separation between the peninsula and the Borneo states, or does this strain the evidence too much? Will the national borders between Malaysia and Indonesia, or Thailand and Indonesia, continue to lay down investigative parameters?

The political elite does not hesitate to evoke a ‘Malaysian’ past. The final section of Prime Minister Mahathir’s The Way Forward (1998) begins with a quotation from Sejarah Melayu on the greatness of Melaka, presumably intended, as Virginia Hooker has suggested, ‘to prove that Melaka (and therefore the Malays) was at one time a city of power and influence and that Malaysia could recapture that glory if his development programs are successfully implemented. He is using a particular representation of the past to “show the way forward”.”

Professor Hooker goes on to describe the Museum of National History at the northern end of Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur. It covers Sarawak and Sabah as well as the peninsula, and in the section on ‘nationalism’ it includes among the ‘many examples of Malaysians struggling against the power of the British’ not only the assassins of J.W. Birch, the first Resident of Perak, and the Kelantan rebels of 1915, but also Mat Salleh, the Sulu-related opponent of the North Borneo Company, Rentap, the Iban opponent of the Brooke Raj, and Rosly Dhobie, assassin of Governor Stewart of Sarawak in 1949. That, as Hooker says, is a ‘forced anachronism. . . . The individuals labelled as nationalists in Sabah and Sarawak . . . could not have been struggling for an Independent Malaysia, an entity which did not exist until 1963. But as a frame in the narrative of
In historiography, as in other fields, nationalism in Southeast Asia has taken forms that differ among states, but have many commonalities. Nation-, state- and regime-builders share a desire to use the past, but it is at odds with the search for objectivity that still lies at the centre of the discipline. In this and other fields, again, a comparative regional approach possesses explanatory value, even though the hold of regionalism on the states and peoples of Southeast Asia is yet tenuous.

This book has sought to pursue such an approach to nationalism with the help of tentative definitions and chronologies which in turn it may help to confirm or refine. If it has in this respect a distinctive feature, it lies in its attempt to give its definition a chronological dimension. The definitions and chronologies may in turn be useful in respect of other regions, and thus both help in understanding them and in mainstreaming the study of Southeast Asia.

In some ways, indeed, Southeast Asian countries differed not only among themselves but differed in general from the rest of the world. In particular they underwent a Japanese conquest, in some sense a dual colonisation. Even so their nationalisms can be shown to share common features with other nationalisms and so contribute to a comprehensive approach. Their origins are found in economic, social and political change. They develop also under the impact of outside factors, oppressive, exemplary, supportive, sometimes a mixture of them. Their development does not stop with the gaining of political independence, if that is secured. Nationalism is a component of state-building, and if regimes press it too hard may replicate its challenge to the status quo. Unlikely to disappear in the new phase of intensified globalisation, nationalism is much more likely to take new forms, accommodating it, but also contending with it.
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