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FOCUS **THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NEW AUTHORITARIANISM**

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FOCUS THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NEW AUTHORITARIANISM

New authoritarianism has become a global phenomenon over the past years, and Southeast Asia is no exception to this trend. The current issue of ASEAS 11(1) discusses the rise of authoritarianism in the region from a political economy perspective. It raises questions about the connection between economic crises and the rise of authoritarian regimes, as well as the specific kinds of economic projects that authoritarian regimes pursue. The articles in this issue include an analysis of a Chinese mining project in Myanmar's frontier region as well as a re-interpretation of Thailand's military coup in 2014 against the background of China's Belt-and-Road Initiative and the changing economic world system. Other contributions analyze the continuity and intensification of Malaysia's neo-liberal development paradigms, and the role and potential of National Human Rights Institutions in big transnational infrastructure projects. The articles illustrate not only facets of persistent authoritarian neoliberalism, but they also highlight the dawn of a new Chinese-centered accumulation cycle in world history. They reveal transnational mechanisms of primitive accumulation as well as sophisticated transnational institutionalization processes for the defense of human rights. It becomes clear that any response to new authoritarianism will need transnational cooperation and include a search for more fundamental economic alternatives.

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The Political Economy of New Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia

Rainer Einzenberger & Wolfram Schaffar

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, the deterioration of democracy and the rise of authoritarian forms of governance have been a growing global phenomenon. In the Global North, this became painfully clear not least since the establishment of right-wing governments in Hungary and Poland, or the election victory of Donald Trump in November 2016. Southeast Asia is certainly no exception to this trend (Chacko & Jayasuriya, 2018; Docena, 2018; Kurlantzick, 2014). With General Prayuth Chan-o-cha in Thailand (2014) and Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines (2016), two more 'strongmen' joined the ranks of authoritarian leaders in a region that is departing fast from democratic pathways. They follow a law and order attitude reflected in statements such as that of General Prayuth who warned of "obsession with rights" which could "lead to anarchy" ("Obsession With rights", 2017). Duterte's central message is that the Philippines suffer from elites who care too much about Western notions of human rights and Western democracy (Bello, this volume; Focus on the Global South, 2017; Juego, 2017). Several recent surveys confirm the authoritarian trend in Southeast Asia. The Democracy Index 2017, for example, listed six out of ten nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) as *unfree*, two (Indonesia and Malaysia) as *largely free* and only Timor-Leste as *partly free* (Brunei not included). None of the countries was considered as *fully free* (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018).

Meanwhile, research on *new authoritarianism* has emerged as a dynamic field in different disciplinary and regional epistemic communities. Due to the global scope of the issue, its political relevance and its highly contested nature, emerging debates are very vibrant, and yet fragmented. This fragmentation is mirrored, firstly, in the variety of concepts which are being used – the most prominent being authoritarianism, populism, and fascism – sometimes in combinations or with specifying adjectives (authoritarian populism, populist authoritarianism, right-wing populism, right-wing authoritarianism, authoritarian neo-liberalism, etc.). For this special issue, we will use new authoritarianism as an umbrella term – in singular, without suggesting that it denotes a single well-defined homogeneous concept or regime type (for a different approach see Docena, 2018). Secondly, the dynamism and fragmentation of the debate on new authoritarianism is mirrored in the highly controversial debate about the actors and the social

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base of the turn towards the new authoritarianism (Demirović, Sablowski, Schneider, & Syrovatka, 2018). Thirdly, there seem to be fundamentally differing views on how to conceptualize the link between authoritarianism, neoliberal capitalism, and the economic crisis. On the one hand, there seems to be an emerging consensus that the rise of a new authoritarianism is linked to what has been analyzed as a multiple crisis which started in 2008. Yet, it is highly controversial in how far the new authoritarianism marks the ascent of a nationalist, protectionist – thus anti-neo-liberal – mode of regulation, or rather is connected to a further intensification and continuation of the neo-liberal economic policies (Bruff, 2014; Demirović, 2018).

This special issue contributes to the emerging debate and addresses different phenomena of new authoritarianism in the Southeast Asian region from a political economy perspective. We argue for the need to understand new authoritarianism as connected to the crisis of global neoliberal capitalism and as part of a global trend. In all areas of the discussion, the role of China as a new hegemonic power plays a central role. Against this backdrop, data from Southeast Asia – where Chinese economic, political, and cultural influence is particularly strong – promises new insights and valuable contribution to the general debate.

FROM DEMOCRATIC 'POSTER CHILD' TO AUTHORITARIAN 'PROBLEM REGION'

Not long ago, in the early 2000s, hope for democratic progress in the region was still high (Freedom House, 2005).[1] Globally, the number of democratic countries had increased since the 1970s in a steady process described as "the third wave of democratization" (Huntington, 1991) and spread to Asia in the 1990s (Croissant, 2016). At the end of the cold war, Fukuyama famously declared the "end of history" and the eternal victory of liberal democracy over communism (Fukuyama, 1992). The extraordinary economic growth in the New Tiger States (Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines) appeared to create the conditions for democratic reforms as suggested by modernization theory (Lipset, 1960). With increasing income levels, an educated urban middle class was growing, championed as the 'bearer of democracy'. Indeed, following the early years of the economic boom, mass movements dominated by middle class replaced the old authoritarian regimes one by one. It started with the overthrow of the Marcos regime in the Philippines by the *People Power* Revolution in 1992 (Thompson, 2011). In the same year in Thailand, the *Mobile Mob* mass protests led to the toppling of General Suchinda and the legendary intervention of King Bhumipol (McCargo, 1997). Subsequently, democracy in Thailand appeared to consolidate with the 1997 constitution. In Indonesia, the *Reformasi* movement overthrew General Suharto in the wake of the economic crisis of 1997; and in Malaysia Anwar Ibrahim challenged his former superior Mahathir (Funston, 2000).

However, when the 'third wave' reached its democratic peak in the mid-2000s, progress began to stall or even reverse quickly (Croissant, 2016). In Thailand, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, during his first term in office, had gradually turned into an authoritarian populist (Pasuk & Baker, 2011), cracking down on political dissent, waging a bloody "war on drugs" (which Duterte would copy ten years later), and

1 In its 2005 report, Freedom House categorizes the majority of ASEAN nations as *partly free* or *free*.

stirring up an insurgency in Thailand's south. Yet, after he was re-elected in 2005, the military staged a coup in 2006 and yet again in 2014, re-installing a military dictatorship that has lasted for already five years.[2] In Cambodia, the iron grip of quasi-dictator Hun Sen destroyed any hopes for a democratic government to rise out of the ashes of civil war, with the support of the UN (Hutt, 2017). In Laos in 2012, the (enforced) disappearance of civil society leader Sombath Somphone ended any illusions of a political opening (Fuller, 2013). In addition, Myanmar, the most recent candidate for a democratic transition, has disappointed international observers. Even after the take-over of the civilian government, led by the National League for Democracy (NLD), in many respects authoritarian politics did not recede, raising questions concerning an "authoritarian rollback" (Buschmann, 2017). In particular, the crisis around the violent displacement of roughly 700,000 Rohingya led to an international outcry and condemnation of the former democratic icon Aung San Suu Kyi for not preventing what has been called an "ethnic cleansing" (Beyrer & Adeeba, 2017).

Hence, at ASEANs 50th anniversary - celebrated in 2017 - the political outlook for the region was rather bleak. Since the 2007 ASEAN Charter, a number of reforms have been initiated; in particular, the neoliberal reform agenda of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) (Juego, 2014). Other "principles of the Charter, however, have not been adequately implemented. That's particularly true when it comes to issues concerning human rights, democracy, fundamental freedoms, good governance, and the rule of law" (Khoo Ying Hooi, 2017, for a different perspective see Middleton & Pritchart, 2013). The widespread assumption that increased economic growth would lead to an increased level of political freedom proved wrong over the long run. In addition, the role of the middle-class is controversial, with the urban middle classes in Thailand supporting fascist-like, popular, anti-democracy movements (Naruemon & McCargo, 2016; Schaffar, 2016, 2018), and middle classes in the Philippines approving extrajudicial killings of so called 'drug users' by a populist full of disdain for human rights (Focus on the Global South, 2017). The question remains how this trend of stalled or even reversed democratization can be conceived of, and what makes this region unique compared to global trends?

TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION OF THE RISE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

The emerging debate on new authoritarianism is dynamic as well as fragmented. This is true for the global discourse as well as for the debate on and in SEA. To lay the foundation for our contribution, some remarks on the history and definition of central concepts and terms are due. What we subsume under new authoritarianism can be discussed on different conceptual levels: on the level of *regimes*, of *actors,* and of *ideology*.

Regimes

The term authoritarianism in the sense of a regime type was established by Linz (1975). Similar to the tripartite regime typology of Aristotle or the Weberian tripartite

2 Thaksin was the first Prime Minister in the history of Thailand ever re-elected to serve a second term. For an analysis of the political polarization, see Naruemon (2016).

typology based on the criterion of legitimacy, Linz uses the criterion of pluralism and contrasts authoritarianism (with limited pluralism) with democracy (unlimited pluralism) and totalitarianism (no pluralism/complete conformity). Authoritarianism, according to Linz, is a regime type where traditional institutions, like the family, church, or corporatist organizations, are used for the exertion of dictatorial rule.

Whereas Linz conceptualizes authoritarianism as fundamentally different from democracy, critical materialist approaches see authoritarianism as an inherent feature to bourgeois democracy. Poulantzas (1978/2000) analyzed rising authoritarian tendencies in the democratically consolidated welfare states of the 1970s and coined the concept of *authoritarian statism* (Kannankulam, 2009, p. 223-224). On a descriptive level, Poulantzas' work shows parallels to the characterization of Linz' typology. Nevertheless, he is writing from the perspective of critical state theory and analyzes the authoritarian tendencies as result of the economic crisis, which began with the oil crisis in 1973 and put Western democracies under pressure. These ideas have recently been taken up by Lukas Oberndorfer in his concept of *authoritarian constitutionalism* (Kannankulam, 2016; Oberndorfer, 2013) – a specific strategy of the EU to enshrine neoliberal policies of austerity in quasi constitutional treaties on the EU level, and defend them by means of increasing suppressive measures.[3]

Populism

Populism is one of the most frequently used categories in the current discourse on the rise of new authoritarianism. Roughly speaking it denotes a situation where a "rhetorically versed leader" appeals to or "seduces the dull populace" by means of "false promises" (Boos, 2018, p. 10). Because of its analytical vagueness, and the strong tendency to be used as political slogan, there have been frequent appeals to abandon the concept.[4] A second quite different strand of the debate on populism stems from Latin America, where leaders in the early and mid-20th century achieved a substantial improvement of the situation of the marginalized parts of the population through social reforms.[5] The special feature shared by these presidents, which owed them the characterization as populists, was that they mobilized the electorate by emotionally appealing language. For Southeast Asia, the term was taken up by Mizuno and Pasuk (2009) and recently by Hadiz and Robison (2017), and Hewison (2017), largely drawing on the structural functionalist tradition and a pejorative meaning.

3 Very similar, but including a focus of the electoral dynamism inside the nation states, Alex Demirović (2018) speaks of authoritarian populism. Docena (2017) speaks of authoritarian populism in connection with Duterte.

4 The current exponential use of the concept is, according to Boos (2018), more an expression of the lack of concepts on the side of the Left, and should be analyzed as a phenomenon of its own. Boos identifies two major historic sources of the concept of populism: One source is the Russian Narodniki – the movement of "going to the people" of young Russian intellectuals -and the US-American People's Party in the late 19th century.

5 Those leaders included Lázaro Cardenas (Mexico), Getúlio Vargas (Brazil), and Juan Domingo Perón (Argentina).

Fascism

Similar to authoritarianism of populism, fascism is not clearly defined and has a strong undertone of a political slogan. The term fascism is derived from a term for Italian vigilante groups – (*Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* or FIC) – which were supported by the capitalists in northern Italy, with the aim of fighting the increasing influence of organized labor and communist groups in factories and among rural laborers. Under Mussolini's leadership, these vigilante groups grew strong enough to abolish the parliamentarian system and establish an authoritarian regime based on violence. Theories focusing on the dynamism of class struggle and the role of political violence in the early stages of the rise of fascism (Saage, 2007) have recently been used by Bello (2018) for a cross-regional and diachronic comparative analysis of regimes in Italy, Chile, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. Schaffar (2016) and Schaffar & Naruemon (in print) focus on vigilante actors in the social media as a form of fascist groups and follow a similar interpretation of the situation of present day Thailand.

Ideology

All authoritarian regime types discussed here – authoritarianism, populism, fascism – primarily denote a mode of governance. However, in the discourses centering around the respective concepts we find literature that can be characterized as an "ideational approach", trying to carve out a specific ideological content connected to the respective concepts. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, p. 6) define populism as a "thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people". Fascism, on the other hand, is understood as a political ideology whose mythic core is a palingenetic (meaning the idea of 'national rebirth') form of populist ultra-nationalism (Griffin, 2003).

Certainly, the recent developments in Southeast Asia provide an abundance of data which can be analyzed along these lines: Xenophobic discourses, anti-liberal ideas, the legitimization of the use of violence, the de-humanization of refugees, the anti-gender discourses, the rising LGBTIQ-phobia. In a comparative perspective, however, it seems that the present authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia do not share a common ideology: Thailand with its hyper-monarchy, the Philippines with its preoccupation with drug abuse, or Indonesia with its dynamics connected to Islamic fundamentalism. What unites the new authoritarian leaders, and what might count as a distinctive feature for the entire Southeast Asian region, however, is the recurrence of the Asian Values debate.

Values debate

The idea of 'Asian Values' was popularized in the 1990s by autocrats such as Mahathir and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew (Thompson, 2001). They claimed that Asian values based on Confucianism – with a supposed focus on loyalty towards the family and community – were simply not compatible with the concept of 'Western democracy'

emphasizing individual freedom. This argument has been somewhat revived at times also in the context of Thailand, referring to 'Thai Style' democracy (Ferrara, 2010; Thompson, 2015; Walker, 2006). Yet, several surveys suggest that preferences for authoritarian politics are certainly not limited to (Southeast) Asia. Also in 'settled' Western democracies, an increased support for authoritarian populists led to the rise of right-wing parties for instance in Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands, Denmark, Hungary amongst others. Different from the Asian values debate, the tendency towards authoritarianism has been explained by some as a "cultural backlash in Western societies against long-term, ongoing social change" and increasing liberalization (Norris, 2016).

Actors

After looking at regimes and ideologies, a third dimension of new authoritarianism needs to be considered. Who are the actors behind the new development? Who profits from it? How can we analyze the social base of new authoritarian regimes?

Concerning these questions, a highly controversial debate has evolved in the United States and in Europe, at the example of the rise of Trump or what has been called authoritarian populism in Europe (Demirović, 2018; Eversberg, 2018; Lessenich, 2016; Sablowski & Thien, 2018). The two contradictory and seemingly irreconcilable views are: On the one hand – the analysis that the social base is mainly working-class people, who are the losers of neoliberal globalization and have been abandoned by the social democratic parties (Demirović, 2018; Sablowski & Thien 2018).[6] On the other hand, Lessenich (2016) and Eversberg (2018) focus on the role of middle-classes and their chauvinistic motivation to defend their social status. This line of argumentation can also be found in Southeast Asia. Saxer (2014), for instance understands the "rage of the middle class" in Thailand as a fight between elites during a transformation crisis. In this case, conservative elites resort to fascist ideologies (Schaffar, 2016) to gain legitimacy, and apply extra-constitutional measures to turn back the re-distributive project of Thaksin's populism. Bello (2018) too, sees a crucial and ambivalent role of the middle-class in the dialectic of "revolution–counterrevolution" against a perceived revolutionary threat by a "progressive movement that is able to use the law and established institutions to promote social reform" (p. 34).[7]

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NEW AUTHORITARIANISM

The authors in this issue take a political economic perspective in order to understand the rise of authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia as well as globally. This distinguishes the present special issue from analyses cited earlier, which rely on a modular approach to democracy (Croissant, 2016), treat the political system as largely detached from the surrounding economic situation, and identify authoritarianism as an endogenous dysfunction of the political system. The approach pursued here departs

6 Walden Bello's (2018) analysis of the rise of Duterte mirrors this view, too.

7 Due to space limitations, we will throw only a spotlight on open questions in this field in the Research Workshop section of this issue (Schaffar).

from the parallel nature of the phenomenon at this critical juncture of late capitalism, as there seems to be an intrinsic connection to the crisis of capitalism. Already decades before the financial crisis of 2008, Poulantzas (1978/2000) developed the concept of authoritarian statism, which seems strikingly contemporary. This concept explains how states try to manage economic growth under crisis tendencies resulting in "intensified state control over every sphere of socio-economic life combined with radical decline of the institutions of political democracy and with draconian and multiform, curtailment of so-called 'formal' liberties" (Poulantzas, 1978/2000, pp. 203-204). While the concept focused on western capitalist states, it is also applied to dependent states in the periphery (Chacko & Jayasuriya, 2018; Jayasuriya, 2018). Even though it displays certain fascist elements, according to Poulantzas authoritarian statism does not equal the historic form of fascism. As a result of the 'crisis of crisis management', producing increasing unemployment, inequality and social tensions, authoritarian states increasingly resort to nationalist ideologies, sometimes combined with religious elements to manufacture hegemony and support for its neoliberal re-structuring (Demirović, 2018; Docena, 2017).

The connection between the economic crisis and the rise of authoritarianism seems well established. What is contested, though, is the question whether there is a specific kind of economic project underlying the new authoritarian regimes. One line of argumentation – following Poulantzas – is that new authoritarian regimes mean a further intensification of neoliberalism. Another position claims that the new regimes pursue an anti-neoliberal project – most clearly mirrored by the new mercantilist 'XY first' economic policies – and in non-Western countries a move to abandon western style neo-liberal globalization.

This is where the role of China comes into play. China itself has undergone a massive capitalist transformation over the past decades, arguably rescuing global capitalism from the crisis of Fordism following the 1970s (Harvey, 2005; Neuwirth, 2018). Yet as China's own capital accumulation cycle is experiencing a decline, it set out to plan a massive infrastructure investment program abroad as a way of "spatial fix" to its overaccumulation problems (Harvey, 2001; Zhang, 2017). Following its 'going out' strategy at the turn of the millennium, China soon became the largest investor in the Southeast Asia Region. In 2013, it announced its massive *One Belt One Road Initiative* (OBOR), also known as *Belt-and-Road Initiative* (BRI). With an investment volume of several trillion USD, supported by the BRICS Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (Chen & Mardeusz, 2015), the plan involves massive infrastructure development (including harbors, ports, highways, railways, etc.). Eventually, it should cover over 60% of the world population, potentially overshadowing the US Marshall Plan. The strategy is to export capital and labor and integrate as many countries as possible into its economic and political sphere, thus replacing the *Washington Consensus* with the *Beijing Consensus* and diminishing US strategic influence in the region. While US imperialism has used free trade agreements and (forced) market liberalization as a means to extend its political influence (Harvey, 2001), China is building connections through infrastructure development. Thereby a heavy debt creates a dependence or debt bondage which some have called "creditor imperialism" (Chellaney, 2017).

According to Kneuer and Demmelhuber (2016), China can be regarded as one of the world's new "authoritarian gravity centers" which may serve as a role model "for

the countries in their geopolitical proximity, making emulation, learning processes or policy transfers effective means of autocracy promotion" (p. 777). While China may not actively promote authoritarian regimes, it is at least providing indirect support through its economic engagement with authoritarian regimes. This might also result from China's quest for stability in the countries, which are the destination of large-scale investment. The political consequences can be observed for instance in Cambodia where longtime prime minister Hun Sen, relying on China's full support, openly repudiated Cambodia's former Western sponsors by dissolving the main opposition party and closing down an independent US-American-owned newspaper (Hutt, 2017).

In his case study, Einzenberger (this issue) discusses the politics of dispossession around a planned Chinese mining project in Myanmar's frontier at the beginning of the political transition in 2011. The study constitutes a showcase of the influence of China – mediated through Chinese companies and investment – on political processes in the neighboring countries, resulting in (de-)democratization processes and counter-movements. Myanmar is well known for its dependence on China, which enabled the authoritarian military regime's survival, also in times of international sanctions. Rich in resources and sharing a long border, the country is considered by China as a resource frontier to be integrated into its economic orbit in order to fuel its economic growth. Due to the regime of dispossession described in the article as *frontier capitalism*, in the early years of the political transition there was a considerable increase of anti-dispossession movements. While reconciliation with the US and Europe opened up some political space for civil society to contest dispossession, in recent years, Myanmar has re-oriented itself again towards China, in particular due to its worsening diplomatic ties with Europe and the US in relation to the 'Rohingya crisis'. Interestingly, while the Rohingya have been scapegoated as an economic and political threat, millions of Chinese immigrants in the countries' north, de-facto dominating the economy, have been left out of the public discourse.

Looking at the case of Thailand, Schaffar in his article discusses another example of how de-democratization processes can be linked to the impact of Chinese projects. His approach, however, focuses on a macro-level and on different actors at a national level. He argues, that the high-speed railway project proposed in 2013 – connecting Thailand via Laos to China as part of Chinas Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI) – played an important role in intra-elite conflicts leading up to the 2014 coup. Taking a longue durée perspective, and drawing on world-systems theory, he interprets the Chinese mega-infrastructure projects as the material backbone of what André Gunder Frank (1996) called the "ReOrientation" of the world economy towards China. Against this background, the coup d'état in Thailand appears as an example of the upheavals in the phase of transition between two accumulation cycles.

Bonn Juego's article adds to the discussion in how far the new authoritarianism in Southeast Asia is new and linked to a specific new economic project (such as Chinese investment or the Chinese BRI). His very topical article departs from the recent historic elections in Malaysia where the longtime opposition Pakatan Harapan defeated the Barisan Nasional, which had ruled the country since its independence in 1957. Yet, this likewise marked the return to power of Mahathir Mohamad, one of modern Asia's notorious strongmen and leading proponent of the concept of Asian Values.

The new ruling government under Mahathir promises regime change through institutional reforms, the revival of populist economic policies, and the investigation of massive corruption allegations against the nine-year tenure of former premier Najib Razak – including the review of lucrative megaproject deals with China's government and corporations under the BRI framework. Juego concretely discusses the institutions of the prevailing regime where the promised reforms shall start and where change must come. Through a critical assessment of the evolving political economy of development from Mahathir's first stint as prime minister in the 1980s/1990s to the administrations of Abdullah Badawi and Najib at the turn of the 21st century, Juego reveals the continuity and progression of what he calls the regime of "authoritarian neoliberalism", or a neoliberal economy embedded in authoritarian politics in contemporary Malaysia.

Middleton, in his contribution, focuses directly on the nexus between economy and authoritarianism and discusses the dynamics of transnational business activities and human rights violations in the region. His analysis sheds light on economic actors from Thailand and Malaysia and on a transnational aspect of the work of human rights commissions in these countries. Drawing on the concept of 'extraterritorial obligations' (ETOs) – duties of states towards protecting human rights beyond borders (ETO Consortium 2013) – he argues that appropriately mandated National Human Rights Institutions and an active civil society empowered with political and civil freedoms are necessary for the further institutionalization and effective utilization of ETOs in the region. He shows this dynamism on the example of two dams under construction on the Mekong River's mainstream, namely the Xayaburi Dam in Northern Laos and the Don Sahong Dam in Southern Laos, and the role of the Thai and Malaysia national human rights commissions.

The four articles in this issue focus on different aspects of the authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia and their connection to economic regulation and crises. They illustrate facets of persistent neoliberalism, but also the contrary – the dawn of a new accumulation cycle of world history. They reveal transnational mechanisms of primitive accumulation as well as sophisticated transnational institutionalization processes for the defense of human rights. There is no coherent picture or answer to the question whether the new authoritarian regimes are connected with a specific economic project or a regional flavor. However, what becomes clear is that any response to the rather bleak outlook can only be transnational cooperation in the search for more fundamental alternatives.

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Frontier Capitalism and Politics of Dispossession in Myanmar: The Case of the Mwetaung (Gullu Mual) Nickel Mine in Chin State

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Since 2010, Myanmar has experienced unprecedented political and economic changes described in the literature as democratic transition or metamorphosis. The aim of this paper is to analyze the strategy of accumulation by dispossession in the frontier areas as a precondition and persistent element of Myanmar's transition. Through this particular regime of dispossession – described as frontier capitalism – the periphery is turned into a supplier of resource revenues to fuel economic growth at the center. The paper takes up the case study of the Mwetaung (Gullu Mual) nickel mine on the border to Chin State and the "politics of dispossession" around this project. It analyzes the strategies, motives, and objectives of a broad ad-hoc coalition that emerged in 2013 to defend their access to land against forms of legal dispossession by the state. In this case, the attempted dispossession has been successfully challenged, by making use of new opportunities for political participation.

Keywords: Chin State; Frontier; Mining; Myanmar; Politics of Dispossession

INTRODUCTION

Following the 2010 elections, Myanmar seemed to go against the general trend in Southeast Asia towards increasing authoritarianism. While other countries in the region were returning to authoritarian rule (Thailand, for instance, entering its fifth year of military dictatorship in May 2018), Myanmar's elected semi-civilian government seemed to push towards political liberalization. Especially after the electoral victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in December 2015, hopes were high for a 'speeding-up' of a democratization process under the leadership of Nobel Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi whose stated aim is the "emergence of a democratic federal union" ("State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's", 2017).[1] Indeed, the majority of observers and academics understood

1 Even though Aung San Suu Kyi was barred from officially becoming president for constitutional reasons, she assumed the newly established position of State Counsellor and ministerial posts. She became the de facto leader of the semi-civilian government. President Htin Kyaw, installed by Aung San Suu Kyi, remained largely in her shadow, getting little attention and media coverage. However, he resigned recently and was replaced by Win Myint who is said to be as loyal to Aung San Suu Kyi ("Myanmar Parliament Elects Suu Kyi", 2018).

the recent developments as an ongoing transition from authoritarian rule under a former military junta towards a more liberal electoral democracy. They point to a number of major political achievements, such as the release of political prisoners, easing of media censorship, growing freedom of expressions, new ceasefire agreements and more (Egreteau & Robinne, 2015, p. ix). Others are taking a more cautious approach and characterize the process as a "'protracted transition' in which oppositional forces, ethnic groups, and the military have started to renegotiate political power" (Bünte, 2016, p. 370); or as a "caretaking democratization" highlighting the continuing influence of the military and the top down nature of the political reform (Egreteau, 2016). Thus, a core question concerns the structural changes and continuities which influence the country's political trajectories. Egreteau and Robinne (2015) consequently opted for the notion of a "metamorphosis" rather than a "transition" to describes the "deep-seated, incremental and observable transformations but with elements of resilience if not (frustrating) persistence, such as the political salience of the armed forces" (p. 4). At least since the renewed outbreak of violence in Rakhine State in 2012 and military confrontation in the north of the country, this became painfully clear (Burma News International, 2017; Doyle & Rigby, 2016). The "unprecedented violence" against self-identifying Rohingya involving security forces, civilians, as well as militant armed groups, attracted massive international attention and was qualified by the UN as an act of "ethnic cleansing" (International Crisis Group, 2017; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2017).

Analyzing Myanmar's transition from a political economic perspective, Jones (2014a) suggested that the "military has been left 'holding the ring' placing broad constraints on the reform process" (p. 156). Rather than Myanmar becoming the next democratic poster child he sees the country transforming into a more "normal" Southeast Asian state, with state power serving only a "narrow social constituency" (pp. 167-168). Pointing towards a scenario potentially similar to the Cambodian experience, he describes Myanmar's recent capitalist development as "highly rapacious and coercive" in an early phase of primitive accumulation (p. 167). A precondition for the recent transition (contrary to earlier attempts) was the incorporation of the periphery through an emerging "ceasefire-capitalism" (Woods, 2011). The co-optation of ethnic armed groups in the border areas through business concessions and transnational capital allowed the regime to re-focus on its roadmap to 'disciplined democracy' and ensure its own economic survival (Jones, 2014b). The specific accumulation regime, mainly based on the extraction and dispossession of land and natural resources in the *frontier* areas through authoritarian means (including but going beyond ceasefire agreements) is termed here as frontier capitalism. It builds on the concept of the frontier which traces the particular process of accumulation, enclosures, and contested property regimes in areas of fragmented authority as a result of coercive incorporation into the national state and global circuits of capitalism (Geiger, 2009; Kelly & Peluso, 2015; Peluso & Lund, 2011).

The aim of this paper is to analyze frontier capitalism and the related politics of dispossession as a persistent element of Myanmar's transition. While it does not intend to further theorize Myanmar's political transition on a macro level (see Jones, 2014a, 2014b), it offers empirical evidence and insights into the dynamics of the transition at the sub-national and local level. It looks at the particular case of the Mwetaung

(Gullu Mual) nickel mine project in northern Chin State, a politically relatively 'stable' area under ceasefire since 2012. While in other frontier areas local resistance to dispossession led to the breakdown of ceasefires and renewed armed conflict (Brenner, 2015; Burma News International, 2017), civil society in Chin State is making use of increasing political spaces to voice their resistance. By focusing on grassroots mobilization during the period from 2013 to 2014, the article aims to contribute to a growing body of critically engaged literature on the "politics of dispossession" (Levien, 2013a) in contemporary Myanmar (Prasse-Freeman, 2015; Zaw Aung & Middleton, 2016). It documents a notable 'success story' of an anti-dispossession movement which has received little attention in media and academic literature so far (for an exception, see Mark, 2016). The research presented in this paper is part of an ongoing research project on "Contested Frontiers" in Myanmar (Einzenberger, 2016a). It is based on literature review and multi-sited field research conducted between 2015 and 2017 over several months in Yangon, Kalay, Hakha and other locations, particularly in Chin State. Semi-structured interviews and open interviews were conducted with civil society activists, representatives of communities, investors, political parties, local government, and others.[2] In addition to interviews (conducted partly in English and in local languages with the support of local interpreters), the information gathered was cross-checked with documentation provided by the Chinland Natural Resources Watch Group (CNRWG, 2013) as well as (local) English online media sources (Ei Ei Toe Lwin, 2013; Khaipi, 2013; Kyemon & Ju Nine, 2013; Mirante, 2017; Thawng Zel Thang, 2013).[3]

The article proceeds as follows: The first part introduces the theoretical core concepts followed by a summary of the historical background of Myanmar's economic transition from a 'pseudo-socialist' isolated economy to a more liberalized market economy. The second part of the article discusses the empirical findings of the case study with a special focus on the role of local civil society, political parties, and the local government. Furthermore, it explores the importance of land rights and indigenous rights issues for the anti-dispossession movement.

FRONTIER CAPITALISM AND POLITICS OF DISPOSSESSION

From a theoretical perspective, the specific process of (re-emerging) capitalist development in the periphery areas of Myanmar can be framed as "frontier capitalism" (Laungaramsri, 2012).[4] Here, frontier capitalism means the specific "regime of dispossession" (Levien, 2013b)[5], in particular the dispossession of land and natural resources

2 The names of the local communities as well as the names of the persons interviewed remain anonymous in order to protect their identity.

3 I would like to thank the CNRWG for their permission to translate the Burmese language report into English.

4 While Laungaramsri (2012) does not clearly define "frontier capitalism", she argues that "provincial authorities have engaged in widespread transboundary and joint economic enterprises, particularly in the peripheries. Such collaboration, which often bypasses central governance, with chaotic boundaries between what is recognized as 'used (or productive)' and 'unused (underproductive)' resources, along with unclear regulatory control, allow the growth of what I call 'frontier capitalism'" (p. 466).

5 Levien (2013b) defines "regimes of dispossession" as "socially and historically specific constellations of state structures, economic logics tied to particular class interests, and ideological justifications that generate a consistent pattern of dispossession" (p. 383).

in border or frontier areas through authoritarian or outright violent means facilitated by the state for the benefit of a narrow elite. The concept of the *frontier* is a helpful analytical tool to explain processes of incorporation and transition of 'unproductive land' in the periphery into the national economy and ultimately the capitalist world system (Geiger, 2009; Hall, 2012, 2013). Frontiers are defined as sparsely populated areas, close to borders and rich in natural resources, where land and territory is contested. Often the state claims sovereignty over those areas, but in practice falls short of exercising full administrative control (Geiger, 2009; Hall, 2013). Apart from being a zone of transition, the frontier can also be understood as a process "where authorities, sovereignties, rights, and hegemonies of the recent past have been challenged by new enclosures, property regimes, and territorializations" (Peluso & Lund, 2011, p. 667). The corresponding representation of the 'imaginary frontier' as 'wild', 'unused', or 'virgin' serves as a legitimating ideology for its exploitation. Local claims, usage rights, and customary practices are thus ignored or disregarded by the state, to be sacrificed for national development (Barney, 2009; Geiger, 2009; Kelly & Peluso, 2015). Processes of enclosures and primitive accumulation (or accumulation by dispossession) are a defining feature of incorporation and transition in the frontier (Foweraker, 1981; Geiger, 2009; Hall, 2013; Harvey, 2003). To this end, the state (and non-state actors) employ a variety of strategies and mechanisms, including both "the rifle and the title" (Grajales, 2011). This means, capitalist relations are not only achieved by outright violent dispossession but also by other more subtle means such as "legal dispossession" involving the state (Pichler, 2015). Thereby, state legislations (for instance land laws) can play a crucial role in establishing the legal basis for a new land market through commodification of land and codification of ownership. Unsurprisingly, processes of coercive incorporation and dispossession in the frontier are often met with resistance by the local population (Hall, 2012, 2013). They challenge the forced imposition of capitalist relations based on state legislation, which mostly disregard customary practices and local modes of production. According to Levien (2013a), the "dispossession of land creates a specific kind of politics" which he calls "politics of dispossession" (pp. 355-356). This involves forms of resistance mainly targeting the state and applying "physical, political, and legal means to maintain possession against the dissipating force of brokers, and the coercive force of the state" (p. 366). Before discussing the "politics of dispossession" around the particular case of the Mwetaung project in more detail, the next section provides an overview of Myanmar's broader economic transition since the beginning of the 1990s, and its impact on the frontier areas.

FROM BURMESE WAY TO SOCIALISM TO CEASEFIRE CAPITALISM

Since Myanmar abandoned its Burmese Way to Socialism and opened up its economy to international investors in the beginning of the 1990s, the country's economic development was essentially based on processes of primitive accumulation and resource extraction (Bissinger, 2012; Jones, 2014a; Lambrecht, 2004; MacLean, 2008; Schaffar, 2008). The main motive for its 'open-door policy' was the desperate economic situation, after decades of self-imposed isolation and economic mismanagement under military rule, which also triggered the mass uprisings of 1988. After

staging a coup and crushing the uprisings, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) took an "entrepreneurial turn" (MacLean, 2008), offering "the right to exploit the rich untapped natural resources of Burma to foreign investors in joint venture with state enterprises" (Mya Maung, 1995, p. 679). A series of laws, such as the wasteland instructions (1991) and mining laws (1994), were introduced to facilitate a market-based economy and private investment (Franco, 2016; Moody, 1999). The much-needed foreign exchange allowed the military junta to purchase new arms from China, expand its army, and tighten its grip to power against the will of the majority population (Mya Maung, 1995). In particular, Myanmar's neighboring countries Thailand and China were more than willing to exploit the natural resources across their border and establish friendly relations with the military junta. Already a few months after the SLORC takeover, the Thai military and associated companies negotiated concessions for teak extraction in Myanmar, since Thailand's own forests had already been depleted (Bryant, 1997). In the early 1990s, the Yadana and Yetagun pipelines were built by a consortium of international companies to import natural gas from the Andaman Sea to Thailand to secure energy for its fast-growing economy. This caused widespread human rights abuses and environmental degradation (Earthrights International, 2000). A few years later, China started to invest in Myanmar following its 'going out' policy, overtaking Thailand as its biggest investor in 2010 (Inclusive Development International, 2016). China mainly invested in (hydro) power (63%), oil and gas (25%), as well as in mining (11%) (Dunn, Ji, & Peng, 2016; Earthrights International, 2008).

Following the 1990 elections, the military also changed its tactics towards its border areas from military interventions to 'business solutions'. In a process described as "ceasefire capitalism" (Woods, 2011), members of the military regime brokered business deals with ethnic armed groups. Legal concessions for the extraction of natural resources in the border areas and other lucrative business were offered to ethnic elites in return for ceasefire agreements (Jones, 2014b; Schaffar, 2008; Woods, 2011). According to Woods (2011), the Burmese army used "land concessions in ceasefire zones as an explicit postwar military strategy to govern land and populations to produce regulated, legible, militarized territory" (p. 747). The ceasefires "weakened and co-opted much of the opposition" (Jones, 2014b, p. 780) and allowed the military regime to refocus on its roadmap to a 'disciplined democracy' in order to safeguard its long-term political interests. Continuing this approach, in 2011, President Thein Sein initiated a new round of ceasefires, which led to the signature of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2015. Yet, some ethnic armed groups who had already existing ceasefires (such as the Kachin Independence Army) were not included in the latest round. This was partly related to competing claims over access to natural resources in the region (Burma News International, 2017).[6]

As a result of the expansion of ceasefires and increasing exploitation of land and resources, "politics of dispossession" have clearly been on the rise since 2011 (Buchanan, Kramer, & Woods, 2013). Local media has documented land conflicts virtually on a daily basis (for some recent cases, see Htike Nanda Win, 2017; Myint Moe, 2017). Until 2015,

6 The 1994 ceasefire "broke down after the military took control of a KIA outpost near a Chinese-run dam in 2011" (Burma News International, 2017, p. 7).

the Farmland Investigation Commission (installed by the USDP – Union Solidarity and Development Party – government following public pressure) recorded more than 11,000 official complaints related to conflicts over land (Htoo Thant, 2015). Prior to 2012 communities rarely dared to speak out in public, due to heavy restrictions on the freedom of expression and media censorship. Since 2012 people have begun to exercise their 'new freedoms' offered by gradual political liberalization (Bünte, 2016).[7] In particular, several large-scale Chinese investment projects attracted widespread attention in relation to land confiscation and were targeted by public protests. The best-known cases were the Letpadaung/Monywa copper mine near Mandalay and the Myitsone hydropower dam in Kachin State with an investment volume of about USD 3.6 billion (Simpson, 2013). The Letpadaung/Monywa mining case became internationally known due to the violent crackdown of Myanmar security forces on peaceful protestors (including Buddhist monks) (Zerrouk & Neef, 2014). For many it symbolized the continuation of authoritarian means employed by the government to ensure an extractivist accumulation regime even after an apparent political liberalization. Even the former opposition leader and current state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi publicly defended the continuation of the mining project despite heavy criticism ("Aung San Suu Kyi Support", 2013). The Myitsone dam on the other hand has been considered a success story for the anti-dispossession movement. In a nationwide "Save the Irrawaddy" campaign framed in ethno-political opposition to 'Chinese exploitation', a broad coalition could be formed between local ethnic activists from northern Myanmar (in particular Kachin State) and urban based environmental and pro-democracy groups (Kiik, 2016). The hydropower project was finally suspended by President Thein Sein and not continued until today (Einzenberger, 2016b; Oh & Andrews-Speed, 2015). In the following section, I will discuss in more detail the politics of dispossession around another, less known investment project proposed by Chinese investors on the border to Chin State – an area under ceasefire since 2012.

THE CASE OF MWETAUNG (GULLU MUAL) NICKEL MINE IN CHIN STATE

The mining project known as Mwetaung/Phartaung Project (which translates from Burmese as Snake and Frog Mountain) or Gullu Mual (after the local name) is situated right at the border between Chin State and Sagaing Region (see Figure 1).[8] Chin State is part of the western frontier of Myanmar towards India and Bangladesh and is often described as the least developed region in Myanmar, difficult to access, and mostly mountainous. Until recently, the government had little economic interest in the remote region. Unlike the eastern and northern frontier, it was hardly known for large-scale resource extraction, except for some logging (Callahan, 2007). This is partly explained by its particular location bordering Northeast India, itself long isolated and 'cut off' from the rest of India. Armed conflict remained relatively low key in the region with the Chin National Front (CNF) taking up arms only in 1988.[9]

7 At times, protest can take on dramatic forms such as the case of a farmer in Shan State who burned himself to death in protest against the seizure of his land by the military (Wa Lone, 2015).

8 Hereafter, the name "Mwetaung" will be used following the use in the CNRWG report and other official documents (CNRWG, 2013; NMIC, 2013).

9 The CNF is a Chin nationalist political organization founded in 1988 and dedicated to ensuring self-

Nevertheless, following 1988, Chin State experienced considerable militarization and expansion of army battalions and with it regular human rights abuses (Callahan, 2007; Chin Human Rights Organization, 2012; Sakhong, 2010).

The Mwetaung project is the first major extractive industries project recently proposed in Chin State. It is located in Tiddim township in the Natmyaung Reserved Forest area, close to the town of Kalay (North Mining Investment Company Ltd. [NMIC], 2013). Officially in Sagaing Region, Kalay functions as a sort of 'gateway' to nearby Chin State. With around 130,000 inhabitants (Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2014), the majority of which are reportedly ethnic Chin or Zomi[10], it is also an important trading hub along the road to nearby India (bordering the Northeastern State of Manipur). Until very recently, Kalay also accommodated the only university and airport in the vicinity of Chin State.[11] The border between Sagaing Region and Chin State begins right at the end of the town near Kalay University campus at the Chin foothills.[12]

The history of the Mwetaung project dates back to the 1960s (see Table 1), when the Chin geologist Ngaw Cin Pau discovered major nickel deposits in the Mwetaung/Phartaung hills (Barber, Zaw, & Crow, 2017; Vumson, 1986; Win & Myint, 1998). However, for decades, no further plans for exploration progressed. The self-imposed international isolation under the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) (1962–1988) and the lack of capital investment and technology inhibited any large-scale exploitation (Oh & Andrews-Speed, 2015). Following its entrepreneurial turn in the early 1990s, the junta actively promoted foreign investment into mining in several "geologically favorable" areas including the Mwetaung hills ("Invitation to Mining Investors", 1995). In 1994, the military government passed the Myanmar Mines Law in order "to fulfill the domestic requirements and to increase exports by producing more mineral products" (Leckie & Simperingham, 2010). However, it took until the early 2000s before the first plans for an exploitation of the mineral deposits emerged. Prior bids for exploration of the Mwetaung area by Western companies in the 1990s lead to nothing (Moody, 1999). They either shunned the political risk or questioned the profitability (Interview with former employee of NMIC, Yangon, December 2017). Only Chinese companies showed interests in further exploration. A 2008 report listing Chinese investment projects in Myanmar mentioned Kingbao (Jinbao) Mining Co.

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determination for Chin State. Its armed wing is the Chin National Army with more than 200 armed soldiers. About least 70 CNA soldiers were killed during fighting with the Myanmar military between 1988 and 2012. After 2003, fighting with government troops stopped (Burma News International, 2017). The ceasefire agreement with the CNF on state level was signed on 7 January 2012 ("Breakthrough: CNF Signed Ceasefire", 2012).

10 In Northern Chin State, the local population prefers to call themselves Zomi instead of Chin and there is some controversy around the naming. The Zo historian Vumson (1986), for instance, prefers the term Zo because "he believes that names such as Kuki and Chin which originated as abuse names should not be adopted as designation of a people". Sakhong (2010), on the other hand, prefers the term Chin as a name for a collective identity. However, there is no available official data on ethnic categories in the census data.

11 In the meantime – as of 2018 – a new airport is planned near the town of Falam and a new university was opened in Hakha.

12 At one of the first research trips to the region in 2015, I had to pass a checkpoint and show my passport right at the 'border' between Sagaing Region and Chin State, reinforcing the impression that it is more than just an internal administrative border. Until the ceasefire agreement in 2012, Chin State was only accessible with a special permit.

having signed an agreement with the Ministry of Mining No. 3 to conduct exploration and feasibility studies on the Mwetaung (Earthrights International, 2008). According to local residents in the early 2000s, some Chinese workers visited the area for exploration. Yet, the contract was cancelled, and new negotiations were held in 2012 with the North Petro-Chem Corporation of China ("Union Mines Minister Receives", 2012). Finally, in May 2012 a contract for a feasibility study was signed with another Chinese company, North Mining Investment Company Ltd. (NMIC) ("Agreement Inked to Assess", 2012). Around that time, the market price for nickel on the world market had reached a peak of over USD 20,000 per ton (InfoMine, n.d.). The investing company NMIC submitted a feasibility study to the ministry of mining in February, 2013 (NMIC, 2013). According to what little is known about the project plans for the open-cut mining, the project was to cover around 55 acres (about 22 ha), including several buildings for housing, offices, and storage as well as two 15-megawatt coal-fired power plants. The ferronickel concentrates extracted from the mine and produced on site in a smelter would be transported via a newly built access road and the India-Myanmar friendship road to a new jetty on the Chindwin River. From there, the minerals would be shipped to Yangon then further to China (CNRWG, 2013).

Village Consultations and Civil Society Movements

In late 2012, the local population took notice of the planned mining project for the first time. A Yangon-based service company named Asia Guiding Star Services Company Limited (AGSS) assigned by NMIC visited some of the 15 villages surrounding the Mwetaung/Phartaung area to collect data for the environmental, social, and health impact assessments.[13] The service company acted as an initial intermediary between the Chinese investor, the government, and the local population. In this role, the firm tried to put pressure on the village heads to give their consent for the planned mining project:

> Workers from AGSS company came to collect data about the water and the soil; their main point was to get the consent from the local people; it was only the first time we heard about this and it was too early to give our consent, we needed to discuss first; in other villages they tried to meet the village head and get the consent. (Interview with local residents, November 2016)

In order to convince village heads to give their consent, AGSS promised 'development' for the area including new schools, hospitals, roads, and electricity. They generally ignored questions concerning negative impacts, while they highlighted the positive impacts such as jobs. Indecisive about how to respond to the proposal, several villagers contacted local civil society organizations in the nearby town of Kalay. The civil society groups had already been active in civic education and other political awareness raising programs as soon as the opportunity had emerged in 2012. The awareness raising programs included "Basic Understanding of Democracy", "Civil

13 According to its own website, the company has been involved in the construction of the Yadana and Yetagun Gas Pipeline, the Traders Hotel, and many other construction projects during the time of the military regime prior to 2010 (Asia Guiding Star Services Company Limited [AGSS], 2012).

Society Organizations", and, "Development and Democracy". The loose network of local civil society groups organized several rounds of public consultations. Over one hundred meetings and information events were organized within the first few months of 2013 alone (CNRWG, 2013). In the beginning, villagers were divided on how to respond to the proposed mining project, with one faction supporting and the other opposing the project. Previous experience of oppression under authoritarian rule and fear of the central government played a major role in local perceptions. Moreover, the escalation of violence at the Letpadaung mine (located in Sagaing Region) had an intimidating effect. Some of the civil society actors from Kalay were also active themselves in the Letpadaung case before 2012.

> In general what they [the villagers] said is that we have no choice because this is the agreement between the government and the foreign company so it is useless to resist; but in my opinion it was influenced by fears which are rooted in a long history of military oppression; they don't accept it but they at least wanted to take advantage of the company, this was before civil society leaders came for awareness raising. (Interview with CNRWG, November 2016)

Shortly after the first consultations, a broad coalition comprising of affected villagers and urban based civil society organizations (youth groups, student groups, political activists) from Kalay was formed as a 'watch group' on the Mwetaung project. This ad hoc coalition was subsequently officially named the Chinland Natural Resources Watch Group (CNRWG). Remarkably for a majority Chin/Zomi ethnic network in a predominately Christian area was the inclusion of non-ethnic as well as Buddhist groups. Indeed, one of the first big assemblies was held in a Buddhist monastery in Kalay where the head monk actively supported the coalition. Thus, the coalition tried to gain legitimacy and leverage with the Buddhist majority population similar to other protest movements in the country drawing strongly on Buddhist symbolism (Prasse-Freeman, 2015; Zaw Aung & Middleton, 2016). In addition to crossing ethnic and religious lines, it also had a cross-class character (including peasants and urban residents) not uncommon for anti-dispossession movements (Levien, 2013a). Considering itself a loose grassroots movement, the CNRWG opened up a public space for deliberation and consultation on the contested mining project.

> We recommend, if you don't know if it is good or bad, don't make any decision. The conflict was so hot at that time. The group who opposed the project was accused to oppose the development. . . . The government also said like the company; they came together and put pressure on the villagers to sign to agree. After this, our group and the villagers demanded the companies and the government to explain to the public how they work, to explain the plan to the public. (Interview with CNRWG, November 2016)

The Role of the Government and Political Actors

While initial steps towards the exploitation of the Mwetaung/Phartaung hills were already taken under the previous military regime, the first activities on the ground

coincided not only with the early period of the newly inaugurated semi-civilian government, but also with increasing activities of the local government and local political parties.[14] Although vested with limited powers and led by the USDP – a party known for its close ties to the military – the creation of state level political institutions, with a high representation of Chin ethnic parties, provided an opportunity for the civil society network to advocate for more transparency, participation, and democratic decision making (Nixon, Joelene, Kyi Pyar, Thet Aung, & Matthew, 2013; United Nations Development Programme, 2014). One major achievement was to push the Chin State government, including the Chinese investor NMIC, to public consultations. A meeting was held at the town hall in Tiddim in April 2013 with both members of the CNRWG and concerned villagers in attendance. In preparation for the meeting, the network had collected a long list of questions for NMIC in order to demand detailed information on the expected project plan and its potential impacts. Yet due to heated debates and furious villagers insisting to get clear answers the meeting was cut-short by the Chin State government. Subsequent visits by representatives of NMIC and the Chin State government to the affected villages ended without any results. The sticking point was the question about potential impacts and distribution of costs and benefits of the proposed project (CNRWG, 2013). After several rounds of public consultation and deliberation without any clear answers by the mining company and the local government, the majority of the villagers did no longer believe in any beneficial arrangements. Nevertheless, the Chin State government reported to the Union government that villagers had agreed with the mining project (Thawng Zel Thang, 2013). Reportedly, the Chin State minister responsible for mining was facing considerable pressure from the central government in Naypyidaw to ensure consent for the project and support NMIC. Given the mixed experience with the Chin State government and its limited role regarding questions of resource governance (Lynn & Oye, 2014), civil society actors finally turned to Chin/Zomi members of parliament (MPs) at the Union level:

> We changed our way of approaching; we went to the Union Hluttaw. The executive branch was directly influenced by the military; the MPs were a little more flexible than the ministers. The ministers are not elected persons. They don't look at our local people's rights. They don't look down; they look up [to the central government], also this time. Our way at that time was to convince them [Hluttaw MPs] to be on the side of the local people. If they are powerful in their respective parties they will push the ministers, we hoped. And we can say we were successful. (Interview with civil society activist near Mwetaung, November 2016)

While the civil society network was autonomous from party politics, political parties played an important role in the political dispute around the Mwetaung project.

14 "About five parties participated in the 2010 election in Chin State. The National League for Democracy boycotted the election nationally and parties to which it was allied in Chin also boycotted the ballot. The parties that competed in the state in 2010 included the Chin National Party (CNP) and Chin Progressive Party (CPP), representing the Chin people at a state level, and the Union Solidarity and Development Party and the National Unity Party. The two Chin parties each won five seats in the 24-member state hluttaw" (Sithu Aung Myint, 2015). The Chief Minister in the 2010 cabinet, appointed by the president, was Pu Hung Ngai from the USDP – a former member of the army. He appointed the ministers of his cabinet. Pu Kyaw Ngein from CPP was the minister responsible for mining ("Chin State Ministers", 2013).

While their positions seemed to be unclear or even contradictory at the beginning, four of the Chin parties finally set out to conduct their own survey on the Mwetaung case in 2013 to get a better understanding of the local perception.[15] The survey concluded that – contrary to the findings of the state government – the majority of affected villagers disapproved of the project. The report also criticized the involvement of a Chinese company and stated that "local communities prefer mining companies from a democratic country to those from China if the project must proceed, although the majority objects to its implementation" (Thawng Zel Thang, 2013). Towards the end of 2013, the Chin political parties finally aligned their position with that of the local civil society network after considerable grassroots lobbying. A statement was put forward citing "lack of information" and "lack of rule of law" as well as "little benefit" for Chin State, and the parties expressed their "deep concern" on the implementation to the project (CNRWG, 2013). While the Chin National Front (CNF), the only ethnic organization with an armed wing (the Chin National Army) had strong influence on regional and national politics, in particular since the ceasefire agreement in 2012 (Burma News International, 2017), its direct involvement in the anti-dispossession movement against the Mwetaung project is less clear. However, the CNF publicly stated that it rejects extractive industries in Chin State at this moment ("CNF Wants to Halt", 2016).

In November 2013, the speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw (lower house of the Union parliament), Shwe Mann, and regional ministers visited Kalay and met with local civil society. Responding to the concerns voiced by the local population, the speaker promised to ensure that "the project won't damage the lives of people" (CNRWG, 2013). Since 2014, the project has apparently been on hold. According to some residents, NMIC pulled out of the project due to increasing public pressure and local resistance. However, a former employee of NMIC cited failed resource sharing negotiations between the company and the ministry of mines and the declining world market price for nickel (from USD 20,000 to under 10,000) as the main reasons for the pull-out from the project.[16] In any case, local civil society groups see the suspension of activities as a consequence of their own continuous efforts and as a success story of civil society mobilization (Interview with villagers near Mwetaung, November 2016). Yet, according to recent media reports and local activists, other investors, local companies, and investors from India have shown new interest to explore the mining deposits in the area ("CNF Wants to Halt", 2016; Mirante, 2017).

Land Rights and Resource Sharing

An immediate concern for the local people regarding the Mwetaung project was the potential loss of their farmland on which they largely depended for their livelihood. This was despite assurances by the mining company that no village land would be affected or taken (CNRWG, 2013). Given the experiences of other communities

15 According to ethnic media reports, The Chin National Party (CNP), Chin Progressive Party (CPP), Ethnic National Development Party (ENDP) and Asho Chin National Party (ACNP) met with more than 700 people from 14 villages and over 10 organizations in both Chin State and Kalay from 2 to 9 September 2013 (Thawng Zel Thang, 2013).

16 According to the former NMIC employee, the company was dissolved after the related concessions by the Myanmar Investment Commission had expired.

with mining projects (in particular the Letpadaung mine), however, local communities stayed alerted. Already long before the first news of the mining project broke, villagers were afraid of being dispossessed of their land. The reason was that, as in many frontier areas, most farmers do not own any legal land titles for their farmland.[17] In accordance with local customary practices, they practice swidden (shifting) cultivation along the slopes around Mwetaung (Ewers Anderson, 2014; Mark, 2016). In government maps, however, their farmland is officially categorized as 'reserved forest' under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry. According to government sources, this designation originated from colonial times and has never been changed or verified since (Kyemon & Ju Nine, 2013). Typically for frontier regions, there is an overlap of claims and a mismatch between the official and actual land use around the Mwetaung area (NMIC, 2013). Registration of their farmland is challenging, if not impossible, since the national land laws introduced in 2012 did not recognize customary practices of upland agriculturalists such as shifting cultivation. Customary rights are only enforceable as long as there is no interest from outside the region. The overall changes in the political economy following Myanmar's opening and the new land laws and investment laws threatened customary institutions (Ewers Anderson, 2014). A local land rights activist criticized that the new farmland law (Farmland Act, 2012) and vacant land laws (The Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Act, 2012) had actually turned the villagers into "illegal settlers" although they had been farming in the area already for generations. Moreover, he complained about the "Burman bias" of the legislation since "the Burmese don't know anything about the traditional customary law of the ethnic people" (Interview with land rights activist, Kalay, November 2016). Also, the communities themselves were very conscious of the situation and challenged the state's image of the frontier as an 'empty' and 'virgin' space to be brought to 'productive' use with the support of foreign investment.

> The Union government does not care about our Chin customary law. In British times, this was practically applied even in the high courts, but this government does not care at all. There is no land which is not occupied by our own people in Chin State. The villages have exact boundaries and they occupy all areas. There is not even a single inch of land not occupied in our Chin customary land use system. But this is not accepted by our government. (Interview with villagers near Mwetaung, November 2016)

Even though the 2016 National Land Use Policy (NLUP) envisions the recognition of customary land use systems and calls for the revision of land use maps and records through public consultation processes, little has happened on the ground (The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2016). On the contrary, in late 2016, the parliamentary Commission for Legal and Special Issues Analysis pointed out that "it is not necessary to include the ethnic nationalities' land use rights as a separate part in the National Land Use Policy" (The Commission for Legal and Special Issues Analysis, 2016). Also, according to land rights activists, the National League for Democracy

17 According to Ewers Anderson (2014), only an estimated 15% of all land in Myanmar is titled.

(NLD) government did not follow up on the NLUP implemented under their rival USDP government. Even though solving the land problems was one of the central promises of the NLD during its election campaign, the government was slow to solve existing problems or reform laws. To take matters in their own hand, some villagers around Mwetaung are meanwhile seeking legal protection through community forest registration, even if the process is complicated and slow. This gives communities the opportunity to obtain official permission from the Forestry Department to use a demarcated forest area for 30 years. Yet, it is still unclear if this approach will be feasible and ensure the long-term interests of the communities (Einzenberger, 2017; Kyaw Tint, Springate-Baginski, & Mehm Ko Ko Gyi, 2011).

In addition to the immediate dangers of dispossession, villagers also rejected the government's justification for the mining project and the terms of the deal. One argument brought forward by the central government was that Chin State should also contribute to the national budget to finance national development, since the poor state was still a net receiver fully financed by the Union. In addition, according to media reports and Chin politicians, only 2-5% of the benefits or around USD 500,000 were earmarked for Chin State (Ei Ei Toe Lwin, 2013; Mirante, 2017). The resisting villagers, framed as 'narrow minded' and 'anti-development' by the investor and the government, rejected the project's unfair distribution of costs and benefits. The promised benefit would amount to only around one US dollar per year and capita, as one villager amusedly remarked in an interview. The major bulk of the benefits would go to the central government's budget, and the Chinese investor according to the sharing agreements (which in the end failed). In public statements, the communities made clear that they regarded the mineral deposits in the Mwetaung area as 'Chin property' to be used for future generations only under a federal system which guaranteed the self-determination of Chin State.

Local land rights activists also claimed that the central government tried to gain control over the Mwetaung area by other, more indirect means. They accused the government of shifting the demarcation of the border between Chin State and Sagaing Region and thus shifting the Mwetaung area out of the jurisdiction of Chin State into the more "mining friendly" Sagaing Region (Mirante, 2017). This process has become known as the 'boundary issue'. Already in 2008, the CNF officially "lambasted the Burmese military junta over its plan to add some parts of Zomi (Chin) State into Sagaing Division". According to a media report, "around 8,000 acres of farmland, teak forests and Gulu mual called 'Mwe Taung' nickel and chromium mining areas" would be included in the Sagaing Division ("CNF Criticizes Burmese Regime", 2008). Local land rights groups recently tried to collect historical evidence to prove that Chin State slowly lost territory, which had been incorporated by the 'lowland regions' since independence, and started to advocate with the local government (Interview with land rights activist, January 2017).

Indigenous Rights and Transnational Mobilization

The local communities' historical and identity-based claims of ownership were also accompanied by international indigenous rights discourses. One of the first public events organized by local civil society groups during the mobilization campaign

took up the issue of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC). Banners donated by a local civil society organization were displayed at public exhibitions at villages around the Mwetaung area (CNRWG, 2013). The banners explained the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the concept of FPIC as one of its core principles in the Burmese language (United Nations, 2008). Villagers resented the complete lack of information and transparency around the mining project. Neither the local government nor the investing company had informed the residents in advance about the plans, despite long running preparations (see Table 1). Instead, villagers were pressured to provide their consent to the project ad hoc without any clear and detailed information, being only provided with some vague pamphlets (described by one activist as propaganda). Also, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Social Impact and Health Assessment (SIA/HIA) reports, which according to NMIC were submitted to the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry in March 2013, were never disclosed to the public (NMIC, 2013).[18] Drawing on international indigenous rights instruments, local civil society groups made use of an emerging transnational indigenous rights discourse in order to defend their interests (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, Institute for Human Rights and Business, & The Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2016). In 2015, a Coalition of Indigenous Peoples in Myanmar/Burma, a network of over 20 (ethnic) organizations (including Chin organizations), submitted a report for the 2015 Universal Periodic Review to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. In the report, the network criticized the increasing confiscation of land and the violation of indigenous rights, citing also the Mwetaung case (Coalition of Indigenous Peoples in Myanmar/Burma, 2015).

A transnational dimension to the Mwetaung campaign was added to the local movement in August 2013 when exile groups, identifying themselves as 'indigenous Zomi', gathered in cities in the United States, Norway, India, Australia, and other countries to protest against the planned mining project in their 'homeland'. In Washington DC, representatives of the World Zomi Congress condemned the suspected "confiscation of land" and exploitation of natural resources in Chin State in front of the Chinese Embassy and called for an immediate stop of the project (Khaipi, 2013). In their public statements, they directly referred to the UNDRIP and claimed ownership over their "indigenous land":

> We are here today as Zomi National Indigenous People from Burma who are oppressed by our government. The reason we are here today is that the Chinese North Mining Company and the Chinese government and the Burmese government are mining in our land, our indigenous, own land. . . . As the indigenous people in Myanmar, we have the right to claim according to UNDRIP article 25 and 27. That is why the Gullu Mual Nickel project . . . is our own property and we are here to stop it today. Therefore, until the Burmese government has changed our constitutional law which will give us the right to own our land, we will stop this project. (WZC Channel, 2013 [transcript of YouTube video, min. 8:45-11:16])

18 Local villagers and activists only received pictures of the report cover, but never copies of the full report.

While locally the civil society alliance was crossing ethnic and religious divides, including Burman Buddhist groups, as well as Christian ethnic groups, identity-based claims (such as in the quote above) were still obvious. In public consultations, local villagers repeatedly claimed that the mineral deposits were "Chin property" to be preserved for future generations and that the Myanmar government or Chinese investors had no right to extract them. However, in what way local coalitions were directly linked with transnational 'indigenous Zomi' campaigns against the Mwetaung project is still unclear. According to the CNRWG, there was only limited contact with groups overseas.

CONCLUSION

The case of the Mwetaung mining project discussed in this paper illustrates the strategy of accumulation by dispossession in the frontier areas as a persistent element of Myanmar's political economy. Through this particular regime of dispossession, described here as frontier capitalism, the periphery is gradually turned into a supplier of resource revenues to fuel economic growth at the center while gaining little benefits itself. The country's latest transition, including the introduction of a series of legal and political reforms, facilitated investment (in particular from its neighbors) and provided a new dynamic for the expansion of the frontier. This expansion relies on the support of foreign capital, in particular China, since the early 2000s. In the case of the Mwetaung project, the attempted dispossession has been successfully challenged, at least for the moment, by a local civil society coalition using new opportunities for political participation. The politics of dispossession in this case were characterized by political strategies targeting newly established democratic institutions. The mobilization was initiated by an ad hoc grassroots coalition based on emerging civil society actors since 2011 (such as the CNRWG). The movement was independent from political parties, but targeted political actors on regional, national, and even transnational political scales. Despite bridging ethnic and religious divides locally, demands for indigenous rights and self-determination, including land and resource governance rights were voiced by actors identifying themselves as ethnic Chin or indigenous Zomi. This divergent and even contradictory character is not uncommon for anti-dispossession movements. While local initiatives did not reject extractive development projects as such, they rejected the authoritarian and non-transparent manner in which this particular project was unfolding. A main concern was the dispossession of their agricultural lands, which are not legally recognized under the current legal framework introduced as part of the current transition. This framework is considered biased towards the majority lowland population and ignorant of ethnic customary practices. Given the particular political history in this frontier region, local communities rejected the government's demands as illegitimate and showed little trust in the promises made by the government and investors. This was mixed with strong anti-Chinese sentiments – a legacy of recent experiences in the region and beyond. Yet, the frontier regions, including Chin State, will likely face further coercive integration and exploitation in the context of future regional initiatives such as Chinas Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Following China's involvement, India is also seeking to enhance the integration of trade and investment in the northeast

through its Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation (BCIM) Economic Corridor. Unless the central government and investors are prepared to change their approach and renegotiate conditions of integration, including decentralized decision-making and benefit-sharing agreements, politics of dispossession will continue to shape Myanmar's transition.

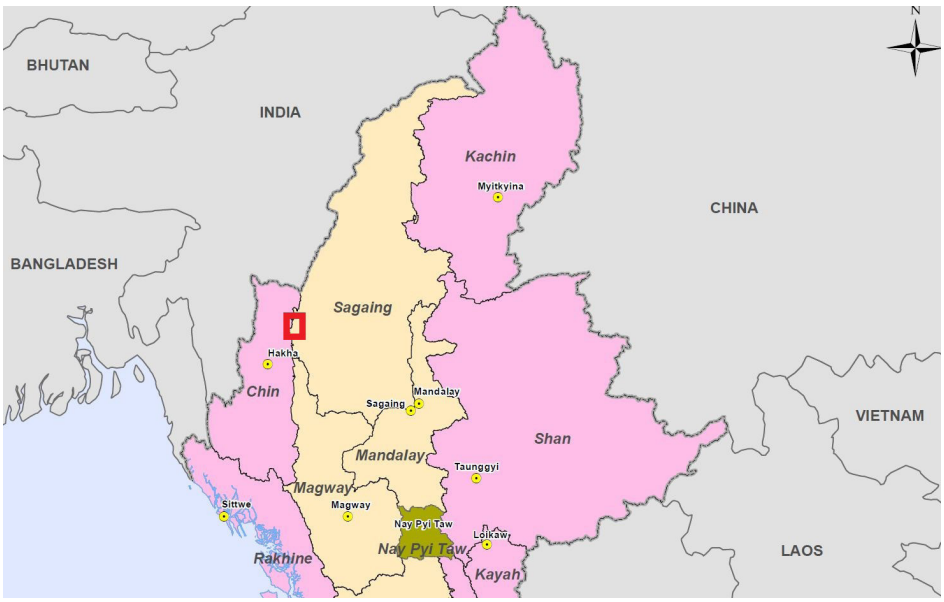

Figure 1. Location of Mwetaung mining project, bordering Chin State and Sagaing Region. (Myanmar Information Management Unit, figure by the author).

DATE	CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS AROUND THE MWETAUNG (GULLU MUAL) MINING PROJECT
1960s	Initial geological surveys by Dr. Ngaw Cin Pau
1988	SLORC takes over power after uprising in August 1988
1994	SLORC adopts new Mines Law
1995	Announcement in government newspaper invites foreign companies to conduct mineral prospecting and exploration operations
2005	Kingbao (Jinbao) Mining Ltd of China signed an agreement on nickel mineral exploration and feasibility study with No. 3 Mining Enterprise of the Ministry of Mines. After initial explorations, the contract expires.
2010	General elections on November 7
2012	CNF signs 9-point state level ceasefire agreement in January
2012	New negotiations are held in April concerning exploration of minerals in Mwetaung with the North Petro-Chem Corporation of China
2012	CNF signs Union Level 15-point ceasefire agreement in May
2012	North Mining Investment Co. Ltd receives permission for ferro nickel deposit feasibility study in May
2013	Asia Guiding Star Services Company Limited (AGSS) starts to collect data for EIA/SIA surveys in January
2013	Local communities seek advice concerning Mwetaug project from Kalay CSOs in January

2013	Formation of local CSO networks at local monastery in Kalay
2013	Media campaign in Kalay town
2013	Poster exhibitions on FPIC in local villages
2013	Village consultation meetings around Mwetaung area between January and February with hundreds of participants
2013	Civil society coalition on Mwetaung is renamed to Chinland Natural Resources Watch Group (CNRWG) in February
2013	North Mining Investment Co. Ltd submits feasibility reports on 'Mwetaung Nickel Smelting Project' to the Ministries of Mines, and Environmental Conservation and Forestry
2013	Reports of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and Health Impact Assessment (HIA) are submitted to Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry
2013	Meeting with local political parties in March Discussion of Mwetaung Project at Chin State parliament
2013	Public consultation with local government and NMIC in Tiddim town hall, NRWG presents 48 questions in April
2013	NMIC holds village meetings
2013	Buddhist monk and CNRWG members meet with local media
2013	Meeting with Chin regional government and Chin MPs in Hakha in May
2013	Meeting at Tiddim town hall: Manager from NMIC answer 46 questions
2013	CNRWG sends letter to the Mr. Quintana, UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar in August
2013	CNRWG and GDI conduct collaborative research in Mwetaung area in August and September
2013	Representatives of four Chin political parties conduct a survey on the Mwetaung project with local communities in September
2013	Chin parties meet with state government in Hakha
2013	Press conference in Yangon with CNRW, GDI, Chin political parties and civil society representatives
2013	Meeting with speaker of Union Parliament (lower house) Shwe Mann in Kalay in November
2014	According to media reports in January, the Gullu Mual project has been suspended

Table 1. Chronology of events around the Mwetaung (Gullu Mual) mining project. ("Agreement Inked to", 2012; "Breakthrough: CNF Signed Ceasefire", 2012; CNRWG, 2013).

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The Iron Silk Road and the Iron Fist: Making Sense of the Military Coup D'État in Thailand

Wolfram Schaffar

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In May of 2014, the military of Thailand staged a coup and overthrew the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. The political divisions in Thailand, which culminated in the coup, as well as the course of events leading to the coup, are difficult to explain via Thai domestic policy and the power relations between Thailand's military, corporate, and civil entities. The divisions can be more clearly revealed when interpreted in the context of the large-scale Chinese project "One Belt, One Road". This ambitious infrastructure project represents an important step in the rise of China to the position of the world's biggest economic power and – drawing on world-systems theory – to the center of a new long accumulation cycle of the global economy. Against this backdrop, it will be argued that developments in Thailand can be interpreted historically as an example of the upheavals in the periphery of China, the new center. The establishment of an autocratic system is, however, not directly attributable to the influence of China, but results from the interplay of internal factors in Thailand.

Keywords: Belt-and-Road Initiative; Coup D'État; High-Speed Train; Thailand; World-Systems Theory

THE RETURN OF AUTHORITARIANISM IN THAILAND

On 22 May 2014, the military in Thailand staged a coup d'état and removed the elected government of Yingluck Shinawatra, the sister of the exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.[1] This coup marked the climax of the political division of Thailand into two camps: the Yellow Shirts, which are close to the monarchy and to the royalist-conservative elites, and the Red Shirts, who support Thaksin. With the coup, which was preceded by the concerted demonstrations of the Yellow Shirts, the royalist-conservative camp seized power. While after previous coups the respective juntas had rushed to promise a return to democracy and presented their seizure of power as a temporary measure necessary to remedy a defect in the political system, the present junta made clear that they had come to stay. The state of emergency imposed after the coup was maintained for almost a whole year, elections were postponed indefinitely, and a handpicked group of lawyers were commissioned to draft a new constitution, which would guarantee the influence of the military. With the lasting

1 To be exact, Yingluck Shinawatra had already been removed from premiership a few weeks earlier by a court decision.

establishment of a military regime, Thailand fits the global trend of an expanding authoritarianism, which also shows repercussions in other countries of Southeast Asia – such as the Philippines, Cambodia, and Indonesia. Outside Southeast Asia, we find similar developments in Egypt, Turkey, and Russia, and increasingly in Eastern and other European countries. In 2018, the Freedom House Index – an index measuring the level of democracy worldwide - concluded that by 2017 "democracy faced its most serious crisis in decades" (Freedom House, 2018).

Research on *New Authoritarianism* is an emerging field and a variety of explanations have been proposed. Materialistic accounts see the present trend as a continuation and intensification of neo-liberalism (Bruff, 2014) which is used as strategy to cope with the continuing economic crisis (Demirović, 2018). In search of an explanation for New Authoritarianism in specific regions, such as Southeast Asia, analysts point to the influence of China as new hegemonic power. Extensive literature on the role of China in Africa argue that China's readiness to cooperate with authoritarian regimes has fostered authoritarianism (Broich, 2017; for a critical view, see Lagerkvist, 2009). The same can be discussed for the case of the Philippines, where the elections in 2016 not only brought into power Rodrigo Duterte as a highly authoritarian strongman, but also a reorientation away from the Philippines' old allay, the United States, towards China. If we follow Kneuer and Demmelhuber (2016) and see China as one of the world's new authoritarian gravity centers, what remains to be answered, however, is the question how concretely the process of taking influence can be conceptualized. China could either be directly supporting authoritarian forces abroad or even launch direct interventions into neighboring countries – in the same way authoritarian regimes used to be directly supported by the United States during the Cold War on grounds of their anti-communist stance. An indirect support of authoritarian regimes might result from China's quest for stability in the countries that are the destination of large-scale Chinese investment.

This article will examine such questions at the example of the coup d'état in Thailand and scrutinize the influence of China on Thai politics. Methodologically, the paper will depart from the incident of the coup itself and re-interpret the circumstances of the coup as well as political developments since the turn of the millennium against the backdrop of world-systems theory, drawing on Wallerstein (1974-2011) and Frank (1998).[2]

THE 2014 COUP AND ECHOES OF FASCISM

The coup of 2014 was only the climax of a longer process in the course of which multiple outbreaks of surprisingly severe political violence had already taken place several times. In the spring of 2010, the Red Shirts launched their largest-ever political campaign. The background of the mobilization was that in 2008 the government

2 This theoretical choice, however, comes with a certain blindness for the agency of lower classes. While I agree with one anonymous reviewer that this is a serious shortcoming, the limited space of this article does not allow a detailed analysis of the class structure and the class struggle underlying the Thai political development since 2000.

of the royalist-conservative camp had come into office under dubious circumstances.[3] Consequently, in 2010, the Red Shirts simply demanded elections, knowing well that they still had the majority of the population behind them. The government, however, was unyielding, and after several weeks of protests at different places in the city, the demonstrators set up barricades in the central business district of Bangkok. More than 90 people were killed when the army moved in with heavy equipment and dissolved the protest camp (Montesano, Pavin, & Aekapol, 2012). Considering the demands of the protestors, which were in no way radical, the question arises as to why the royalist-conservative position was so uncompromisingly keen to hold on to power and did not hesitate to deploy the military to an exposed place in the middle of the city.

When, in 2011, a new parliament was finally elected after several postponements of the election date, the party from the Thaksin camp was, as expected, again victorious, and Yingluck Shinawatra became Prime Minister in July 2011. Her leadership is commonly characterized as defensive and low profile, reflecting the strategy of not providing any target for the royalist-conservative camp and giving the Yellow Shirts no reason for new demonstrations. In spite of this, in November 2013 the Yellow Shirts again launched a concerted campaign to overthrow the government. Using the slogan "Shut Down Bangkok - Restart Thailand", the demonstrators blocked the central traffic intersections of the Bangkok city center, following the example of the occupation of the airport in 2008. The enormous LED screens on the central stages and the nationwide transmission via television and print media, which is closely associated with the royalist-conservative camp, indicated the financial and logistical support of influential groups. From these stages, demands were voiced to abolish elections altogether and to replace the government and the parliament with a reform committee consisting of appointed representatives of professional groups. Armed security groups emerged around the protest booths and began baiting political opponents. Similarly, on the internet, the so-called Rubbish Collector Organization emerged – a Facebook-based group, founded by the head physician of a renowned hospital and supported by prominent representatives, professors of leading universities, and politicians. According to its own statutes, the group aimed to 'purify' Thailand of 'social waste' within two years, referring to people who show themselves to be disloyal to the monarchy. Via Facebook, lists of names were published and members mobilized for actions directed against these individuals (Pinkaew, 2016; Pirongrong, 2016; Schaffar, 2016).

The emergence of violent actors in times of deep political division as well as the demands to abolish the parliamentary system is reminiscent of the processes which led to the establishment of the Austrofascism or the Estato Novo in Portugal in the 1920s and 1930s in Europe (Pinto, 2014; Tálos, 2014): The country is divided into two camps, neither of which is strong enough to conclude the conflict and take power. The cornered royalist-conservative camp, which could mobilize supporters among the urban upper middle class, recruited and organized violent thugs who were to intimidate political adversaries and precipitate a resolution to the power struggle.

3 Following political pressure of street protests, specifically in the course of the occupation of the Bangkok airport by the Yellow Shirts, the Constitutional Court dissolved the ruling pro-Thaksin party and, thus, the opposition Democratic Party, the political arm of the Yellow camp, was elevated to government without running for elections.

The aim of the campaign was to cement the social status quo through the abolition of the parliamentary system and the establishment of a corporatist system of political representation. The bourgeoisie – the upper middle class in Bangkok – disempowered itself politically in order to maintain its social status.[4] The folk festivals organized by the junta after the coup, using the slogan "Bring Happiness Back to Thailand", included small gift packages and meals handed out to the public as well as pop stars in camouflage-patterned clothing showcasing "The Happiness Song" of the junta. These developments evoke associations of a nascent, Orwellian fascist regime.[5]

Many theories stress political polarization as structural condition for the rise of fascism. As in the social clashes between organized workers and the bourgeoisie in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, the two factions in Thailand are oftentimes characterized as extreme opposites and as supporters of two diametrically opposed economic projects: The Yellow Shirts portrayed Yingluck Shinawatra as a representative of a 'grabbing capital'[6] oriented towards rapid gains in the global market. Interestingly, and as will be seen later, tellingly, only occasionally the defamation campaign against the Shinawatra family pointed to the fact that the Shinawatra were "Chinese", although in Thailand – as in other countries of Southeast Asia – there is a long tradition of marginalization and pogroms against the Chinese as "exploitative, grabbing capitalists".[7] As a counter-project to Thaksin, the representatives of the royalist-conservative camp present themselves as supporters of a gentle, sustainable development based on local structures. The royal concept of the sufficiency economy – an indigenous alternative development concept based on Buddhist principles – serves as a reference point here and is embellished with an essentialist discourse of national identity, that of 'Thainess' (Isager & Ivarson, 2008; Rossi, 2012).

HIGH-SPEED TRAINS AND THE CHINESE IRON SILK ROAD PROJECT

Beyond this discourse on the difference between the two camps, some of the events related to the coup allow a different interpretation. Among the central accusations against Yingluck Shinawatra was her plan to build a network of high-speed trains in Thailand. This infrastructure project was ambitious: With an investment package of USD 44 billion, in addition to the development of public transport in urban centers and the development of roads, almost half was to be invested in the construction of two high-speed rail tracks. These were to follow routes from southern China and Laos, passing through the north and the northeast and south over the Malay Peninsula to Singapore. Accordingly, plans were prepared in the second half of 2013. In October 2013, the Chinese state railway company, the project-executing

4 This analysis refers to August Thalheimer's (1930) seminal work "Über Faschismus". An exact class analysis of the Thai situation, however, would need a more sophisticated characterization of the different groups involved.

5 For a more detailed discussion of the fascist nature of the regime, see Schaffar (2018).

6 Schaffendes vs. raffendes Kapital (creative vs. grabbing capital). For a similar analysis, see Glassman (2004).

7 In 1913, King Vajiravudh published a pamphlet titled *Phuak yio haeng burapha thit lae mueang thai jong tuen toet*. [The Jews of the East and Wake Up Thailand!], in which he used anti-Semitic tropes from Europe to classify the Chinese minority in Thailand (Baker & Pasuk, 2009).

agency, initiated an exhibition on high-speed trains in Bangkok and the government of Yingluck Shinawatra began brisk diplomatic activities to drive the project and its funding forward. The investment – a huge sum considering the national budget of USD 71 billion in 2013 and a GDP of USD 420 billion in 2013 (National Statistical Office, 2018) – was to be generated by Thailand through supply of rice and natural rubber to China. These plans were branded as scandalous by the Yellow Shirts and presented as proof of unscrupulous handling of the budget and as an indication of corrupt practices. In parallel with taking the issue to the streets, the opposition party in parliament appealed to the Constitutional Court. In a televised hearing at the beginning of January 2014, a senior judge not only concluded that the investment amount was too high, but also that "Thailand is not yet ready to use high-speed trains". On the contrary, gravel roads would have to be paved first (Bangkok Pundit, 2014).

With this political statement, the court, overstepping its authority, positioned itself on the side of the Yellow Shirts – a move, which, however, was to be expected, since the courts had been politicized since the political split and acted on the part of the royalist-conservative elites (Hewison, 2014). At the beginning of March, the project was stopped by the courts. At the beginning of May, in respect of another legal proceeding, Yingluck was relieved of her post for misuse of office. Thus, the courts became a key player in the coup before the military formally took over power a few days later (Veerayooth & Hewison, 2016).

Against the backdrop of the public debate on high-speed trains, the publicly staged trial, and the role played by this project in removing Yingluck from office, it is surprising how the project went on. Just a few weeks after the coup, the now ruling junta announced that it would implement exactly this project with the same investment sum (Amornrat, 2014). Since then, Prayuth Chan-ocha, appointed Prime Minister, has positioned himself as a committed supporter of railway expansion. In summer 2017, he even invoked Article 44 of the interim constitution – an article which grants to the Prime Minister the prerogative to circumvent legal and administrative procedures – to get the project off the ground (Chatrudee, 2017).

A different analysis of these developments became apparent only when, at the end of March 2015, the full extent of the Chinese infrastructure project, Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI), became accessible to a broader public. Only then it became clear that the tracks to be laid by Thailand were a sub-project of the BRI. In a joint press conference by the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce, and in a speech by the Chinese President Xi Jingping on the same day, the Chinese government revealed that the project, also known as the "Iron Silk Road" aimed at nothing less than the development and integration of the entire Eurasian continent. The project, which is estimated to be worth USD 21 trillion (Eyler, 2015), is supported by two new development banks controlled by China – the BRICS Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) – as well as a special investment fund (Chen & Mardeusz, 2015).

In this context, the antagonism between the Thaksin camp and the royalist--conservative elite is less a conflict between different economic models and more a competition for the same project – competition for access to and decision-making competence in the Chinese large-scale project, a project which commentators

characterize as a tectonic shift in the world trading system. It is along these lines that foreign as well as Chinese analysts compare the project with the road network and aqueduct construction of ancient Rome, with the maritime expansion of the Chinese Ming Empire of the 14th century (Godehardt, 2016), the Japanese project of a Great East Asian prosperity sphere, or with the U.S. Marshall Plan after World War II (Eyler, 2015). In March 2015, however, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Li rejected comparisons with the Marshall Plan as a Cold War memorial, insisting that it was a peaceful enterprise solely based on integration through trade (Zhang, 2015).

Nevertheless, there is more to the plan than just an improvement in transport routes for the sales of Chinese goods. China's rapid economic rise in recent years has led to a wealth of literature that predicts a shift in the center of the global economy away from the US to China. Against this background, and considering the massive scale of investment, the question arises whether or not the new orientation of the Chinese economic policy is connected to a new geostrategic project (Zhao, 2016). The wording to "rejuvenate the Chinese nation"[8], and to unite China's Asian neighbors into a "community of shared destiny"[9] (Godehardt, 2014, 2016; Wang, 2013) points to the historic dimension which the Chinese government connects with the project. Moreover, the Belt-and-Road Initiative is seen as part of a general new orientation of Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping, which moves away from political restraint and conceptualizes China's rise in economic, military, and geostrategic perspective (Arase, 2015, pp. 14-17). The announcement to establish a "new type of great power relations"[10] is a clear program (Godehart, 2014, pp. 7, 22).

In fact, for China, there are good reasons to use a new geostrategic project in order to stand up to various challenges. Until recently, with programs like "Pivot" or "Rebalancing" (The White House 2015), the US administration took strong efforts to establish a network of free trade agreements around China - with the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement (TTIP) between the U.S. and the EU and the Transpacific Partnership (TPP). The common interpretation was that the ultimate aim was to support the economic structures that favor the West and to contain China. In this context, the BRI represents a visionary step of Chinese economic strategy and has a global significance. It is not only the construction of a rail network, which, in addition to setting up a direct road to the European markets, also opens up resource-rich regions in Central Asia. But it also includes a sea route to India, the Arab World, and East Africa, via various corridors through Southeast Asia. With the Belt-and-Road Initiative, China enters into direct competition with the efforts of the USA to maintain their hegemony.

Compared to the US, which attempts to promote integration by means of trade agreements, the Chinese project has a completely different character. China relies on the expansion of physical infrastructure and counts on the integrating power of material presence. This qualitatively different project has a significant impact on the countries under the Chinese sphere of influence, for example, Thailand.

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8 中华民族伟大复兴 'Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation'. For a discussion of "rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" versus "the Rise of the Chinese Nation" see Zheng Wang (2013).

9 命运共同体, 'Community of Shared Destiny' or officially 'Community of Common Destiny'.

10 新型大国关系, 'New type of great power relations'.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHINESE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT

The interpretation that both political camps in Thailand are in competition for the Chinese project is supported by more pieces of evidence: the diplomatic initiatives, for example, that the royalist-conservative camp has been developing since 2013. In parallel to the state visits, where Yingluck Shinawatra negotiated the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Chinese authorities, Princess Sirindhorn, who is regarded as an important representative of the Thai royal house, traveled to China several times and met high representatives of the Chinese government during her travels, despite the fact that – officially – the visits were devoted to science or culture. The friendly relations between the Thai royal family and China, as well as the common interest in working closely together on development and technology, was repeatedly emphasized in the coverage of the visits (Zhao & Zhang, 2015).[11] Another piece of evidence can be drawn from literature which documents and analyses a more general tendency of the economic elites in Thailand towards China. As in many Southeast Asian countries, the economic elites as well as the urban middle class are of Chinese descent. In Thailand, these "lookjin" seemed to have been assimilated into the Thai majority. Recent accounts, however, show that the urban (upper) middle class, which make up the most important and strongest part of the Yellow Shirt demonstrators, as well as the royal-conservative elites rediscover and cherish their Chinese roots (Kasian, 2017; Somsak, 2016). It seems as if not only Thaksin, who – as will be argued below – openly sought a close relation to China as part of his economic project, but also the Yellow Shirt camp show a strong tendency to connect to China. Against this background, it is quite striking that – despite the general interest in China – there was almost no public debate in Thailand about China's gigantic infrastructure program. Only in late 2016, the first English-language newspapers started publishing introductory articles to the Belt-and-Road Initiative, albeit without mentioning that Thai high-speed trains are part of it (Hashim, 2016). This supports the impression that – in addition to the political rift which started in 2005/2006 – the coup against Yingluck and the establishment of an authoritarian system in Thailand can be viewed in connection with the Chinese large-scale project. One popular trope is that the spread of authoritarianism is linked to the influence of China and in particular to economic and development cooperation with it. Particularly in development cooperation projects in Africa, it is often stressed that China does not link its economic commitment to conditions such as respect for human rights, nor does it shy away from working with dictators. As a result, the consensus of the traditional Western donor countries gathered in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to promote democracy via development cooperation projects is undermined. Similarly, Reilly (2013) and Grävingholt (2011), which are only two examples of a whole genre of contributions, assume a direct connection between the failure of democratization processes in Southeast Asia and the influence of China. The underlying idea is that China is the source of an authoritarianism, either directly

11 There are a lot of rumors about a hidden agenda of Sirinthorn's visits to China – including rumors saying that she was trying to reserve a share of the project for the royal-conservative capital group. At the present stage of political conflict and the general restrictions to investigate issues connected to the royal family, such rumors cannot be verified.

advanced by the export of authoritarian governance techniques, or made to appear particularly attractive in the light of its economic success. The idea that the new global wave of authoritarianism can be traced to "authoritarian gravity centers" (Kneuer & Demmelhuber, 2016) points to the same direction. This thesis is to be examined critically in the context of the processes in Thailand.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THAILAND AND CHINA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY

In view of the fact that the Belt-and-Road Initiative is perceived by commentators in historical dimensions, contributions on the Chinese ascent from the perspective of world-systems theory are particularly relevant (Schmalz, 2010). Giovanni Arrighi (Arrighi, 2007; Arrighi & Silver, 2011; Robinson, 2011) and André Gunder Frank (1998) have dealt with the rise of China, but interpret this ascent very differently. Arrighi and Silver's (2011) focus is on the development of the capitalist world system, which they track in several distinct cycles and characterize as an expansion movement. They distinguish four consecutive cycles, beginning with a cycle dominated by the city of Genoa in the 16th century, which then passed into a cycle dominated by the Netherlands in the 17th century. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the center moved to Great Britain to be replaced by the United States after the Second World War. The shift of the center of the world economy to China is interpreted as a new development; a rupture that represents a transition into a new long century – a new order with a new hegemon.

In *ReOrient*, Frank (1998) interprets the current rise of China from an entirely different angle. He argues that long before the imperialist expansion of England and the United States, an integrated global world trading system existed, the center of which was in Asia. In concrete terms, he assumes that there was a period of economic expansion from 1400 to about 1760, which began with the development of trade routes and the establishment of production capacities by Chinese traders and flowed into an expanding financial system controlled by China. It is to this that numerous Chinese sources allude when they compare the Belt-and-Road Initiative with the expeditions of Admiral Zheng He on orders from the Ming emperors in the early 15th century. From this global point of view, the simultaneous developments in Genoa and the Netherlands are only an insignificant Western adjunct of a larger cycle – and the importance given to this cycle by Arrighi and Silver rather proves the distorted perspective of a Eurocentric historiography. From Frank's point of view, however, the center does not migrate to a new place, but returns to the place where it has been since the beginning of the 15th century.

The periodization of Arrighi and Silver and the still larger arcs that Frank spans can certainly be criticized as simplistic. Wood (2002) pointed out that the Genoese and the Dutch cycle cannot be understood as capitalist accumulation cycles. Likewise, the suggestive comparison between the Chinese expansion of the 15th century and China's present rise seems flawed when we take into account that the trade empire of the Ming era was based on a non-capitalist economy. Moreover, the historical method of world-systems theory is that it draws retrospective conclusions through the interpretation of large amounts of data. Its explanatory power of the present is therefore

limited. This is shown by Arrighi's assessment that present day's China is not a capitalist country but that its rise is based on the expansion of a market economy of a different, non-capitalist kind (Arrighi, 2007, pp. 331-332) – a characterization unlikely to stand up to a sociological analysis of conditions of production.

The present text draws on Arrighi, Silver, and Frank, despite all their limitations, as these concepts open up an angle under which the current developments in Thailand can be interpreted in their historical continuity. Moreover, in the work of Evers, Korff, and Pas-Ong (1987) on Thailand, we find a strong argument for Frank's analysis, i.e. - that the rise of the West was not so much based on a development of new production capacities but rather on a redirection of trade flows. It must have been by accident that Frank did not take this work of Evers, Korff, and Pas-Ong (1987) into account in his book because it illustrates precisely this transition by the example of the state formation of Siam.[12]

THE INFLUENCE OF TRADE WITH CHINA ON THE FORMATION OF THE SIAMESE STATE

Evers, Korff, and Pas-Ong (1987) respond with their work to the literature of Thai Marxist historiography, which has been concerned since the 1950s with the question to what degree Siam/Thailand is to be described as capitalist. The question arose since in other countries and regions of Asia (India, Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, and Indochina) the capitalist mode of production was regarded as a system imposed by the colonial powers. Since Siam had never been formally colonized, the question was whether Thailand would still have to be analyzed as feudal (Reynolds & Hong, 1983). According to a widespread Marxist reading, the Bowring Treaty of 1855, a free trade agreement between Siam and the United Kingdom, was the turning point through which a forced market opening, abolition of the corvée labor, and thus a break in the feudal structures was introduced and a capitalist economic system established. In this way, so the interpretation goes, a semi-colonial system was created in which the country was integrated into the world system by Chinese traders as intermediaries.

Evers, Korff, and Pas-Ong (1987) show that even before the Bowring Treaty the entire state formation of Siam had been determined by its integration into the world trade, which prior to 1855 meant trade with China. After the old capital of Ayutthaya had been completely destroyed in 1767 in the war with the Burmese, the landlocked, feudalistic state of Ayutthaya ceased to exist. Instead of the old center, a new maritime trading hub in Thonburi (Bangkok) became the capital and crystallization point for a new, foreign trade oriented state at the mouth of the Chao Praya River. The central figure of this newly founded Siamese state was Taksin, who in traditional Thai historiography plays the role of the unifier. Using his familial ethnic links to South China, he succeeded in getting loans from China to import food and weapons, and on this basis, he gradually brought many regions of the country back under military control. However, as Evers, Korff, and Pas-Ong (1987) showed, this control was not feudal but followed the rationale of a trade nation where revenue is not derived through compulsory labor but from taxation of trade activities with China. Even

12 The state at the mouth of the Chao Praya River was known as Siam and was not called Thailand until 1939.

these founding years of Siam were dominated by coups. Thai national historiography reports that by 1782 Taksin had become "crazy" and was deposed and executed by General Phraya Chakri, the founder of today's Chakri dynasty. Through Evers, Korff, and Pas-Ong (1987), we can re-interpret this coup as a process by which a competing merchant dynasty with Chinese roots acquired the political control of trade flows. The complete physical eradication of the Taksin family which followed the coup is the first historical reference to the existential character of these conflicts between rival capital fractions in times of transition from one long century to the next.[13]

THE INTEGRATION OF SIAM INTO THE BRITISH-DOMINATED WORLD-SYSTEM

Bowring, the British governor in Hong Kong, arrived on a war ship in Siam in the 1850s. The conclusion of the free trade agreement he negotiated marks the integration of Siam into the trading system under the Pax Britannica. According to Terwiel (1991), this agreement only came about because the Siamese economy was in a crisis after several boom phases since 1840. Against this backdrop, the newly enthroned Siamese king Monkut hoped for new opportunities for development, but above all wanted to appease the aggressive colonial powers (Terwiel, 1991). In this way, the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty illustrates the pattern which Frank (1998) generally identifies for the transition to the English cycle: In times of economic weakness, England appears as a militarily dominant power and can force a redirection of existing trade flows westward by means of exemption of customs duties – free trade treaties. A similar treaty with Prussia in 1863 and one in 1869 with the Austro-Hungarian Empire followed the Bowring Treaty. In this sense, Evers, Korff, and Pas-Ong (1987) emphasize that free trade was only seemingly free; in reality, it brought about a western dominance of the economy on western terms.

While the position of Siam in the global economic system led to a formation of mono-structures, especially rice monocultures in the Chao-Phraya Delta and the extraction of teak and mineral resources, the ruling family who controlled the trade routes was able to achieve profitable income from the expansion of the trade. As a part of the western-dominated trading system, Siam also experienced the critical transition to the US-dominated cycle, and here, too, the effects on domestic policy have been significant. After the collapse of the world economy in 1929, social unrest shook the country. Thai historiography sometimes refers to the promulgation of the constitution of 1932 and the transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy as a democratization from above, in the course of which an enlightened monarch gave the subjects a constitution. A more adequate account may be to characterize the events as a revolution: Against the backdrop of social unrest, a group of determined military and bureaucrats took over the political control and carried out administrative and economic reforms (Ji, 2003). Alongside the royal family, new capitalist bureaucratic elites established themselves in the newly started accumulation cycle (Riggs, 1966). The royal house itself was limited to representative functions;

13 Today, numerous myths surround the death of King Taksin. The resemblance of his name to Thaksin Shinawatra and the fact that both are considered political opponents of the Chakri dynasty inspired the Red Shirts to begin their great protest campaign in 2010 with a ceremony at the monument of King Taksin. Some even consider Thaksin to be a reincarnation of King Taksin, having come back to take revenge.

physically, the kings were only periodically in Thailand and spent most of their time abroad. Cut off from direct access to state tax revenues, the financial livelihood of the House of Chakri was secured by the establishment of the Crown Property Bureau, an institution which managed the assets of the family, especially its property, and had the task of ensuring an appropriate income. For this purpose, a special legal status was created which exempted the treasury from all taxes and duties and from any accountability (Porphant, 2008). The constructive phase of the new accumulation cycle, under the Pax Americana – the dominance of the United States – led to a specific economic structure and influenced the economic development of Thailand in a lasting way, i.e. firmly integrated into the military security architecture of the US as a military base for the Vietnam War and as a location for many recreation centers for soldiers. Similar to the Japanese *zaibatsu* or Korean *chaebol*, merchant families of Chinese descent formed Bangkok's conglomerates, the core of which was formed of a bank and a trading house. These nascent structures gradually expanded into different productive sectors and formed industrial complexes (Suehiro, 1989; Krirkkiat & Yoshihara, 1983). The royal treasury was one of the five conglomerates, at the center of which was the Thai Farmers Bank and industrial companies such as Siam Cement (Porphant, 2008).

THE REORGANIZATION OF THE THAI CAPITAL IN THE WAKE OF THE ASIAN CRISIS AND THE EMERGENCE OF CONTESTING POLITICAL CAMPS

The Asia Crisis in 1997/1998 shook this system to its foundations. The boom of the 1980s and early 1990s had led to a real estate bubble. The banks had speculated mainly in the real estate sector and when the Thai Baht's peg to the Dollar had to be abandoned and massive devaluation followed, several banks went bankrupt and dragged the industrial sectors they controlled down with them. The International Monitory Fund (IMF) granted emergency loans linked to structural adjustment programs, which the government invested in bailouts. Porpant (2008) was able to show how the strategic selectivity of state apparatuses (Jessop, 1999) helped the group around the Crown Property Bureau profit disproportionately from the bailouts and ultimately emerge from the crisis as the only group grown even stronger. In this manner, the Crown Property Bureau grew to become the largest capital group in Bangkok by the turn of the millennium. In 2011, the Forbes magazine estimated the assets of the Crown USD 30 billion, making the Thai king the richest monarch in the world (The World's Richest Royals, 2011).

In the shadow of the crisis, new capital factions in the provinces were also able to reorganize their assets.[14] Thaksin Shinawatra, whose family – also of Chinese descent – comes from the Northern Thai city of Chiang Mai, belongs to this group of new capitalists who sought ways out of the recession together with the strengthened Crown Property Bureau. Thaksin was elected Prime Minister as a strategic partner of Bangkok's urban elites in 2000/2001 and took office with the promise to lead Thailand out of the crisis. The present division of Thailand into a Red and a

14 This development can be compared with the rise of the ACP in Turkey. The most obvious parallel is the latent competition with the established capital fractions of the respective capitals. (McCargo & Zarakol, 2012).

Yellow camp began during his premiership. Through a dual-track economic policy – a combination of neo-liberal restructuring and extensive infrastructure and social programs – Thaksin succeeded in achieving high growth rates within a short period of time and continuing the boom years of the 1980s and early 1990s. This success, but above all, the infrastructure and social programs, especially the introduction of a general health insurance, secured him broad support among the poor in the provinces of the North and the North East. On this basis, he succeeded in 2005 with a brilliant re-election – a novelty in the history of Thailand during which hardly any Premier succeeded in seeing out a full term, let alone win a second election (Pasuk & Baker, 2004). The economic power of Thaksin, whose own business empire benefited enormously from the new economic growth, became an increasing threat to the old elites. The royal house, which traditionally advocated for the poor and sought to promote gentle progress through rural development programs, feared the political power that Thaksin was able to gain in rural areas through his popular infrastructure and social programs. Eventually, the increasingly authoritarian style of government and the neo-liberal restructurings gave rise to the opposition of NGOs and trade unions of the state enterprises (Pye & Schaffar, 2008).

In this conflicted situation, the bloc of Yellow Shirts was formed. Under the leadership of royalist-conservative circles, various movements, NGOs, and trade unions organized mass demonstrations in Bangkok against Thaksin over the period of several months. These protests paralyzed Thaksin's government substantially, but could not expel him from office, in part due to his continued large support among the rural population. Finally, in September 2006, the military took the initiative and arranged a coup (Ji, 2007).

On the evening of the coup, a small group of democracy activists and intellectuals gathered to demonstrate against the military's takeover. The key points were the right to self-determination, freedom of expression, and the general rejection of a political role of the military. This group formed the nucleus of a new opposition, which, however, only swelled to a broad movement after collaboration with the party and the party apparatus of the ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra. To distinguish itself from the Yellow Shirts, it chose the color red as that of its corporate identity. Red was not originally chosen as an identification of the movement with international Socialism or Communism. In spite of this, since the demonstrations of 2010, the Red Shirts have used a class rhetoric and referred to themselves as *phrai* (commoners, or dependents) who position themselves against *amat* (feudal lords). On the membership cards of the Red Shirts, issued in advance of the mobilization of 2010, however, the slogan used was "For a Free Market Economy". The lords, *amat*, were also understood in terms of entrenched, quasi-feudal structures against which freedom, even in the liberal sense of free enterprise, was demanded. An analysis by Walker (2012) has shown that the most active supporters of the Reds in the North and Northeast were less workers or rural poor, but rather politicized farmers, in fact, a lower middle class. However, during the mobilization, the demonstrations of the Red Shirts became the starting point for many of the poor and marginalized, and some of the intellectual leaders of the Reds also have an internationalist past. Even though the choice of color was not communist/socialist in the beginning, the activists readily accepted the ambiguity created by the connotations of red.

Thus, the elite conflict between the two capital fractions around Thaksin and the Crown Property Bureau became a crystallization point, where social conflicts were being articulated (Schaffar, 2010). As already discussed, the antagonism between these two fractions is often explained through different development and economic models. On the one hand, Thaksin is characterized as the representative of a capital fraction which profits primarily from its embrace of globalized economic structures. His success in the media and telecommunication sector is exemplary, not only because telecommunications is a new business area connected with the communication revolution and globalization, but also because he pursued business opportunities beyond the borders of Thailand in neighboring countries (Cambodia and Myanmar) just as naturally and successfully as in Thailand itself (Pasuk & Baker, 2004). Numerous innovative business ideas oriented towards a global market provided a model for the economic policy orientation and the close interlinking of business with state economic policy. For instance, Thaksin's proximity to the Thai transnational corporation CP, which had grown by way of vertical integration of its production chain from the world's largest feed manufacturer to a food company and a fast food chain. The state-sponsored foreign trade campaign, using CP to make Thailand the "Kitchen of the World" (Delforge, 2004), was only the prelude to placing CP as a competitor of Wal-Mart on the Chinese market. One of Thaksin's development programs was the so-called "One Tambon One Product" Program – a funding pool for regional development where municipalities were encouraged to choose a local product and apply for state support to assist in its export-oriented production. Thaksin also advocated the negotiation of a US-Thai free trade agreement. Against this turbo-capitalism, the royalist-conservative capital group positioned itself as a counter-project where the development paradigm supported by the King, the sufficiency economy, was propagated as an economic and development model in which small-scale production necessary for local markets and needs – a shift away from western lifestyle consumerism – was instead endorsed (Isager & Ivarsson, 2008; Walker, 2008).

In brief, Thaksin's economic miracle was based on a further capitalist penetration of Thailand into new sectors (the health care market, telecommunications) and rural regions that had not yet been directly integrated into industrial production contexts. Prior to his term, the provinces in the north and northeast were perceived as merely a pool of migrant workers; the provinces were useful for the production of foodstuffs and, because of their partly intact subsistence structures, were fallback options for unemployed workers, who returned there in droves in the wake of the Asian crisis. In this respect, Thaksin's economic project is indeed a qualitative innovation that, in the context of the genesis of the Thai state as a Bangkok-centered trading state, represents a historic rupture.

Thailand, the economy of which has been oriented since the founding of the state towards the maritime trade hub of Thonburi/Bangkok, is one of the most heavily centralized countries in the world, in which an equally record-breaking social inequality is articulated along an urban/rural divide. Thaksin's approach to developing precisely the regions in the neglected provinces through investment programs met with a historic transitional situation: The accumulation cycle, aligned with England and the USA, with which Siam/Thailand was connected to via the hub of Bangkok, was drawing to an end. The plans of Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra,

to systematically link newly developed regions of the hinterland to China with high-speed trains is part of a radical historic shift. This new orientation, which means far more than a different accentuation in economic policy, led to a fierce competition between the two antagonistic capital groups over the control of this process. In spite of their rhetoric of alternative development models, the royalist-conservative elites took on multiple political projects and business ideas of the Red predecessor governments. For example, the royalist-conservative government, which had come into power through the 2006 coup, kept the health system and the rural investment funds introduced by Thaksin – after having previously opposed them as populist programs. In the same way, the present junta began to implement the program for high-speed trains which they fiercely opposed before the coup, only a few days after taking over the power.

IMPLICATIONS AND OUTLOOK

If the last coup of 2014 is historically read in light of world-systems theory, it mirrors the development trajectories between 1767 and 1855, but in the opposite direction. The capital group gathered around the Thai royal house, established as a commercial monarchy in 1767 and reoriented westwards with the Bowring Treaty in 1855, underwent a further transformation. If one follows Frank (1998), it is a return to the trade structures that were dominant before 1855, – it means a reorientation to China. At the present time, Thai political sciences and history have to remain in the state of court historiography with hagiographical features because of the draconian penalties for lèse majesté provided for by Section 121 of the Criminal Code. In earlier decades, critical social science and history with emancipatory ambitions had to be fought for by students and committed scholars. Some of these colleagues have been openly prosecuted since 2014 or are in exile (Thai Political Prisoners, 2015). Confronted with the authoritarian shift in Thailand, which is part of the global rise of authoritarianism, it is the duty of concerned scholars to name the economic elites of Thailand and analyze their appropriation strategies. Above all, it is important to highlight the role they play in the process of establishing an authoritarian regime.

The confrontation of the two capital groups that emerged in Thailand in the wake of the Asian crisis and their struggle over the control of the transition to the next accumulation cycle seem to leave no space for balancing interests and co-existence, as previous capital groups have practiced, for example in the 1970s and 1980s. The confrontation seems to be not about a piece of the pie but – if we consider the coup of 1782 – about the very existence of respective capital groups. This is why democratic means to balance interests have been buried in favor of an authoritarian system with fascist traits.

It should be noted, however, that the de-democratization of Thailand, which was correlated with the reorientation of the royalist-conservative elites, is not due to a direct influence from China. On the contrary, the Chinese government seems to have kept out of the internal conflict in Thailand. In terms of economic policy, one should assume that Thaksin's project is closer to the preferences of China. In fact, China has signed the MoU for the project of high-speed trains with Yingluck Shinawatra as well as expressed its hope that her early re-elections, scheduled for February 2014, may have a positive outcome. However, in the same matter-of-fact way, the Chinese

government continued to pursue the project after the coup in May 2014 and worked with the new royalist-conservative military rulers. Work in the style of Reilly (2013), Grävingholt (2011), or the concept of gravity centers of authoritarian rule (Kneuer & Demmelhuber, 2015) may highlight a proximity of the Chinese government to the authoritarian nature of the new administration. Ideologically, however, there is much that separates the nominally Communist Party of China from a government that is openly royalist.

The indifference of China towards the respective administration with which it cooperates points to the different character of the Chinese integration project. Unlike the USA, which was attempting to secure its sphere of influence by means of treaties that require the political will of like-minded governments, China organizes its new project via the physical expansion of its infrastructure and relies on its physical presence. The authoritarian regime, which was established by the royal elites through the coup in 2014, however, is not a copy of Chinese-style authoritarian rule. It is a genuine 'Thai-style' authoritarianism, borne out of the fierce competition for access to the next grand economic accumulation cycle.

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The Institutions of Authoritarian Neoliberalism in Malaysia: A Critical Review of the Development Agendas Under the Regimes of Mahathir, Abdullah, and Najib

Bonn Juego

▸ Juego, B. (2018). The institutions of authoritarian neoliberalism in Malaysia: A critical review of the development agendas under the regimes of Mahathir, Abdullah, and Najib. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 11*(1), 53-79.

After toppling the 61-year dominant Barisan Nasional through a historic election victory in May 2018, expectations are high for the new ruling government led by Mahathir Mohamad and the Pakatan Harapan to fulfil their promises for socio-economic reforms and regime change in Malaysia. But what have been the institutions of the prevailing regime that need to be reformed and changed? This article offers a critical review of the evolving development agendas since the 1990s of the successive governments of Mahathir Mohamad, Abdullah Badawi, and Najib Razak, each couched in different catchphrases: Wawasan 2020, Islam Hadhari, and 1Malaysia. A close reading of these programs suggests that their substance articulates two persistent logics: the ruling elite's constant requirement for political stability enforced by a strong state; and, the need to adapt to the demands and opportunities of accumulation in specific phases of Malaysia's capitalist development in the context of globalization. The analysis reveals the attempts at maintaining authoritarian neoliberalism, or a neoliberal economy embedded in an authoritarian polity, as the de facto social regime in contemporary Malaysia. By examining policy documents, speeches, and news reports, the article discloses how this regime had been enunciated or reified in public discourses, policies, and actions of the respective administrations.

Keywords: Abdullah Badawi; Authoritarian Neoliberalism; Mahathir Mohamad; Malaysia; Najib Razak

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INTRODUCTION

Malaysia's 14th general election (GE14) on 9 May 2018 was a historical turning point in the country's politics. It marked the end of the uninterrupted electoral dominance of the *Barisan Nasional* (BN, or the National Front) coalition – particularly its major party, the *United Malays National Organisation* (UMNO) – which had governed the country since independence from Britain in 1957. It also paved the way for Mahathir Mohamad to return to premiership at the age of 92 after his first long stint as prime minister in 1981-2003. In a surreal political moment, Mahathir emerged as the leader of the opposition coalition *Pakatan Harapan* (PH, or Alliance of Hope) in partnership with his old critics and enemies, notably Anwar Ibrahim and Lim Kit Siang. He challenged his former friends and allies in the UMNO/BN coalition led by his protégé, then incumbent premier, Najib Razak. Eventually, the Mahathir-led opposition pulled off an electoral upset on a

campaign platform that promised institutional reforms, anti-corruption, democracy, rule of law, and a range of populist economic policies (including the revival of fuel subsidies, increase in minimum wage, and the abolition of the controversial goods and services tax). Yet, any reform efforts by the new ruling government will have to proceed from the existing structures and institutions in Malaysia's socio-economic environment that have been adapted and forged by UMNO/BN in the last 60 years.

The purpose of this article is to take stock of the historical trajectory of Malaysia's contemporary development policies. In doing so, the article reveals a compelling institutional pattern in the structure of the country's political economy in which ethnic and other social relations are embedded. This is important to understand in the current context when the new government under Mahathir enjoys a popular mandate to undertake comprehensive reforms. The prevailing institutions in Malaysia's political economy that are unpacked in this article can be considered: firstly, as a structural reflection of the 'initial conditions' where reform initiatives begin; secondly, as a 'normative indicator' of the specific policies and practices that must be reformed; and thirdly, as a 'benchmark' against which the processes towards the objective for regime change are to be monitored and evaluated.

Historically, the political-economic attributes of Malaysia have been a mesh of a strong state and a relatively open market economy since the colonial period (De Micheaux, 2017; Tajuddin, 2012). Politically, Malaysia has had strong features of authoritarianism where the general citizenry has been deprived of at least the procedural requirements of fair elections, equal privileges before the law, and a modicum of civil liberties and human rights (Case, 1993; Gomez & Jomo, 1997; Zakaria, 1989). Economically, Malaysia's open economy is manifested in its pragmatic – rather than theoretical – adaptation of trademark neoliberal policies of privatization, liberalization and deregulation, as well as in its active production, trade, and financial activities in the world market. Even though *laissez faire* economic policies in Malaysia became more prominent since independence, the British state had already set in train in colonial Malaya the rudiments of the capitalist institutions that structured the unequal relations between classes and ethnicities (Nonini, 2015; Stubbs, 2004). The New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1971-1991 combined state intervention for the reduction of inter-ethnic disparity with the empowerment of private sector activity in the development process. By the 1980s, intensified privatization and deregulation initiatives and other structural adjustments through the Malaysia Incorporated Policy were undertaken (Gomez & Jomo, 1997).

This article examines the evolution of Malaysia's political economy through an analysis of the post-NEP development strategies undertaken by successive governments since the 1990s, namely: Mahathir Mohamad's *Wawasan 2020*, Abdullah Badawi's *Islam Hadhari*, and Najib Razak's *1Malaysia*. The analysis is done through an inductive approach derived from examining, as well as making extensive references to official policy documents, the speeches of the prime ministers, and news reports. The article suggests that the changing slogans from administration to administration are essentially articulations of two persistent and interdependent logics. The first logic is the incessant need of the ruling elites for a strong state to safeguard social and political stability. The second logic is the consistent stance of the elites in government to adapt to the evolving accumulation demands and opportunities

at particular periods in Malaysia's capitalist development. This is manifested by the series of adjustments in the country's development plans in accordance with the shift in neoliberalism's policy emphasis. In general, neoliberal development strategies have shifted from the so-called Washington Consensus during the 1980s-1990s to the Post-Washington Consensus by the mid-1990s. The Washington Consensus had a rather limited focus on *open market economy* through macro-economic programs of privatization and liberalization. The Post-Washington Consensus has a broader and more comprehensive set of policies focused on *competitive capitalism* through deep-seated institutional reforms and behavioral changes – lodged in the agendas on good governance, competition cultures, labor market flexibility, human capital, and social capital (Cammack, 2006; Fine, 2001a, 2001b). Against the background of globalization, Malaysia's national development policies have been adapted to specific phases of neoliberalism and the changes in the geopolitical economy, in particular:

1. Mahathir-style neoliberalization-with-industrialization during the 1980s-1990s, in between the paradigm shift from a declining Keynesian developmentalism and an emergent Washington Consensus;
2. Abdullah's agenda for a 'moderate' Islamic capitalism in the aftermaths of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 9/11 terror attacks; and
3. Najib's strategy for competitiveness as a response to the 2008-2009 global economic recession, the decline of oil prices in the world market in 2014, and the new scramble for capital from the rise of China.

The article's analysis reveals the apparent attempts of the governing elites at maintaining a peculiar form of regime which can be referred to as *authoritarian neoliberalism* – that is, a neoliberal economy embedded in an authoritarian polity. As the de facto social regime in Malaysia, the aims and strategies of authoritarian neoliberalism across the tenures of Mahathir, Abdullah, and Najib had remained roughly consistent: (1) operating a strong state; (2) managing social conflicts; and (3) perpetuating a type of neoliberalism that expands the economy in a changing global context while enriching entrenched local elites.

By charting the discursive mutations of Malaysia's authoritarian neoliberalism, the article puts forward an interpretation which has implications for a number of important contributions from regime studies and transitions literature. In regime studies, the debate whether to categorize Malaysia as a 'developmental state' depends on how this concept is defined (Stubbs, 2009). Some analysts have classified Malaysia as a developmental state (Embong, 2008; Jomo, 1997, 2001) or a semi-developmental state (Rhodes & Higgott, 2000) mainly due to its state intervention in the economy through conscious policy planning of the nation's industrialization strategies. However, Malaysia's long history of corruption and wasteful rent-seeking activities (Gomez & Jomo, 1997; Jomo & Gomez, 2000) are indications that it has not embodied the key institutions and mechanisms that are noted in more developed Asian capitalist developmental states/cities of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Specifically, each of these developed economies has a Weberian 'rational' bureaucracy, which is autonomous from particular vested interests, and which has a strong sense of corporate coherence built around a concrete set of social ties that

have been forged through negotiations of collective goals (Evans, 1995; Gomez, 2009; Johnson, 1987, 1999).

The end of UMNO's hegemony and the recent electoral success of longtime opposition groups from the *Reformasi* movement that formed the PH coalition have significant implications for transitions literature on Malaysia's 'democratization processes', particularly those studies on protest actions and other forms of contestations (Loh & Khoo, 2002; Shamsul, 2002; Weiss, 2006). Thus far, the literature on Malaysian politics has offered valid accounts and arguments about both the country's democratization processes and its resilient authoritarianism. The outcome of GE14 calls for a note of caution against tendencies in political analysis to either underestimate democratization or overestimate authoritarianism. In light of this, the analytical focus of the article is on the project of the then-dominant UMNO/BN elites to consolidate Malaysia's neoliberal capitalism within an authoritarian political framework. Knowledge of this has empirical and normative ramifications for current and future reform processes in Malaysia under the new government of Mahathir and the PH.

MAHATHIR'S WAWASAN 2020

The first tenure of Mahathir as prime minister (1981-2003) was associated with his development program called *Wawasan 2020*, or *Vision 2020*. Within the framework of the National Development Policy (NDP) of 1991, and complemented by the *Malaysia Boleh!* (Malaysia Can!) campaign, Wawasan 2020 was packaged with a populist message to revitalize the growth and redistributive objectives of the NEP. The NDP's 30-year plan proclaimed the vision for social justice, political democracy, and competitive capitalism (Malaysia, 1991a). However, the legacy of Mahathir's 22-year regime exhibited a distinct mix of authoritarianism, crony capitalism, and neoliberalism (Gomez, 2009; Gomez & Jomo, 1997; Khoo, 1995).

The *Fifth Malaysia Plan* 1985-1990 (5MP) was a precursor to Wawasan 2020. It embodied Mahathir's restructuring policies for both the government and the economy. These programs were expressed in the concepts: *Looking East*, *Malaysia Incorporated*, *Privatization*, and *Leadership* by example. The 5MP was the first development plan drafted under Mahathir to implement the last phase of NEP. Arguably, it was also the first articulation of the Mahathir regime's authoritarian neoliberalism. Its objective was to further Malaysia's entanglement with global capitalist processes, consistent with neoliberalism's private sector-led growth strategy. Moreover, the 5MP made a policy shift from 'growth with equity' to 'growth with stability' aimed at securing market mechanisms through disciplinary state power. Amid threats to his leadership in the run-up to the 1987 party elections and the worsening recession, Mahathir resorted to authoritarian responses in both the political and economic spheres: through the Internal Security Act (ISA) to stifle his critics even those within UMNO; and through the imposition of the premier's power over the bureaucracy under the guise of government streamlining for market reforms (Khoo, 1992; Khoo, 1995; Milne & Mauzy, 1999; Munro-Kua, 1996). Having won this election, Mahathir carried on with the same peculiar methods of patronage politics, authoritarianism, and economic restructuring. Powerful executive institutions continued to encroach on the bureaucracy and the economy.

Wawasan 2020 was introduced at the end of the Cold War and signaled Mahathir's embrace of neoliberal globalization. It served as a "state-class ideology" in which cross-ethnic alliances were based on a particular class interest (Hilley, 2001). But since repression had limitations as a political strategy, Mahathir opted for consensus-building to consolidate a power bloc around Vision 2020 (Hilley, 2001; Munro-Kua, 1996). As John Hilley (2001) has aptly described, the UMNO/BN under Mahathir's leadership was able to forge a hegemonic network that "[extended] outwards and beyond conventional party arrangements, with chains of influence ranging from corporate elites to the BN media, from party affiliates to Islamic fora, voluntary bodies and a panoply of NGOs" (pp. 117-118). At the heart of the regime's politics of consociationalism was the practice of a fluid, interactive, and accommodating art of "hegemonic networking", which tried to balance the protection of "particular sectoral interests" with their "shared outlook on the maintenance of the broader power structure" (Hilley, 2001, p. 118). This network was constantly engaged in the reproduction of "dominant ideas and interests through diverse processes of political, corporate and ideological exchange" and was receptive to "the incorporation of new interest groups and alliances" (Hilley, 2001, p. 118).

Economic Heterodoxy

Unlike other developing countries such as the Philippines and parts of Latin America which embarked on neoliberalism *without* specialization in the manufacturing industry, the kind of neoliberalization in Malaysia was pursued *with* a national industrialization strategy oriented towards exports to the world market (Juego, 2013, 2015). Yet, this neoliberal industrialization project for the economy was anchored to the politics of authoritarianism and the discourse of nationalism. Authoritarianism was conducive to the industrialization project not as part of the official development plan, but as a proactive realization of the governing elites on the advantages of repressive state measures for their stability (Crouch, 1994). The "Mahathirist programme" pursued a blend of capitalism and nationalism for socio-economic development – that is, "a nationalist project driven by capitalist impulses or a capitalist project imbued with nationalist aspirations" (Khoo, 2003a, p. 5). The anchoring of the economic project for neoliberal industrialization to the politics of authoritarianism and nationalism served a three-pronged purpose for the regime, notably: (1) to expand profitable opportunities for the local capitalist class in a diversified manufacturing sector, (2) while meeting the security requirements of the ruling elites in business and government, and likewise (3) gaining a substantial degree of social legitimacy.

It is suggested here that Mahathir adopted a 'heterodox' economic policy which was different from the orthodox prospectus of neoliberalism under the Washington Consensus. This is revealed through a scrutiny of the political imperatives *behind* the regime's economic reform initiatives in the policies of liberalization, austerity, deregulation, and privatization.

First, Mahathir had a calibrated perspective on trade and industrial policies. On the one hand, he appreciated the benefits of gradual liberalization; on the other, he understood the necessity of protectionism in the industrialization process. In his own words:

> We should take into the fullest consideration Malaysia's capacity to undertake liberalization. We should not dismiss the infant industry argument, but we should not bow to illegitimate pressure. (Mahathir, 1991)

He argued that "it is important for [Malaysia] that free trade is maintained" due to its very small domestic market; at the same time, he claimed to adhere to a principle in international relations where "the emphasis should be less on politics and ideology but more on economic imperatives" (Mahathir, 1991). In a blog post entitled "Protectionism", then-private citizen Mahathir (2011) decried G20's double standard and noted that while Malaysia believes in competition it is important to have protection in its domestic economy because it is "up against countries which protect their industries against foreign products".

Secondly, Mahathir's agenda on austerity had both economic and political rationales. Managing inflation was intended for stabilization of the economy and the regime. The bottom line of belt-tightening measures was that the citizenry had to bear the brunt of an economy undergoing the process of neoliberalization, absorb the consequences of market failures, and be subjected to disciplinary whipping from the state. Mahathir (1991) minced no words:

> The public must understand what causes inflation and must be disciplined enough to combat it. In some countries when inflation rates go up to thousands of per cent per year, Governments have been changed again and again without inflation being contained. The reason is that the people are not disciplined and prepared to restrain themselves. No Government can put a stop to inflation unless the people are prepared to accept the discomfort of austerity.

Thirdly, Wawasan 2020 adopted the policy of *deregulation* while insisting on the need for *regulation*. Its logic equated the economic policy of regulation with the politics of 'order'. Mahathir (1991) argued:

> The process of deregulation will continue. There can be no doubt that regulations are an essential part of the governance of society, of which the economy is a part. A state without laws and regulations is a state flirting with anarchy. Without order, there can be little business and no development. What is not required is over regulation although it may not be easy to decide when the Government is over regulating.

Here, it is implied that the source of strength of the market order and elite hegemony had to be state regulation and repression. This dynamic interdependence for survival between the market, elites, and state became more pronounced in times of crises. The observations have been that Mahathir's government acted even more authoritarian over both the public and the economic spheres during the 1997-1998 Asian crisis and its aftermath than during periods of relative stability (Pant, 2002; Pepinsky, 2009). To a large extent, the 9/11 event also provided the government the legitimacy to implement repressive laws, to suppress public protests, and to pass new electoral laws conducive to gerrymandering – all of which were hostile to the opposition.

Lastly, the Malaysian privatization experience had been an inherently political process. The Mahathir administration's privatization program was shaped by the intractable political economy of rent-seeking in the regime's state-class relations. Implementation of the *Privatization Master Plan* (PMP) in the 1990s was plagued with the same failures as in the early privatization projects in the 1980s. The PMP failed to meet its foremost objective to restructure ownership of public assets to encourage competitive private sector activity. Instead, the privatization of public wealth, assets, and services had enlarged UMNO's patron-client network, encouraged the proliferation of rentier activities, escalated corruption, politicized business, and institutionalized money politics (Gomez, 1997; Jomo, 1995; Tan, 2008). In terms of policy implementation, notable reasons for failures were the absence of transparency in the selection process, weak regulation, and the lack of complete divestiture. A comprehensive study by Jeff Tan (2008) shows the 'ex ante' and 'ex post' failures of the state in the major privatization projects from 1983 to 2000.[1] Ex ante failures were flaws in project planning, including wrong choice of industries and bidders, regulatory capture, and contract provisions disadvantageous to the state. Ex post failures were deficiencies in the government's capacity in project management, including issues on resolute state regulation for the general public.

The privatization experience under the Mahathir regime suggests that political-business elites, as well as domestic and foreign capital, dominated the conflict-ridden scramble for rents. It also tells that the process entailed both state and market failures. Yet, the drive for private appropriation tried to avoid any public responsibility and resulted in the deprivation of the general population of their collective resources.

But how did the Mahathir regime's ethnic cronyism and state-orchestrated redistribution policy relate to its adoption of neoliberal policies based on pro-market ideology? This seemingly contradictory nature of the political economy of authoritarian neoliberalism was likewise one of its most compelling features for the ruling elites. The state had sanctioned accumulation activities of its cronies in an enlarging market space opened up by *selective* privatization and liberalization policies (Gomez, 2009). In the process of neoliberalization, the state had allowed entrenched cronies to exploit bigger market spaces and use broader market means, purportedly to attain the developmental goals of an ethnically defined and biased redistribution policy. For instance, in the bidding of projects associated with policies of liberalization and privatization, business cronies had first-mover advantages in the competition due to their political connections and access to state decision-makers (Juego, 2013, 2015). Apparently, such scheme did not necessarily result in regime stability, but rather it had been ridden with corruption, ethnicized divisions, and social conflicts.

Mahathir's perspective on economic development may be a strange mix of nationalism, protectionism, and neoliberalism; but it was by all means capitalist and elitist. The NDP was forthright in its call on the citizens to accept the fundamental nature of unequal social relations. It posited that inequality between human beings and uneven development across spaces are intuitive and normal. The *Second Outline Perspective Plan, 1991-2000* affirmed that "uneven development is characteristic of most market

1 The case studies in Jeff Tan's (2008) book covered the four largest privatization projects, namely, Indah Water Konsortium (the operator of the national sewerage system), Kuala Lumpur's Light Rail Transit, Malaysia Airlines (the national airline), and Proton (the national car company).

economies" (Malaysia, 1991a). Mahathir (1991) also clarified that, under Wawasan 2020, the principle of "individual income equality" does not mean that "all Malaysians will have the same income". His argument was premised on an individualistic ontology, contending that "by sheer dint of our own individual effort, our own individual upbringing and our individual preferences, we all have different economic worth, and will be financially rewarded differently" (Mahathir, 1991). He then went on to assert that "an equality of individual income as propounded by socialists and communists is not only not possible, it is not desirable and is a formula for disaster" (Mahathir, 1991).

Anti-Democracy

Even though Mahathir spoke of Malaysia's variant of 'democracy' in some occasions, he believed that the political regime of authoritarianism was the most conducive to Wawasan 2020 to flourish. In his classic *The Malay Dilemma* (1970), Mahathir's ethnicity-based analysis of backwardness and prescription of cultural conditioning for attaining modernization defeats the principle of liberal freedoms. In "The New Malay Dilemma", which was one of his last speeches before he resigned as prime minister, Mahathir (2002) discussed the two *new* dilemmas of the ethnic Malays and the society of Malaysia, namely, affirmative action and democratization. As regards the first of the new dilemma, Mahathir (2002) asked whether Malays "should or should not do away with the crutches [i.e., affirmative action] that they have gotten used to, which in fact they have become proud of". The second new dilemma that Mahathir (2002) identified was framed in the question: "Can we take a leaf from their [i.e., most liberal democracies] book and risk condemnation for not being democratic?". He asserted that "Malaysia is committed to democracy", which he conceptually reduced to its "most important element" – that is, the mere conduct of elections, or the act of ensuring the voters' "right to elect" for the party they want to represent them in government. As one of the staunchest proponents of Asian Values, specifically the idea to prioritize economic development over political democracy, Mahathir's (2002) polemics was straightforward and warned against democratization in the context of a developing Malaysian economy: "The dilemma that the Malays and the peoples of Malaysia face is whether we should in the name of democracy allow the country to be destroyed, or we ensure that people are not subjected to manipulations to the point where they will use democracy to destroy democracy".

Furthermore, during the Mahathir regime, harassment of the opposition and social movements was accompanied by legislative regulations and repressive practices to discipline the media (Munro-Kua, 1996; Tapsell, 2013). In 1999, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) (2000) included Mahathir in the list of "Ten Worst Enemies of the Press" and described him as "a master puppeteer, … [pulling] the strings of the major media, mostly owned or controlled by his ruling coalition, to perpetuate his power". Mahathir (2002) also censured the nurturing of politically conscious (Malay) students who "don't seem to appreciate the opportunities they got" but instead "become more interested in other things, politics in particular, to the detriment of their studies". This implies that the banner of Wawasan 2020's goal of attaining a fully developed economy with 'productive' workforce had to co-exist with a strategy for the de-politicization of the youth and students. All these authoritarian means

signified the bold assertion of Mahathir and his UMNO/BN allies to protect their monopoly not only on politics and public discourse but also on the wealth of material resources that come with the control of state power and social institutions.

Mahathir officially left the premier's office after 22 years in power. Yet, Wawasan 2020 has remained, in principle, the development vision of Malaysia. Succeeding governments of Abdullah and Najib had expressed their commitments to it. Having been functionaries themselves during Mahathir's regime, Abdullah and Najib were conscious of the deepened and widened system of patronage in Malaysia's power relations. True to form, they had consistently envisioned a society governed within the general framework of a capitalist economy resting upon elite interests and guarded by an authoritarian state.

ABDULLAH'S ISLAM HADHARI

Upon taking over the government from Mahathir and having been part of the hegemonic network that forged and promoted Wawasan 2020, Abdullah Badawi (2003-2009) declared that "My vision for Malaysia is Vision 2020" (Wain, 2009, p. 307; see also Abdullah, 2006a, 2006b). In line with this affirmation, and hence the resolve to pursue the NEP and NDP objectives, in 2004 Abdullah's government introduced the concept of *Islam Hadhari* (Civilizational Islam) as "a comprehensive and universal development framework for the nation" that balances "between physical and spiritual development" – meaning, the "imperative for the people" to have economic "progress" and civilizational "advancement" that is "firmly rooted in the universal values and injunctions of Islam" (Malaysia, 2005, p. 9). Even though "the tenets of Islam" would be the basis of the development framework, its proponents claimed that it should benefit all people regardless of religion, race, and other identities in the multiethnic society of Malaysia. In theory and practice, Islam Hadhari was made to ground in the regime of authoritarian neoliberalism.

With hindsight, the discursive appeal of linking Islam Hadhari to Wawasan 2020 served some important political, electoral, and economic objectives for Abdullah, the UMNO/BN coalition, and Malaysia's neoliberalism. Firstly, it attempted to sustain support of the elites and masses across classes and ethnicities who continued to believe in Mahathir's leadership and the modernization project. Secondly, it had enlarged UMNO/BN bailiwick coming from moderate Muslim constituencies. And thirdly, especially in a post-9/11 moment, it was designed to attract foreign capital and investments from both the Muslim world and 'Western' economies. Mahathir later turned out to be the most vehement critic of Abdullah's leadership, and he denounced Islam Hadhari, which he argued to be as a misnomer since Islam itself as well as being a Muslim is compatible with living a balanced life and with the belief in progress. But the nub of the conflict between Mahathir and Abdullah was more due to political and personal reasons than based on ideological differences (Wain, 2009). Both of them adhered to the idea of capitalist market-oriented development and to a critique of democracy.

The impressive victory of the BN coalition in the 2004 general elections, winning an overwhelming majority of votes and securing 199 of 219 parliament seats, was often credited to Abdullah's charisma, his well-received attempts at 'de-Mahathirization' or

not living in the shadow of Mahathir, and the drawing power of the Islam Hadhari slogan (Chong, 2006; Khoo, 2003b). However, beyond personality-based analysis of election success, the fact was that Abdullah and UMNO were the greatest electoral beneficiaries of the regime of authoritarian neoliberalism that Mahathir and his power clique had long instituted. Decades of UMNO dominance of money politics made possible the consolidation of a wealthy and powerful electoral machinery, the control of mainstream media, and the crippling of dissenters (Loh, 2005). The modernization project of the Mahathir regime's power bloc also built the foundations for: the promotion of the image of a moderate Islam especially after 9/11; the normalization of the perception of the conduciveness of neoliberal policies to economic growth and long-term social development; and the popularization of the Asian Values discourse that conceptually separates or detaches development from democratization.

Capitalism With Islamic Characteristics

With a fresh mandate from party mates and the electorate, Abdullah launched the *National Mission* in 2005, the midpoint between the introduction and termination of Vision 2020. As a policy framework for a 15-year period, the National Mission recognized that while "Malaysia is now an open trading economy participating in an extremely competitive and fast-moving global marketplace", there persist "considerable income and wealth inequalities", uneven rural-urban development, and "racial polarization" (Malaysia, 2005, pp. 3-4). It expressed the usual development rhetoric of the previous regime: "a resilient and competitive economy" based on the goals of "equity" and inclusive growth (Malaysia, 2005, p. 4). Guided by the principle of Islam Hadhari, the National Mission wanted to avoid the "danger of … possessing first-class infrastructure but third-class mentality" by fortifying "moral and ethical foundations" and changing "mindset and attitudes" to be able to compete globally "through meaningful participation … in the competitive and productive growth process" (Malaysia, 2005, p. 4). To this end, the Abdullah administration expanded free-trade agreements with the US, India, Chile, Pakistan, and the Asia Pacific region including Australia and New Zealand to complement Mahathir's earlier negotiations with Japan and China (Wain, 2009).

The *Ninth Malaysia Plan* (9MP) detailed the strategies and budgetary allocations to realize the National Mission. Its program for continued macroeconomic reforms were buttressed by a new discursive thrust at the turn of the 21st century (Abdullah, 2006a; Malaysia, 2005). The discourse of 'ownership' was emphasized to instill a sense of responsibility among stakeholders from the private and public sectors to civil society in the accumulation regime. The objective of 'human capital development' aimed at capability building and skills upgrading, as well as the conditioning of values and mentalities of the population attuned to the capitalist ethos. The idea of 'transborder development' meant restructuring the geography of capital accumulation where competing centers are clustered as productive corridors for the market.

In sum, the National Mission's agenda was indicative of the twofold feature in Malaysia's envisioned modernization process. The first was the country's struggle with the intractable problems of economic poverty, social inequalities, and political-cultural conflicts. The second was the country's alignment with the evolving

discourse in global development whereby neoliberalism has moved away from a narrow concern on macro-economic adjustments to a broader project for competitiveness through institutional and human behavioral change.

Overall, Abdullah's Islam Hadhari project was illustrative of the contradictions of the regime of authoritarian neoliberalism in *conceptual*, *pragmatic*, and *empirical* terms. Despite the principle's ambiguity, its particularly capitalist, racist, and non-democratic orientations were revealing of the class, ethnic, and political interests behind the ideology.

Conceptually, Islam Hadhari defines a vision of creating a civilization of Malaysian capitalism with Islamic characteristics. There are ideological or religious debates about the compatibility of Islam with capitalism, or Islamic economics with modern capitalism, and the extent to which capitalist penetration impacts on the rise and decline of civilizations. However, the history of both the Islamic civilization and global capitalism has shown how the encroachment of capital on cultures and religions, particularly through imperialist wars, can appropriate surplus from them and can become an influential force in their evolution (Atasoy, 2009; Bayat, 1992; Kadri, 2016; Karim, 2011; Rodinson, 1973). Theoretically and historically, capitalism and Islam can accommodate each other but in ways that necessarily induce ideological contestations and social conflicts. What the Islam Hadhari experiment desired to prove was the case that Islam could flourish on a capitalist system.

Abdullah's (2006a) program in "building a civilization to elevate the nation's dignity" was aimed at unleashing the capitalist spirit from Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of Malaysia. This was evident in the objectives and strategies delineated in the National Mission and the 9MP, where Islamic values would be a thin icing on a largely neoliberal capitalist cake. The crux of the logic of changing behaviors and mindsets – that is, towards a 'first-class mentality' – is for culture to adapt to and facilitate the requirements of economic productivity and competitiveness. In essence, the development approach of Islam Hadhari was to strengthen the materiality of capitalism within which the ideology of Islam is to be imbued.

Failed Political Reforms

Pragmatically, Islam Hadhari had served as an ideological façade of the interests of ethnic Islam and UMNO. This became more pronounced in an issue in early 2006, when nine non-Malay ministers submitted a memorandum to Abdullah calling for a review of laws affecting rights of non-Muslims (Chow & Loh, 2006). UMNO took offense of this initiative, which was eventually withdrawn through the usual politics of consociation, notwithstanding its legitimacy.

Further, the executive and the parliament had systematically ignored the advocacy and work of the civil society and SUHAKAM (the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia) that proposed reforms and investigations on human rights cases, which also implicated some UMNO officers (Rodan, 2009). While Abdullah appointed a Royal Commission for Police Reform, his administration did not act upon its report on issues such as police payoffs and extrajudicial killings, as well as their recommendations which included the establishment of the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission and a possible repeal of the ISA (Tikamdas, 2005). This

inaction was telling of the regime's unwillingness to restructure the coercive apparatuses of the state according to human rights principles.

Empirically, the attempts at governance reforms under the rubric of the Islam Hadhari principle were not only thwarted by the established structures of patronage, impunity, and corruption, Abdullah himself was also accused of nepotism and cronyism. Despite gaining a very popular mandate and a generally positive international media perception as Malaysia started off a post-Mahathir era, Abdullah's anti-corruption campaign and anti-cronyism promises to ensure some sense of integrity in government contracts for a supposedly liberal economy soon faltered. The investigative journalist Barry Wain (2009) observed that: "While Abdullah deserved the sobriquet Mr. Clean in the sense that he had not enriched himself, his family and friends had benefited from the system of patronage he was supposed to be dismantling" (p. 312). In his book *Malaysian Maverick: Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times*, Wain (2009) also revealed features of authoritarian neoliberalism under the Abdullah government. These were evident in a number of the Abdullah administration's parochial decisions and anti-democratic actions that specifically privileged family- and crony-based *interests* of executive dominance over the competitiveness *ideology* of a neoliberal economy. Firstly, one of the most controversial issues was the reported favors granted to Abdullah's brother in the catering business servicing the armed forces and the national airlines (Wain, 2009).[2] Secondly, media remained in the hands of the political and business cronies of UMNO leaders as Abdullah loyalists and trusted allies were appointed to key media posts, including the management of TV3 and the national news agency *Bernama* (Brown, 2005; Wain, 2009). Thirdly, there was growing perception from local and international human rights organizations that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) – supposedly Abdullah's reform legacy – turned out to be an instrument of the incumbent government to selectively prosecute the political opposition.[3] Lastly, institutions for the strengthening of democratization, especially the Election Commission to guarantee free, fair, and credible elections and the MACC (the restructured Anti-Corruption Agency) to ensure government integrity and end the culture of impunity, were within the Prime Minister's Department itself.

If there was any strong indication of the general shortcomings of the Islam Hadhari project, it had to be the dismal electoral performance of the Abdullah-led BN in the 2008 general elections that caused the ruling coalition the loss of the key states of Selangor, Penang, Kelantan, and Kedah to the political opposition *Pakatan Rakyat*. While there might be several contributing factors to the project's failure, it is instructive to point out three important explanations. The first was the apparent disappointment of the electorate on the inability of Abdullah to deliver on his reform promises. The second was the fragile discursive construction of the Islam Hadhari concept that was framed along conflict-inducing religious and ethnic undercurrents – which was unlike Mahathir's Wawasan 2020 that used a 'more inclusive' language

2 The corruption allegations implicating Abdullah and family were issues related to: a 15-year contract for canteens in the armed forces when Abdullah was defense minister, and the awarding of a nine-year guaranteed return with the privatization of the catering service of the national airlines (see Wain, 2009).

3 This was amplified as a result of the suspicious death of Teoh Beng Hock from the then opposition Democratic Action Party while under custody of MACC for corruption allegations.

for a multiethnic society and was built on a more solid hegemonic network. The third was the precariousness of the regime of authoritarian neoliberalism whose hegemony had been challenged by different social forces with respective visions for alternative futures. In particular, this signified that a counter-hegemonic movement of the opposition had arisen to contest the hegemony of UMNO. In 2009, even though BN still had a slim parliamentary majority, Abdullah resigned and officially handed on the government leadership to his deputy.

NAJIB'S 1MALAYSIA

Najib Razak (2009-2018) took over the premiership from Abdullah with: the party mandate to regain UMNO's dominance; the ethnic Islam and Malay interest to keep their socio-economic privileges; the capitalist development objective to overcome the impact of the 2008 global recession; and a personal ambition to craft his own legacy. As a strategic step to address these aims and demands, Najib (2009a) launched the program *1Malaysia*, or "1Malaysia: People First, Performance Now", as a key pillar of his administration's agenda for national transformation. The articulation and execution of 1Malaysia evoked the earlier observed *modus operandi* of authoritarian neoliberalism – that is, attuned to the incumbent government's interests in the maintenance of the status quo and to the exigencies of the global and domestic economies. It was presented as a perpetuation of UMNO's historical hegemony. As Najib (2009b) asserted:

> 1Malaysia does not reject our past in order to secure our future. Rather it is a clear reaffirmation of the 'documents of destiny' that have shaped this great nation and bound it together since our Independence – the Federal Constitution, the Rukun Negara, the guiding principles of the NEP, Wawasan 2020 and the National Mission.

Spanning nine years and two terms, the Najib administration's economic vision for competitiveness was carried out through policies for further liberalization, privatization, fiscal discipline, and market reforms. These were formulated in the context of the effects on the domestic economy of the 2008 global economic crisis, the 2014 oil crash, and the re-emergence of China as an economic superpower. At the same time, repression of civil and political rights persisted (Case, 2017). In essence, Najib's 1Malaysia would be best understood as: an *electoral campaign and political agenda*; a *socio-economic development strategy*; and a *crisis response*.

Political Doublespeak on Democracy

As an electoral campaign and political agenda, the 1Malaysia slogan made a populist appeal while the regime continued on repressive measures against dissenters. On the one hand, it promoted the discourses of national unity, socio-economic reforms, and political democracy to muster a broad inter-ethnic support. On the other hand, the discourse was buttressed by the government's harassment of critics and opposition. Examine, for example, the contradictions in Najib's pronouncements about democracy

under existing power relations and the announcement about the repeal of the draconian ISA. In a speech where he outlined his administration's media relations policy, Najib (2009c) spoke of the "need to renew [Malaysia's] democracy" by establishing a "new national discourse on the principles of transparency and accountability; service to all, not just the few; and respect and fairness in the public dialogue". He then proclaimed a version of democracy based on the principles of consensus, social equality, and interactivity that can be qualified as 'radical' given the historically institutionalized stratification in the society: "a constructive civilized consensus – across all people, races, parties and media – that engages the Nation in the political process" (Najib, 2009c). Yet, even at the discursive level, the 1Malaysia concept's allusion to a certain kind of 'inclusive' politics was contested not only by sections of the Chinese and Indian communities, but also by some factions within the UMNO social bloc and their grassroots constituencies. The latter groups strongly believed in preserving the privileges of Malays and Islam in government policies and social institutions. Indeed, Najib's rhetoric on 'democratic' governance was faced with disparate communal interests from ethno-religious groups and with the often competing political-business interests within the UMNO network. In its strategy to keep the opposition at bay, the Najib regime had also denied civil liberties through violent dispersal of peaceful protests such as the *Bersih 2.0* demonstrations for electoral reforms, arrests of opposition politicians, and the clamp down on free press including threats to imprison critical bloggers. All of these were done in the name of unity, order, and stability under the 1Malaysia banner.

On 15 September 2011, the eve of Malaysia Day, Najib announced the abolition of the ISA whose detention-without-trial provision had been a serious human rights concern since 1960 (Munro-Kua, 1996). A careful examination of his speech for this occasion would reveal his political doublespeak on democratization where he made a distinction between the aspirations of the people for democracy and the imperative of the state for social order. Speaking with a Lincolnian rhetoric, Najib (2011) claimed to have been "feeling the pulse, agitation and aspiration of the [people] … for a more open and dynamic democracy, where the opinions, ideas and concerns of the masses are given due attention". He then emphasized his aim for Malaysia "to be at par with other democratic systems in the world which are underscored by the universal principle from the people, by the people and for the people". However, this rhetorical aspiration for democracy had to be sidelined by the post-9/11 security concerns and subsumed under the doctrine of the protection of authority as the *raison d'état*. Najib (2011) justified the legitimacy of the authoritarian disposition by arguing it is a "global truth" because the objective of national security "unavoidably … demands special measures [such as preventive detention] which sometimes are outside the democratic norms". He substantiated this argument with "Islamic law" by highlighting the principle of *Usul Fiqah* on "the need to prevent a wrongdoing from occurring" and the belief "that the decision of the ruler is a trust which must be implemented for the people being governed for their general benefit" (Najib, 2011). Then he framed tough state security enforcement as a normal empirical reality that is "not something strange, unusual or alien" because in the 9/11 aftermath "it has been proven that developed democratic countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom had also enacted special legislative framework to deal with terrorist threats" (Najib, 2011).

After the ISA was formally repealed in 2011, SOSMA (the Security Offences Special Measures Act of 2012) was enacted (Malaysia, 2012). SOSMA has been complemented by the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2015 and the National Security Council Act of 2016 (Malaysia, 2015a, 2016). Akin to the ISA, these expanded national security laws are not aligned with international human rights standards. They continue to give special powers in terms of legal rules and discretionary authority to the prime minister and the whole state apparatus, especially the police and public prosecutors over issues of preventive detention without judicial review, arbitrary arrests, surveillance, and access to sensitive information.

Global Competitiveness, Large-Scale Corruption, and Megaprojects

As a socio-economic development strategy, 1Malaysia was designed for the continuity of neoliberalization. Its immediate economic agenda was to overcome the global recession which posed difficulties on the Malaysian economy, especially the slowdown of the exports industry. The 1Malaysia program was the first of the "Four Pillars of National Transformation" of the Najib administration which enjoined the government to act as a "competitive corporation" with market-friendly policies in pursuit of global competitiveness (Najib, 2010a, 2010b). It was envisioned to work with the other pillars: *Government Transformation Programme* (GTP), *Economic Transformation Programme* (ETP), and the *Tenth Malaysia Plan* (10MP).

Central to GTP are good governance (to fight corruption) and social order (to reduce crimes) with a view to making state institutions responsive to the requirements of local and foreign capital for security and calculability. As Najib (2008) remarked at the Malaysian Capital Market Summit: "Stability, predictability and certainty … have been the corner-stones of our economic development, prosperity and progress as a nation. We have built prosperity for Malaysia and Malaysians because we have a Government which is stable, united, liberal and pro-business."

The highlight of the ETP was the New Economic Model (NEM), which charted the strategies to escape the "middle-income trap" by upgrading productivity and enhancing national competitiveness in the real economy and engaging in huge financial investments (Najib, 2010a, 2010d; NEAC, 2010a, 2010b). At the inaugural of the National Economic Advisory Council (NEAC), which drafted the NEM, Najib (2009d) pronounced the continuation of economic reforms en route to neoliberal convergence by "realigning … economic strategy to accommodate today's competitive environment"; by accelerating liberalization efforts; and by continuing post-1997 crisis plans of action that "fostered the transformation of Malaysia into a free market economy". He then instructed NEAC "to review the importance of traditional relationships and responsibilities in the economic sphere", so as to "create a new relationship of public/private partnership", where *the government* "manages the economy and ensure[s] an economic environment that is conducive to long term, stable growth", and where *the private sector* "provides a strong engine for growth, as it is able to react almost immediately to changes in market conditions, much faster than any government" (Najib, 2009d).

The *1Malaysia Development Berhad* (1MDB) was established in 2009 to carry out ETP's strategizing activities and meet funding requirements. It turned into a sovereign wealth fund with diversified interests in key economic areas identified under the

ETP such as oil and energy, financial and business services, and communications and infrastructure. The Government of Malaysia was 1MDB's only shareholder, ensuring "a unified public-private sector approach and policy alignment towards a competitive Malaysia" (1MDB, n.d.). The Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) Institute characterized 1MDB as an enterprise "funded by debt guaranteed by the Malaysian federal government" (SWF Institute, 2012).

Early on, critics were wary of Najib's intention in creating 1MDB on suspicion that its funds could be used as electoral capital for BN's money politics and as a business machine to enrich or bail out UMNO cronies (Zahiid, 2011). Soon after, corruption allegations and financial scandals surrounding the mismanagement of the 1MDB immensely contributed to the dismal electoral showing and eventual defeat of Najib and BN during the 2013 and 2018 general elections. The Najib government tried to contain local media news on the 1MDB controversy through censorship of critical online media outlets, like *The Malaysian Insider* news site. Nonetheless, international news agencies, particularly *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, have followed the controversy and regularly published reports on the 1MDB scandal since July 2015, including the exposé that some USD 1 billion from the state investment fund had been deposited to Najib's personal bank account (Hope, Paige, Welch, Murray, & Canipe, 2016). The 1MDB scandal elicited a motley crew of discontents with Najib even within the UMNO, not least the sustained criticism from Mahathir who unequivocally demanded Najib's removal and finally resigned from the party in February 2016 (Murad, 2016). On his part, in 2015, Najib sacked cabinet officials over the 1MDB controversies, notably his deputy minister Muhyiddin Yassin and Attorney-General Abdul Gani Patail (Teoh, 2015). Muhyiddin was openly critical of the government's handling of the 1MDB case, and Abdul Gani led a high-level investigation of the alleged money trail of the 1MDB funds ending up in Najib's bank accounts. In 2016, the Najib government classified the Auditor-General's report on the financial transactions and accounting of assets of the 1MDB under the Officials Secrets Act. But within a week after Najib had lost the 2018 general elections, the new government under Mahathir made this report public. The Auditor-General's report basically confirms previous news and longstanding criticisms on 1MDB's poor corporate governance and illicit transactions – including the claim that, between 2009 and 2014, the company had accumulated debt and inherited loans totaling MYR 42 billion (USD 10.6 billion) (The Edge Singapore, 2018). The U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ), together with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service, also launched an investigation into alleged fund misappropriations of the 1MDB. In June 2017, the USDOJ filed "civil forfeiture complaints" under its Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, seeking to recover nearly USD 1.7 billion worth of assets that might have been laundered through financial institutions in the United States (Hui, 2018; Paddock, 2017; USDOJ, 2017).

The 10MP provided the details of growth targets, budgetary allocations, and implementation of 1Malaysia, GTP, and ETP-NEM for 2011-2015 (Malaysia, 2010). It maintained the development objectives of previous administrations, with emphasis on continuous financial and institutional support for the Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community and affirmative actions for Bumiputeras in equity ownership restructuring efforts (Najib, 2010a). Yet, it was especially intended to deal with the impacts of the global economic crisis on the domestic economy. Najib (2009d) had

outlined state-market relations in Malaysia's neoliberalism during crisis moments: "When the dynamic private sector retreats, the government must step in and increase its investments to fill the void." This, as Najib (2009d) pointed out, had been the case since the 1997 Asian crisis which made it difficult to realize private sector-led growth and market-led development as envisaged in Vision 2020. The NEM and the 10MP defined the "strategies for a more focused role for the government as an enabler, regulator and catalyst" and emphasized the "shift [of] the onus now for the private sector to step up its role as the true engine of growth" (Najib, 2010c). To stimulate participation of the private sector, which "has not been playing its part" since the 1997 crisis (Najib, 2009d), the government had planned to venture into massive investments in megaprojects and allotted a Facilitation Fund of MYR 20 billion (USD 5 billion) for public-private partnerships (Najib, 2010a, 2010d).

1Malaysia was also the development program for the last leg of the journey to Vision 2020 as laid out in the *Eleventh Malaysia Plan* (11MP) for 2016-2020. The Malaysian National Development Strategy (MyNDS) is the guiding action plan for the 11MP. MyNDS enjoins market-based solutions to attain the goals of social inclusion and environmental sustainability through increasing high impact labor productivity and technological innovation at low cost for the government. Thus, what the 11MP's theme of "anchoring growth on people" means is that its real centerpiece is the advancement of the "capital economy" (GDP growth, big businesses, mega investment projects, and financial markets) under which the "people economy" (workers, small-and-medium enterprises, families, and communities) is subsumed (Malaysia, 2015b).

Neoliberal Crisis Responses

As a crisis response, 1Malaysia undertook several key institutional measures, of which six of them were notable. These economic policies and strategies were aimed at weathering the impact of the 2008 global economic crisis and the effects of the sharp drop in oil prices in the world market that followed. Their goal was to restore growth in the export-oriented industries.

The first of these measures was the expression of the Najib regime's interests in the stability of the global capitalist system. As he was about to assume the premiership, Najib (2008) called for the reform of the global financial architecture and urged governments to draw on the lessons of the Malaysian 'successful' experience of capital and exchange controls in dealing with the 1997 Asian financial crisis. He appealed to the G8 countries to "come to grips with the seriousness of the global financial turmoil, so that the capitalistic system as we know it do not break down or collapse amidst rising bank failures, bankruptcies and market meltdown" (Najib, 2008). Then, at the 2009 World Capital Markets Symposium, he proposed for a "regulatory *laissez faire*" in the financial system where "regulatory oversight should take precedence over the pursuit of private profit through the manipulation of unfettered capital" (Najib, 2009e).

The second measure was for the restoration of political order, immediately following the 2008 general elections. Najib (2008) claimed that "predictability, stability and certainty in [Malaysia's] system of governance" have been the linchpin of the country's capitalist development, as these conditions are needed for market security and profitability. This particular crisis response signified a couple of important

features in the regime of authoritarian neoliberalism under Najib: (1) Democracy is limited to the electoral exercise; and (2) the objective of securing market order entails an *anti-politics* attitude towards the opposition where "[there] is no time for politicking or to score points politically" (Najib, 2008).

The third of these measures were the two Economic Stimulus Packages (ESPs) roughly amounting to MYR 67 billion (USD 16.5 billion), or 9% of GDP, to inject spending into the domestic economy with the hope of recovery of the private sector and the economy as a whole during the 2009-2011 period (Goh & Lim, 2009; Mahani & Rasiah, 2009; Najib, 2009f). ESP 1 was allotted for infrastructure, transportation, education, banking, and finance. ESP 2 took the forms of bank guarantees, tax incentives, and allocations to the National Sovereign Fund. These packages were appropriated *mostly* for private sector assistance and infrastructure, and *the rest* for social protection programs and subsidies for food, toll, fuel, and low-cost housing.

The fourth measure had to do with further liberalization. At the 13th Malaysian Banking Summit, Najib (2009g) commented that "to make 1Malaysia a reality … the Government needs to partner actively with the business community". Accordingly, Najib (2009g), as concurrent Finance Minister, announced the liberalization of the *financial* sector "as a key enabler and catalyst of economic growth". This was earlier complemented by the liberalization of the *services* sub-sectors and related efforts to "continue to modify or eliminate policies that inhibit growth" (Najib, 2009f). Other reforms that Najib (2009e, 2009f) announced include: removing 30% bumiputera equity requirements for listed companies; liberalizing the capital market growth agenda by attracting international firms in broking and Islamic finance; deregulating the Foreign Investment Committee guidelines; and restructuring government-linked companies to be globally competitive. These liberalization schemes were connected to the ambition for Kuala Lumpur to become a "global financial center" through a megaproject of the 1MDB in partnership with Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Development Company to construct the Kuala Lumpur International Financial District – a 34-hectare real-estate development amounting to around MYR 26 billion (USD 6.5 billion) (Najib, 2010e). Renamed as the Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) after Najib's father, the construction of this megaproject only began in 2013 and the plan expanded to 70 hectares. But the Najib government was soon compelled to de-link the TRX from the 1MDB state fund and the money laundering controversies surrounding it.

All these liberalization agendas, however, cannot be construed as the Malaysian state's unqualified embrace of orthodox neoliberalism. As Najib (2009b) categorically declared:

> We welcome others into Malaysia, while maintaining our own special identity and protecting our economic interests … [W]e are not liberalising to conform to some new economic orthodoxy … Our objective is clear: to ensure that Malaysians – our people and our companies … benefit from the competitive dynamics that are shaping the global marketplace.

The fifth measure was fiscal discipline, mostly imposed during Najib's second term (2013-2018), through austerity programs that cut subsidies and funds for welfare, health, and education. The government implemented a series of major tax and fiscal

reforms to replace long-running populist economic policies to address the challenges of budget deficit, the fall in global oil prices, and the depreciation of the Ringgit. Firstly, the Najib administration removed blanket subsidy for fuel in 2014 and then proposed to cut electricity subsidy in 2017. Energy subsidies, especially on electricity and transport fuel, have existed since the 1980s to protect low-income households and stimulate economic activity. The rolling back of this state-subsidized fuel consumption is in line with the neoliberal principle of getting prices 'right' by letting the market set the 'real' costs of energy usage.

Secondly, the government implemented the GST (goods and services tax) at the standard rate of 6% in April 2015. The GST was intended to increase revenue to offset decades-long fiscal deficits. From 1988 to 2017, the government budget deficit of Malaysia averaged 2.97% of GDP (Trading Economics, 2018). During the 2009 global recession, the deficit further ballooned to its highest level equal to 6.7% of GDP due to stimulus packages and subsidies for the domestic economy. It was also hoped that the income generated from GST would reduce government's dependence on oil and natural gas revenues, especially from the state-owned Petronas. The GST was a broad-based tax on most consumptions and imports made *in* Malaysia. But the exports of goods and services from Malaysia were generally GST-free; thus giving incentives to an export-oriented production system to encourage GDP growth. The GST was implemented when the Ringgit was depreciating, when currencies of commodity exporting countries like Malaysia were negatively affected by oil price fluctuations since 2014. The combined effects of GST and the weakening Ringgit on rising prices and living costs have been mostly felt by poor households, ordinary workers, and the middle class (cf. Ng, 2015).

China Policy

The sixth crisis response measure was the strategy to look to or emulate China's economic strategy and integrate Chinese capital into Malaysia's accumulation regime. This was in line with the overall plan to attract more foreign direct investment (FDI) and portfolio investments from emerging economies that form part of the BRICS (especially China, India, and Brazil) while continuously engaging with traditional partners US, EU, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the ASEAN. Najib (2009b) candidly justified that his first official visit to a non-ASEAN country was made to China upon the invitation of the former Chinese Premiere Wen Jiabao because Malaysia's relationship with China is "fundamental to our national interests" and "there are many mutual lessons to be learnt and shared between our countries".

Firstly, Najib (2009b) had expressed Malaysia's interest in getting a market share of Chinese capital in recognition of the fact that "China has enormous foreign exchange reserves which amount to larger than the combined reserves of all the G7 countries added together". At the Business Forum organized by the Government of Malaysia in Beijing, Najib (2009h) regarded China as a "strategic partner", and thus laid down his economic agenda for expansion with his state counterpart and China's business community (see also FMPRC, 2011; Najib, 2010f).

Secondly, Najib (2009b) highlighted one of the important lessons from the Chinese development experience: "the realization that for China, like Malaysia, an

open door economic policy has brought extraordinary economic progress". At the 2010 World Chinese Economic Forum in Kuala Lumpur, held exactly a year after the former Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Malaysia, Najib (2010f) announced that "Malaysia has become China's largest trading partner among ASEAN countries". Najib (2010f) then went on to declare: "The lessons that can be learned from China, and from the rise of Asia as a whole, is that Free Trade, open markets, and openness to investment are the way to prosperity". Since 2009, China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner. Between 2009 and 2017, Chinese exports to Malaysia amounted to USD 41.7 billion (i.e., 10.8% year-over-year increase), and Malaysian exports to China amounted to USD 54.3 billion (i.e., 10.2% year-over-year increase) (Liu, 2018).

In terms of investments, Chinese FDI in Malaysia were relatively small until 2012. But both Chinese FDI in, and trade volume with, Malaysia skyrocketed during Najib's second term starting in 2013, at the time when Chinese President Xi Jinping assumed power and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was launched. Within the BRI framework, Chinese FDI into Malaysia during 2013-2017 grew nearly 350%, totaling USD 2.36 billion – which is a 20.2% contribution to FDI growth (Liu, 2018). Big investments from China got increasing public attention since the late 2015 when the 1MDB sold its entire assets in the power sector under the Edra Global Energy Berhad to China General Nuclear Power Corporation for MYR 9.83 billion (USD 2.3 billion) cash (Chin, 2015). Then, in 2016, Najib made another official visit to China to formalize dozens of agreements between Malaysian and Chinese companies worth around MYR 144 billion (USD 36.1 billion), covering diverse sectors such as infrastructure, manufacturing, and real estate ("M'sian, Chinese firms sign", 2016). Eleven high-profile deals between China and Malaysia totaling USD 134 billion had been reported, including the controversial East Coast Rail Link (Liu, 2018). The Malaysian government guaranteed the loans to finance the high-risk megaprojects. With these agreements, the Najib regime had tied Malaysian society and economy to the Chinese government and business interests for decades ahead. These deals generated political opposition, and became a critical issue against the Najib administration during the 2018 elections. The increasing presence of Chinese workers and enterprises in Malaysia is also creating social tension among the local population (Tham, 2018).

Indeed, Malaysia under Najib had economic interests in China's capital reservoir. But it may also be the case that the Najib government looked to China as an exemplar of an authoritarian-neoliberal regime with a strong state that is capable of managing a capitalist production system and its social consequences.

In his bid for re-election in 2018, Najib campaigned for *continuity* of 1Malaysia's purported accomplishments and its transformation program towards a high-income and equal country. But Najib and the UMNO/BN suffered a stunning defeat from the Mahathir-led coalition Pakatan Harapan, which campaigned on the message of *change* and criticized the actual political, societal, and economic achievements of the 1Malaysia vision – particularly the authoritarianism, neoliberalism, and corruption of the Najib regime.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The GE14 put an end to 61 years of UMNO/BN dominance. It also culminated the two decades of the *Reformasi* movement's electoral opposition. Among other things, the outcome of the historic election signifies a loud 'protest vote' against the more advanced version of the regime of authoritarian neoliberalism under Najib and the large-scale corruption that came with it.

The new ruling government under Mahathir promises an ambitious agenda for 'regime change', encompassing the spheres of governance, ethnic relations, and economy. This article has attempted to reveal the operating principles and institutions of the enduring regime of authoritarian neoliberalism in Malaysia – which must be the targets of reform initiatives, and against which the extent of the promised social change shall be evaluated.

Authoritarian neoliberalism has been the de facto social regime in Malaysia where the neoliberal economy was being made to operate within a strong state. It evolved through the administrations of Mahathir, Abdullah, and Najib. The political-business interests of the ruling elites largely shaped the priorities and tendencies of this regime. Since the official termination of the NEP in 1991, the discursive mutations in Malaysia's development agendas have conformed to the discernible shift in specific phases of the global political economy of capitalism. However, as this article has shown, the Malaysian state's policy choices cannot be reduced to some overarching ideology of orthodox neoliberalism, or process of neoliberalization, according to the templates of the Washington Consensus and Post-Washington Consensus. Formal compliance to the evolving global discourse on capitalist development might have been based on the calculations of the state elites on the benefits of adopting neoliberalism in their domestic laws, external agreements, and policy pronouncements – thereby, avoiding the cost of being excluded from the expanded market share and accumulation opportunities under conditions of globalization (Tabb, 2004). Arguably, Malaysia's governing elites and their cronies were motivated by their self-interests, rather than pure ideology, in yielding to neoliberal discourses and policies.

Mahathir's 22-year premiership hammered out and nurtured the foundations of authoritarian neoliberalism. His administration laid out the Wawasan 2020 development framework upon which the subsequent programs of Islam Hadhari and 1Malaysia were built. Wawasan 2020 was: constructed by a hegemonic network that cut across classes and ethnicities; operated by a political-business alliance within the UMNO power bloc; characterized by a calibrated neoliberalism with a national industrialization strategy; and orchestrated by an authoritarian state. It tried to ensure political stability through state's anti-democratic, coercive means. In addition, it sought to manage the economic accumulation process through active state intervention in favor of its cronies and of what it perceived to be 'the national interest'.

Abdullah's Islam Hadhari envisioned a state-managed capitalist development with ethnic Malay and religious Islam undertones. It was presented as a socio-political and economic program for a moderate Islam in the aftermaths of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 9/11 global war on terror. It initially succeeded as an electoral campaign to win over a larger Malay constituency but later failed to sustain the confidence of both the electorate and the UMNO network. Abdullah failed to deliver on his reform

promises. His anti-corruption initiatives were thwarted by entrenched vested interests including from his own family.

The 1Malaysia agenda of Najib built on the neoliberalization process started off by Mahathir with a view to more open real economy and financial sector towards global competitiveness. Amid the stagnating effect of the 2008-2009 global economic recession on Malaysia's export industry, the competitiveness project to venture out into high value-added production system was coupled with investments in megaprojects and an ambitious scheme to make Kuala Lumpur a global financial center. Central to this drive for competitiveness were Najib government's conscious efforts in emulating as well as making lucrative business deals and high-risk investments with the rising China. During its second term, the Najib administration also resorted to government austerity and other fiscal disciplinary measures to supposedly address budget deficits, fall in oil prices, and the depreciation of the Ringgit. Embroiled in massive corruption scandals and crime allegations, Najib's rhetoric involved a doublespeak, especially about democratization, but his anti-democratic actions spoke for themselves. The Najib regime saw authoritarianism as the most viable political system on which intensified capital accumulation and the maintenance of UMNO/BN hegemony were to be embedded.

The reform programs of Mahathir's new government will be closely scrutinized by the now opposition UMNO/BN and the vibrant new media. Most crucially, Mahathir will be held accountable by his current political supporters from Pakatan Harapan, originally belonging to the *Reformasi* movement, who once faulted him for much of what ails contemporary Malaysia in terms of a culture of impunity, corruption, and other institutional malaises. This article's exposition of the enduring institutions of authoritarian neoliberalism in Malaysia points to where and why reforms for genuine democracy, social justice, economic development, and wealth redistribution must be made.

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National Human Rights Institutions, Extraterritorial Obligations, and Hydropower in Southeast Asia: Implications of the Region's Authoritarian Turn

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This article examines the role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and transnational civil society in pursing Extraterritorial Obligation (ETO) cases in Southeast Asia as a means to investigate human rights threatened by cross-border investment projects. Two large hydropower dams under construction in Laos submitted to NHRIs from Thailand and Malaysia, namely the Xayaburi Dam and Don Sahong Dam, are detailed as case studies. The article argues that the emergence of ETOs in Southeast Asia, and its future potential, is dependent upon the collaborative relationship between the NHRIs and transnational civil society networks. Whilst NHRIs are in positions of political authority to investigate cases, civil society also enable cases through networking, research, and public advocacy. Further institutionalization of ETOs is significant to emerging regional and global agendas on business and human rights, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights that both the Thai and Malaysian governments have expressed commitment to. However, in Thailand and its neighboring countries where investments are located there has been an authoritarian turn. Reflecting this, there are weakening mandates of NHRIs and reduced civil and political freedoms upon which civil society depends that challenges the ability to investigate and pursue cases.

Keywords: Civil Society; Don Sahong Dam; Mekong River; National Human Rights Commission of Thailand; Xayaburi Dam

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INTRODUCTION

In Southeast Asia, new means are needed to ensure that governments and businesses protect and respect human rights. Transnational business activities are well-documented to have threatened or violated substantive and procedural human rights across the region, including industrial projects and special economic zones, the extractive industry, hydropower dams, and agribusiness (Business and Human Rights Resource Center, 2015; Middleton & Pritchard, 2013). In response, civil society have networked across the region and innovated new strategies, including working with the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) to conduct cross-border investigations of Thai business practices in neighboring Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos (Thailand's Extra-Territorial Obligations Watch & Community Resource Center, 2018). The basis

of these investigations is that the Thai state has a responsibility to ensure that the practices of businesses operating from within its territory also respect human rights outside of it, especially in places where access to justice may be weak. These state duties towards protecting human rights beyond borders are known as Extraterritorial Obligations (ETOs) (ETO Consortium, 2013). Despite a tangible push back by governments across Southeast Asia against human rights and its institutionalization (Gomez & Ramcharan, 2016; Welsh, 2017), and a broader turn towards political authoritarianism (Einzenberger & Schaffar, this issue; Dittmer, 2018; Pongsudhirak, 2018), the NHRCT and civil society have had some qualified success in pursuing ETO investigations.

In this article, I argue that the emergence of ETOs in Southeast Asia, and its future potential, depends upon a productive relationship between the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and transnational civil society networks. The implication of this argument is that *both* appropriately mandated NHRIs and an active civil society empowered with political and civil freedoms – including across borders – are necessary for the further institutionalization and effective utilization of ETOs in the region. To substantiate this argument, I examine two dams currently under construction on the Mekong River's mainstream, namely the Xayaburi Dam in Northern Laos and the Don Sahong Dam in Southern Laos. For the Xayaburi Dam, which has been investigated by the NHRCT, Thai construction firms and financiers are undertaking the project. For the Don Sahong dam in Southern Laos, the lead developer is a Malaysian firm, and the project was considered by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM). While I do not claim that NHRIs and ETOs are the sole – or even the most important – means to redress power imbalances and facilitate access to justice,[1] I suggest that given the limited avenues for transnational justice in Southeast Asia they are important despite their constraints. For example, they enable a degree of access to information, offer an arena for deliberating the impacts of projects, and can raise public awareness via media coverage of investigations. Indeed, despite growing authoritarianism in Southeast Asia, transnational civil society and NHRIs to date have managed to maintain momentum towards building ETO investigations.

Conceptually, this article builds upon Hensengerth (2015) who examined the politics of decision-making and sources of political authority associated with hydropower projects on transboundary rivers. Taking the Xayaburi Dam as his case study, Hensengerth argued that the Government of Laos (GoL) worked through a transnational network to bolster its political authority to proceed with the project, including the Thai private hydropower consortium, the Thai state-owned electricity utility, and two international consultancy firms, which it commissioned to undertake key studies. Hensengerth focuses on how the GoL was able to proceed with the Xayaburi Dam despite resistance from neighboring states – in particular Vietnam and Cambodia, and to an extent also Thailand (Rieu-Clarke, 2015a) – as well as an active transnational civil society campaign. In his analysis, he brings into relation state actors who are *in* authority "to resolve procedural issues", and non-state actors who are *an* authority "to legitimize claims" (Hensengerth, 2015, p. 915). He argues that

1 See also Khalfan (2013) cited in Grennan et al. (2016), and Middleton and Pritchard (2016), who list a range of accountability mechanisms that may be utilized in ETO cases, of which NHRIs are only one.

through collaborating with transnational non-state actors, including private sector, selective civil society actors, and supportive state agencies of neighboring countries (e.g., Thailand's Ministry of Energy and the state electricity utility), an apparently weak government such as the GoL could bolster its regional political authority and ultimately proceed with the controversial hydropower project.

In contrast, this article explores the relationship between NHRIs and transnational civil society networks that produces *countervailing* political authority challenging large dam projects. The importance of transnational civil society networks in environmental politics is well-recognized (Doherty & Doyle, 2008), including how transnational civil society networks create "advocacy networks" with state actors to influence state action either at the national or international level (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004). Social movement theory demonstrates how civil society strategically networks and builds allied coalitions where shared values and interests exist (McCarthy & Zald, 2001). Civil society may simultaneously challenge some agencies of the state while building alliances with others (Middleton, Pengkam, & Tivasuradej, 2017). Following Hensengerth (2015), NHRIs are autonomous state agencies *in* positions of political authority, although their power is relatively limited. In Southeast Asia, for example, they may conduct investigations but not prosecutions (Grennan, Velarde, Zambrano, & Moallem, 2016). Conventionally, NHRIs are considered national political authorities given that their investigations occurred only domestically. However, with the push towards investigating cases where investors from their country are building projects in neighboring countries, NHRIs are also emerging as transnational political authorities through innovating the use of ETOs. Meanwhile, transnational civil society networks that have also responded to cross-border investment projects, and which are formed of organizations and community representatives in the host and home country, constitute actors who are *an* authority.

The article is structured as follows: In the next section, the research method is detailed, followed by a contextual discussion on the region's authoritarian turn and the implications for NHRIs and civil society. I then outline key moments that have marked the emergence of ETOs in Southeast Asia, before turning to ETOs and the Xayaburi Dam and Don Sahong Dam. This is followed by a discussion and conclusion on the prospects for ETOs in the region.

METHOD

This research is based upon in-depth interviews and participatory observation with community representatives, civil society groups, NHRIs, and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). It is triangulated with literature reviewed from academic and civil society sources as well as credible news outlets. Expert interviews were conducted with senior campaigners (n=6) from five leading regional civil society organizations based in Thailand in mid-2016 on their work and experience of the regional human rights system in relation to hydropower development. Community leaders (n=4) involved in the campaigns on the Mekong and Salween rivers were also interviewed. Two interviews were conducted with a recent commissioner from the NHRCT (March 2016) and a current commissioner from SUHAKAM (October 2016). In Malaysia, a leading civil society organization

and a researcher on ETOs were interviewed (October 2016). The researcher also participated as a presenter in three AICHR regional workshops on Environment and Human Rights in September 2014, September 2015, and October 2017 where cross-border responsibilities were an emergent topic of discussion. In February 2018, the researcher met with representatives from the lead developer of the Xayaburi Dam.

In my role as an academic, I co-organized the first major conference on ETOs in Southeast Asia at Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok, Thailand) in September 2014. I have joined numerous workshops and seminars on the topics of business, environment, ETOs, and human rights in Southeast Asia with civil society, academics, and state actors over the past five years, often as a presenter. Overall, as a regionally-based academic, I have maintained a close relationship with civil society working on ETOs.

THE AUTHORITARIAN TURN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

Political authoritarianism is deepening across Southeast Asia (Pongsudhirak, 2018). In this section, I briefly survey features of this authoritarian turn and their implications for NHRIs and civil society. I address in particular state-NHRI and state-civil society relations, and the political and civic space for civil society and media. Given that it is the NHRCT that is most active on ETOs, I focus first on Thailand, and then more briefly on Malaysia given that SUHAKAM only recently considered the Don Sahong Dam as an ETO case. I then discuss Laos, where the Xayaburi Dam and Don Sahong Dam are located.

Thailand

In Thailand, a military coup in 2014 heralded an increasingly limited space for civil and political rights, including a tightening space for media freedoms, increased use of the *lese majeste* law and Computer Crimes Act, and a constrained space for civil society (Mérieau, 2018; Peoples' Empowerment Foundation, 2018). Section 44 of the interim 2014 constitution gave the military government unlimited legislative, executive, and judicial power. A new constitution was ratified in April 2017, paving the way for elections that are called for by a growing proportion of the population (McCargo, 2018). The new constitution considerably constrains the power of elected politicians (Mérieau, 2018).[2]

The 2017 constitution affirmed the NHRCT's continued existence, which for a while was in doubt. Under the military government, in 2015, a third batch of commissioners was selected by a committee that was not inclusive of broad civil society and lacked transparency (Ashayagachat, 2015). As a result, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI, 2017) downgraded the NHRCT from A (fully compliant) to B (partially compliant) as gauged by the Paris Principles, which are an international benchmark assessing NHRIs capacity to work to protect and promote

2 Significant powers have been given to the Constitutional Court, anti-corruption bodies, the Senate which had been fully appointed by the current military government for the first five years, and the National Strategy Committee formed of 35 military government appointed members who have defined a 20-year national strategy for Thailand.

human rights.[3] The 2017 constitution also required a new Organic Act on National Human Rights Commission 2017, passed in August 2017. Under this new legislation, the NHRCT lost the power to file lawsuits to the Court of Justice, and to refer cases to the administrative or constitutional courts. In addition, a new responsibility to review and comment on the accuracy of reports produced by human rights organizations and release their findings was allocated to the NHRCT, raising concerns among civil society that the NHRCT might be called upon to defend the state (Peoples' Empowerment Foundation, 2018). Civil society organizations have raised other concerns regarding the reduced role for them on the NHRCT's sub-commissions, which they previously viewed as a key means for substantive civil society participation. The pre-2015 NHRCT has not been without controversy either. However, a key flashpoint was the NHRCT report on major political protests in Bangkok in 2010, published at a time of high tension in 2013, that was criticized by some "for allegedly absolving the authorities while placing the blame for instigating the violence that led to the military crackdown on the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship" ("NHRC Under Fire For", 2013).

Malaysia

Until the recent election in May 2018, the same party coalition – the *United Malays National Organization* (UMNO) – ruled Malaysia as a parliamentary democracy for almost six decades (Milner, 2018). Regarding political and civil liberties, Freedom House (2016) labels Malaysia as "partly free". Access to the political space and the capacity of civil society organizations are relatively limited, the media is not overly critical of the government, and the government largely maintains its authority to censure the press and to detain dissidents, including opposition politicians (see also Juego this issue). Operating under these conditions, although rated as grade A (fully compliant) according to the Paris Principles, SUHAKAM investigation recommendations have "consistently failed to be tabled and debated in Parliament due to the Government's indifference" (Suara Rakyat Malaysia, 2018, p. 22). Despite the political challenges it faces, SUHAKAM is recognized as having made some progress on indigenous rights to land, on establishing a business and human rights agenda, and on maintaining its engagement with civil society (Interview with SUHAKAM commissioner, 2016; Interview with Malaysian civil society leader, 2016; Suara Rakyat Malaysia, 2018). The implications of the election of *Pakatan Harapan* in May 2018 for SUHAKAM's role and space for civil society remains to be seen.

Laos

Laos is a single party socialist state. Since 1986, it has increasingly transitioned towards a market economy facilitated by a mixture of illiberal and quasi-neoliberal institutions (Barney, 2012). The single-party state remains strongly authoritarian with entrenched patronage networks (Gainsborough, 2012). While expanding the

3 The Global Alliance on National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) is a global umbrella body that assesses and accredits NHRI (see also Grennan et al., 2016, pp. 12-13)

economy, accelerating 'resourcification' via hydropower dams, mining, and land concessions is rapidly producing resource scarcity and numerous impacts on local communities (Lagerqvist, 2017). With regard to freedom of the press, domestic media is largely owned by the state. The constitution of Laos forbids mass media activities that are contrary to "national interests" or "traditional culture and dignity" (Lintner, 2016). Liberal forms of civil society are limited (Rehbein, 2011), and most "non-profit associations" (NPAs) are service-oriented or community-based and cannot undertake overt advocacy work (Belloni, 2014). In the late 2000s, political space for civil society appeared to be growing, cumulating in the 9th Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF) in Vientiane in October 2012 (Kepa, 2015). However, shortly afterwards, in December 2012, the Ramon Magsaysay award winner Sombath Somphone, who was also co-chair of the AEPF Lao National Organizing Committee, forcibly disappeared. Sombath's disappearance has had a "chilling effect" on Laos' civil society (Freedom House 2016; Interview with Thai civil society leader, 2016).

ECONOMIC REGIONALIZATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF ETOS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Since the mid-1980s, governments and business in Southeast Asia have pursued economic regionalization and liberalization as a key policy agenda. From the 1990s, regionalization was principally pursued through the Asian Development Bank's Greater Mekong Subregion program, since the mid-2000s also as a vision of ASEAN economic integration leading to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, and most recently via the China-led Belt-and-Road Initiative. Large-scale infrastructure has been central to these programs, including roads, railways, special economic zones, and hydropower dams, which have been associated with a range of human rights violations. Substantive human rights include the right to life, the right to health and the right to food. Procedural human rights include the right to participation, the right to access information, and the right to access justice (Business and Human Rights Resource Center, 2015; Middleton & Pritchard, 2013).

Despite the challenge to human rights, numerous civil society groups including public interest lawyers, NGOs, and community groups have sought to defend, reinforce, and innovate the region's human rights system (Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions [ANNI], 2017). Given that domestic access to justice in some countries in Southeast Asia such as Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar is extremely weak, civil society organizations have sought to make cross-border investments more accountable through utilizing arenas within the home countries of investors rather than the location of investment. This effort has led to the emergence of ETOs, especially in Thailand (Thai ETO Watch WG, 2017). The nascent practice of ETOs reflects a wider global trend in which transnational obligations are increasingly referenced in international human rights pronouncements (The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2017).[4] ETOs are, however, not universally endorsed, including due to the difficulties of conducting extraterritorial

4 The implications of ETOs in international human rights law, in particular as it relates to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, is mapped out in the Maastricht Principles (ETO Consortium, 2013).

investigations (Grennan et al., 2016). In Southeast Asia, the government-claimed 'ASEAN way' of non-interference also makes ETOs a politically sensitive issue that bounds the scope in which NHRIs may act. Yet, there are numerous examples of regional agreements that set in place bounds on sovereignty, for example, the 1995 Mekong Agreement that mandates the Mekong River Commission, and various commitments within ASEAN.

The first ETO case investigated in Southeast Asia was a sugarcane Economic Land Concession (ELC) in Koh Kong province, Cambodia, by the NHRCT. In 2006, the Cambodian government awarded the ELC to Thailand's Khon Kaen Sugar Industry and a domestic company owned by an influential Cambodian senator. 456 households were dispossessed of approximately 5,000 ha of upland land where they grew swidden rice and various cash crops and raised cattle (EarthRights International [ERI] & Cambodia Legal Education Center [CLEC], 2013). The NHRCT complaint was filed in January 2010 by a Cambodian NGO, the Community Legal Education Centre of Cambodia (CLEC), and designated to the Subcommittee on Civil and Political Rights (SCPR). In July 2012, the SCPR concluded that it had jurisdiction to investigate the case, despite the investment's location in Cambodia (NHRCT, 2012a). The commission's report, published in 2014, concluded that human rights violations had occurred, including the right to manage and benefit from resources and the right to life (NHRCT, 2015). It also concluded that the Thai government and the Thai company involved had failed in their respective duties and responsibilities towards human rights, and made a series of recommendations to the company and Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce.

The Koh Kong case entailed a transnational civil society movement undertaking advocacy to challenge the ELC developer (Sokphea, 2017). A range of actions were taken in addition to the complaint registered with the NHRCT, including direct protest, submission of a case to the Koh Kong provincial court, direct communication with the company, a complaint submitted to the industry group Bonsucro and the OECD, and an attempted litigation in the UK court (where the purchaser of the sugar was based) (Middleton, 2014). While some families received compensation due to these actions, as of the time of writing, there remain families who are uncompensated for the loss of their land. Addressing why the case was so difficult to resolve, Sokphea (2017) highlights how a powerful constellation of political and economic elites in Cambodia sought to repress the civil society groups and community movement, together with the complexity of the sugar industry's global supply chain that complicated accountability.

This first ETO case demonstrates the close relationship between civil society groups (as *an* authority) and the NHRCT (as *in* authority). Civil society groups working in a transnational network from Cambodia and Thailand first brought the case to the NHRCT and subsequently supported the investigation through the provision of research reports, meetings with community leaders, and other forms of evidence. They also undertook public advocacy to maintain public awareness about the case and thus assert political pressure. Meanwhile, at the NHRCT, a progressive commissioner and key support staff were able to proceed with and conclude the case (Grennan et al., 2016; Interview with NHRCT commissioner, 2016). While at first it was individuals within the NHRCT who pushed forward an ETO agenda, over time with a now growing number of investigations they have, to-an-extent, become more institutionalized.

Until this case, NHRIs in Southeast Asia had interpreted their human rights obligations as applicable only within their own borders. As the possibility of investigating cross-border cases became recognized, a discussion emerged in Thailand and more widely among ASEAN civil society on the potential for ETOs in Southeast Asia. For example, in September 2014, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok hosted a regional conference titled "Rights-based governance beyond borders: The role of extraterritorial obligations (ETOs)". In April 2015, a session at the ASEAN Peoples Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, titled "ETOs in cross-border investment: the role of human rights institutions" was organized. In October 2014, five NHRIs in Southeast Asia together with eleven civil society groups signed the "Bangkok Declaration on Extraterritorial Human Rights Obligations", stating:

> We recognise the urgency of advancing the implementation of extraterritorial obligations (ETOs) given the accelerating pace of trade, investment, and broader economic integration between States in south-east Asia; the impending creation of the ASEAN Economic Community; increasing levels of migration and human trafficking in the region; and an increasing amount of cross-border economic, political, social, and military activity in the region and globally. (Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development [APWLD], 2014)

HYDROPOWER, HUMAN RIGHTS AND ETOS

The construction of a large hydropower dam has the potential to violate a range of substantive and procedural human rights (Hurwitz, 2014). In Southeast Asia, an increasingly extensive program of large hydropower dam construction is underway in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar to meet domestic electricity demand and for power export to neighboring Thailand, Vietnam, and China (Middleton & Dore, 2015). Since 2006, plans for a cascade of up to eleven dams on the lower Mekong River's mainstream have been revived (International Center for Environmental Management [ICEM], 2010). Two projects are under construction in Laos (Xayaburi and Don Sahong) and a third project, the Pak Beng Dam, commenced the Mekong River Commission's (MRC) regional-level consultation process in December 2016. In this section, I first consider the role of the NHRCT in the Xayaburi Dam case.[5] I then contrast this case with the role of the SUHAKAM in the Don Sahong Dam case.[6]

5 The 1,285 megawatt Xayaburi Dam in Xayabouri province, Northern Laos, will export 95% of its electricity to Thailand, and is owned and operated by a predominantly Thai private-sector consortium. The government of Laos and the project developer signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the Xayaburi Dam in May 2007, a Project Development Agreement in November 2008, and a Concession Agreement in November 2010. The MRC-facilitated Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement (PNPCA) process was initiated in September 2010 and claimed concluded by the Lao government in April 2011 (although the governments of Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia requested further studies). The Power Purchase Agreement between the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand and the project developer was signed in October 2011. As of February 2018, the project is 90% complete. For details, see Matthews (2012), International Rivers (2014), Rieu-Clarke (2015a), and Middleton and Pritchard, (2016).

6 The 260 megawatt Don Sahong Dam is located 2 km upstream of the Cambodia border in the Siphandone Island complex on the Mekong River in Champasack province, Southern Laos. The project developer, the Malaysian company Mega First Corporation Berhad (MFCB), first signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Lao government in March 2006. Following the preparation of various studies, in

NHRCT and the Xayaburi Dam

The NHRCT, under the second batch of commissioners, accepted the case of the Xayaburi Dam after receiving a complaint from the Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces, submitted in May 2011. The complaint was based "on the grounds that the project lacked information disclosure and public participation, including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Health Impact Assessment (HIA)" (NHRCT, 2012b). The Sub-Committee on Community Rights and Natural Resources (SCCRNR) of the NHRCT was assigned to investigate the complaint.

The NHRCT sent a written request to the project's main developer, Ch. Karnchang, to submit a written testimony in response to the complaint, together with relevant government agencies including the central bank and the Ministry of Energy. They also approached the Thai commercial banks that provided loans to the project (International Rivers, 2012). As the inquiry proceeded, a NHRCT commissioner also visited impacted areas to talk with the communities. The NHRCT encouraged the community to conduct research that could be an input into the inquiry. These activities were coordinated with civil society (Interview with NHRCT commissioner and civil society groups, 2016).

On 21 February 2012, five months after the project's Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) had been signed, the NHRCT organized a public hearing. In May 2012, the NHRCT issued an opinion where they recommended that "the Prime Minister should review the implementation of the dam construction" (NHRCT, 2012b). Issues of concern that raised questions about the signing of the PPA included the limited EIA prepared for the project, which did not include an assessment of transboundary impacts; and little sharing of information with the public about the project before the PPA had been signed (King, 2015). The public statement of the NHRCT (2012b) wrote:

> We found that although this project may affect to the said issues [impacts on natural resources, environment and way of life of affected communities], the EGAT and the Thai government have not disclosed the PPA or any other relevant information to the public before concluding the agreement. It is therefore not in line with the human rights protection principle, as prescribed in the constitution of Thailand, and a breach of the cabinet and NEPC's [National Energy Policy Council] resolutions, including on the 1995 Mekong Agreement and good governance.

On completion of the inquiry by the NHRCT, a preliminary report was issued by the sub-committee, but a final report has not been completed and in principle is now the responsibility of the third NHRCT committee. However, it is not clear if the final report will be produced (Interview with civil society, 2016).

June 2014, the Lao government initiated the MRC-facilitated PNPCA. In June 2015, the MRC shifted this process to "diplomatic channels" when agreement could not be reached. The project's Concession Agreement was signed in September 2015 and a Power Purchase Agreement with Electricite Du Laos signed in October 2015. Project construction officially commenced in January 2016. For details of the Don Sahong Dam, see Baird (2011), International Rivers (2015), and EarthRights International (n.d.).

Interviews with civil society groups who had worked with the Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces said that the NHRCT was "a very useful mechanism for getting copies of documents that were unavailable, getting meetings with companies and government who weren't available, and having an independent body investigate the situation and then file a report that was publicly available." In a public meeting in 2018, another prominent campaigner commented that although the project was not stopped, the civil society campaign did improve the project, including the construction of a fish passage structure and revised design for maintaining sediment movement reportedly at a cost of USD 100 million ("Xayaburi Dam Project Commits", 2012). They also noted that the most recent proposed project, the Pak Beng dam, had prepared a transboundary EIA study.

Since the release of the preliminary report, civil society efforts shifted from the NHRCT process to the submission of a case to Thailand's Administrative Court in August 2012, which had the potential to make more enforceable requirements on the involved state agencies (but not the private-sector developers) (Interview with civil society group, 2016). The case was submitted by community leaders from eight Thai provinces along the Mekong River on the basis that the decision-making process had not followed Thailand's constitution that requires adequate public consultation, and that a transboundary EIA had not been prepared. Although the project is located in Laos, they claimed that the case should be under the court's jurisdiction as Thai state agencies were key decision makers (also as electricity purchasers) and impacts could occur in Thailand due to the project being located on the Mekong River (Suriyashotichyangkul, 2012). In February 2013, however, the court announced that it did not accept jurisdiction on the case. In March 2013, the plaintiffs appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court of Thailand, and in June 2014, the Supreme Administrative Court of Thailand reversed the lower court decision. On 25 December 2015, the Supreme Administrative Court rejected the case, and an appeal was filed in January 2016 that has not yet been concluded. The court case, however, was unprecedented for Thailand, as it investigates the implications of Thai investment in a neighboring country, even though it only considers the extent of the project's impacts on Thai communities and thus is not fully an ETO case. However, in April 2018, the Thai courts received a case submitted by Cambodian farmers against a Thai sugar producer that they claim has dispossessed them of their land, which if accepted would set a further precedent in terms of ETO cases in the Thai court system ("Cambodian Farmers Sue Thai", 2018).

The complexity of the role of NHRIs investigating cross-border investments is apparent from this case. The NHRCT emphasized its mandate to investigate and ensure compliance with Thailand's human rights obligations in domestic law, international obligations, and those of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration passed in 2012 related to the activities of Thai state agencies and private sector, including practices that occur outside of Thailand (Interview with NHRCT commissioner, 2016). At the same time, it does not have jurisdiction to inquire into state agencies of neighboring countries. To fulfill its constitutionally defined role requires a collaboration with civil society to enable meetings and further investigation with affected communities.

SUHAKAM and the Don Sahong Dam

On 20 October 2014, six NGOs from Cambodia, Thailand, and the United States submitted a complaint against Mega First Corporation Berhad (MFCB), the developer of the Don Sahong project, to SUHAKAM. The basis of the complaint was the risk that the project posed to the right to health, the right to life and the right to livelihood that are threatened by harms to fish stocks. Furthermore, violations over the right to information and the right to participation for riverside communities formed part of the complaint (Community Resource Centre, EarthRights International, International Rivers, NGO Forum on Cambodia, Northeastern Rural Development, & Cambodian Rural Development Team, 2014). The complaint is stated to be on behalf of Cambodian communities from Kratie and Stung Treng provinces and Thai communities from Ubon Ratchathani, Chiang Rai, Nong Khai, and Bueng Kan provinces. In contrast to the NHRCT, SUHAKAM stated that they are unable to conduct an onsite visit to verify the claims of the complaint, given that "the Commission's power and mandate are limited within the boundaries of Malaysia" (SUHAKAM, 2015, p. 95). Instead, SUHAKAM considered itself as a mediator (Interview with SUHAKAM commissioner, 2016). SUHAKAM first met with MFCB to discuss the complaint in February 2015, and following a response by the complainants to MFCB's initial response, a second meeting was held in August 2015 at which MFCB disputed the complainants' analysis. SUHAKAM concluded that:

> Given that there is no National Human Rights Institution in Laos, the Commission finds it difficult to proceed further with the inquiry into the complaint. Therefore, guided by its mandate to provide recommendations on issues involving human rights, the Commission wrote to MFCB on 8 December, and recommended MFCB to ensure that its business operations and activities are conducted in a manner which respects the human rights of the people living in the affected areas, besides generating profit out of the project. (SUHAKAM, 2015, p. 96)

SUHAKAM also recommended to the Malaysian government to "formulate policies or guidelines to monitor Malaysian companies operating outside of Malaysia in order to ensure compliance with applicable human rights principles and standards as provided under Principle 3 of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)" (SUHAKAM, 2015, p. 96).

Several interviewees highlighted that there was comparatively little political pressure upon the Malaysian government and MFCB to respond to the issues raised by SUHAKAM due to the limited media coverage in Malaysia on the impact of the Don Sahong Dam. This reveals the crucial role of civil society in working with the NHRI. Cambodian and international civil society groups brought the case to SUHAKAM, generating media interest in mainland Southeast Asia, which is not surprising given the broader public interest in the Mekong mainstream dams. However, in Malaysia there is a comparatively limited civil society, with little experience on ETOs, and thus few opportunities to build public awareness that contributed to the lack of traction in the investigation.

MOMENTUM TOWARDS ETOS IN THAILAND AND BEYOND

There has been a growing trend for Thai-based companies to invest overseas since the 1980s. In 2015, 37% of the 517 firms listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand invested outside of Thailand, with 60% of these firms investing in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, or Vietnam (SET Research Department, 2016). According to research by the Thai ETO Watch Working Group (2017), among these are at least 13 megaprojects, including large agricultural land concessions, industrial special economic zones, and energy projects (gas, hydropower, coal-fired power stations) that have been documented to create environmental and social harms. These projects, if built in Thailand, would have been challenged legally and through community protest. Therefore, developers are exploiting weaker civil and political freedoms, legal standards, and institutions in neighboring countries (Interview with civil society 2016).

Thai civil society groups have called on the Thai government to regulate these investments through an outbound investment law and oversight body. A significant development occurred in May 2016, when the Thai government issued a cabinet resolution on outbound investment recommending compliance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP). The resolution was directed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, and Ministry of Justice, and was at least partly in response to the NHRCT's ETO investigations into the Dawei Special Economic Zone in Myanmar and Hongsa lignite-fired power station in Laos (Suk, 2017). The Ministry of Justice was also given responsibility to develop Thailand's National Action Plan (NAP) for the UNGP, working with the other two ministries. A second cabinet resolution was issued in May 2017 regarding an ETO investigation into a sugarcane concession in Cambodia in Oddar Meanchey. These resolutions have also been interpreted by the NHRCT as mandating its role in investigating ETO cases (Public statement by NHRCT commissioner, 2018, 1 June). Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha has spoken on several occasions on his expectation that businesses adopt the UNGP (Ministry of Finance, 2017). Most recently, a high-profile invited visit by the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights in April 2018 assessed a range of areas of progress as well as outstanding problems, including closing civic space and the need to restore and further strengthen the NHRCT's mandate (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2018). Over the duration of this recent interest in the UNGP by the Thai government, Thai civil society groups have maintained a watchdog role on its implementation. For example, in November 2017, the Thai ETO Watch Working Group presented their analysis to the UN Business and Human Rights Forum in Geneva (Thai ETO Watch WG, 2017). According to the Thai ETO Watch Working Group (2017):

> The drafting of the NAP has involved input from CSOs [Civil Society Organisations] working on migrant labor, human trafficking, LGBT rights and discrimination, and land and natural resource rights within Thailand. However, Thailand's current draft NAP fails to integrate the extraterritorial obligations of Thai investors, nor does it include a mechanism for affected communities to seek justice and remedies. (p. 7)

Meanwhile, the third round of the NHRCT Commission has also taken up a number of ETO cases, including on the Heinda mine and Dawei Special Economic Zone in Tanintharyi region, Myanmar, both of which involve Thai companies (Wongcha-um, 2017). Additional hydropower projects are investigated on the mainstream of the Mekong River and Salween River (Sukprasert, 2017). Asides from attempting to maintain the principle of investigating ETOs, the NHRCT aims to further the implementation of the UNGP in Thailand.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

This article has evaluated the roles, opportunities, and challenges for NHRIs to protect and promote human rights via ETOs, which are of growing interest in the region. It has detailed how, in spite of the region's growing political authoritarianism, it has been possible for Thailand's NHRCT in particular to (continue to) undertake ETO cases. The article has argued that the interaction of the NHRI as *in* authority and transnational civil society as *an* authority is crucial to the innovation of ETOs in the region. Within a relatively short period, since 2010, ETOs have emerged as an increasingly established mechanism, in Thailand at least. In the cases of both Xayaburi Dam and Don Sahong Dam, the role of civil society was important for raising the case in the first place, drawing upon transnational networks, and then providing evidence and maintaining political momentum. Regarding the Xayaburi Dam, while it is arguably the national court case that has had the greatest impact in Thailand in terms of seeking to hold state agencies accountable for the project, the complaint first submitted to the NHRCT was an important initial attempt by communities and civil society groups to raise questions about the project and its environmental, social, and human rights impacts. Together with other ETO cases, it has contributed to a broader momentum towards the UNGP and the preparation of a National Action Plan in Thailand. For the Don Sahong Dam, while the impact upon the project is less clear and the case within SUHAKAM did not proceed beyond a limited discussion with the company, the case did draw some attention to the responsibilities of Malaysian companies investing overseas and led to recommendations towards the government which could be considered significant as Malaysia also works towards developing a National Action Plan for the UNGP.

An examination of the co-productive relationship between NHRIs and civil society on ETOs also offers some insights in ongoing research about legal pluralism in Southeast Asia (Breslin & Nesaduri, 2018). While certainly not discounting the role of the state, these studies draw attention to the role of non-state actors in producing norms, rules, standards, and practices that reshape ecological governance in a range of sectors, including transboundary water governance (Boer, Hirsch, Johns, Saul, & Scurrah, 2016; Rieu-Clarke, 2015b). Studying the emergence of ETOs reveals the significance of *interaction* between allied state and non-state actors in producing a new transboundary governance regime, where the normative basis of ETOs draws on the government's already stated commitments to international human rights law and civil societies' expectation that these commitments be fulfilled.

Overall, ETOs as a recent innovation in the regional human rights system have offered new opportunities for access to information and public participation in particular. However, there are contradictions within the rise of the governments' business

and human rights agenda. In Thailand, the current National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) government has publicly stated its support for the UNGP agenda and instructed state agencies to prepare plans accordingly (although not specifically on ETOs). At the same time, there has been a closing space for political, civil, and media freedoms with implications for civil society and community activists, together with a weakening of the mandate of the NHRCT. The implications are that even as limited discussion on business and human rights is officially invited by the government, the means to investigate and pursue cases where human rights have been threatened or violated are in fact weakened. Meanwhile, in neighboring countries, the closing of civil and political space for civil society to work on human rights, both domestically and across borders is also an important consideration for the potential of future ETO cases. In Cambodia, for example, NGOs and critical media outlets have been shut down and the main opposition party disbanded since 2016, which holds implications for how Cambodian civil society working on human rights can operate and network, including in cross-border cases. Given the transnational character of some human rights cases in Southeast Asia, including in the case of large hydropower dams on transboundary rivers, and the uneven access to justice across the region, ETOs could be a significant transboundary justice mechanism. However, to consolidate and institutionalize ETOs will require sustained work by both NHRIs and civil society.

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Thai Doctoral Students' Layers of Identity Options Through Social Acculturation in Australia

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▸ Nomnian, S. (2018). Thai doctoral students' layers of identity options through social acculturation in Australia. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 11*(1), 99-116.

An increasing number of international students in Australian higher education have inevitably increased linguistic and cultural diversity in the academic and social landscapes. Drawing upon Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio-ecological systems theory and Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004) identities in multilingual contexts, this study explores how Thai doctoral students adopt certain identity options during their societal acculturation while studying and living in Australia. Based on a group of nine Thai doctoral students' interview transcripts, the findings reveal three intricate and complex layers of their identity options, namely, assumed identity as Asian people, imposed identity as 'Non-Native-English' speakers (NNES), and negotiable identity as Thai ethnic people. This study potentially sheds some light for future empirical and longitudinal research regarding NNES international students' social acculturation in different multilingual settings in order to support NNES students' academic, linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural adaptations.

Keywords: Australia; Identity Options; Higher Education; Social Acculturation; Thai Doctoral Students

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INTRODUCTION

Language, culture, and identity are key aspects in language use and mobility. In terms of situated locations, language users who move to various places will encounter different sociocultural practices; and thus, they construct and negotiate themselves in particular interactive contexts (Pennycook, 2012). International higher education mobility continues to rise as the degrees and cross-cultural experiences obtained while living and studying abroad can strategically and competitively fulfill career goals and future employment expectations (Beech, 2015). Due to the socioeconomic benefits that an increasing number of international students bring to Australian universities, it is imperative that they obtain high quality education experiences. One of the contributing elements to educational quality is how well they transit from their home country to the Australian higher education system (Phakiti, Hirsh, & Woodrow, 2013). Menzies and Baron (2014) report that smooth international postgraduate transition is not only influenced by appropriate university support, but also by student-based support through student societies where friendship and interactions can be promoted. Effective social transition and acculturation can positively assist them in making a successful academic adaptation.

Previous studies, however, report a number of difficulties and challenges for international students, particularly in English-speaking countries (e.g., Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, & Brown, 2013; Elliot, Baumfield, & Reid, 2016; Fotovatian, 2012; Fotovatian & Miller, 2014; McMahon, 2018; Nomnian, 2017a; Zhang & Mi, 2010). These include lack of awareness of university policies and practices, implicit academic expectations of lecturers, and incompetent communicative English skills. Australia, in particular, is considered as the most multicultural among developed nations thanks to migration and international student mobility (Guillen & Ji, 2011). Australia, as a result, comprises a mixed multicultural and multilingual population who speak 'localized' versions of their own variety of English, which may not meet the expectations of international students who would like to immerse themselves with 'Native-English-Speakers' (NES) (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 187). Phakiti et al. (2013), nevertheless, claim that English proficiency is not the only factor, and that other personal variables including self-efficacy, personal values, academic difficulty, motivation, and self-regulation, lead to academic and social success of international students.

Studies regarding Thai postgraduate students' identities in Australian universities have been documented over the past years (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Kettle, 2005; Koehne, 2005; Nomnian, 2017b, 2017c; Pimpa, 2005; Srikatanyoo & Juergen, 2005). Nomnian's study (2017b) highlights identity narratives of a Thai mature doctoral student, who was a former politician which were related to the academic and social contexts that impacted on his personal and academic growth and satisfaction. Thai doctoral students' academic practices were underpinned by the implicit power of their supervisors, which required culturally sensitive supervision and academic and sociocultural orientations in order to meet university norms and supervisors' expectations (Nomnian, 2017c). These studies revealed the complexities involved in Thai students' academic adaptation to disciplinary discourse and the implications for teaching and learning in Australian higher education. They explored Thai students' academic experiences as they constructed and negotiated their identities to meet the respective disciplinary requirements of their courses.

International students' overseas higher education mobility is not only for instrumental purposes, but also builds and demonstrates personal characteristics as international students are required to adapt themselves physically, mentally, and linguistically to the new sociocultural lifestyle (Bista, 2018). They need to establish social networks, develop English language proficiency, and enhance intercultural communication skills that can satisfy their prospective employers (Beech, 2015). Although Australia is a multilingual and multicultural country, few studies have been conducted regarding how 'Non-Native-English-Speaking' (NNES) international students acculturate and integrate in terms of their identity construction and negotiation in relation to their discursive practices in this linguistically and culturally diverse society. I argue that Thai students in Australia represent an ideal case for an investigation of such identity construction. This study aims to suggest how and in what ways Thai doctoral students' identity options play an essential role in their discursive practices, and how interactions with local people can potentially affect their social acculturation while they are studying and living in Australia.

BIO-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AND IDENTITIES IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS

This study employs Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio-ecological systems theory with the extended study of international doctoral students' enculturation and acculturation perspectives proposed by Elliot et al. (2016), and Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004) identities in multilingual contexts, which will be discussed in detail.

The bio-ecological systems introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1979) is a way of holistically understanding the notion of human development focusing on how an individual's unique and active interactions within layered multi-systems, including the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems, crucially influence one's growth and development. The individual is located at the core of the microsystem where close and direct interactions with one's surroundings such as family, university, and workplace initially take place; the mesosystem is later formed from the constituents within the microsystem. The outward growth and development continues to emerge through one's workplace, social network, and community. These situated sociocultural contexts are located within the exosystem and extend towards the macrosystem of the wider culture and subculture dealing with one's beliefs, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, lifestyles, opportunities, risks, and life trajectory. Embedded within each of these broader systems, the individual's cultural knowledge and beliefs are mainly responsible for his/her identity construction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Regarding the chronosystem, Bronfenbrenner (1979) values temporal milestones such as changes in the family structure, marital status, and employment as important steps in human development. It is, thus, interesting to explore these different layers which interact and interconnect within and among sociocultural, historical, political, and professional contexts, to illustrate the complexity of the individual's unique development through the course of his/her actions and interactions in a particular time and space.

Extending Bronfenbrenner's concept (1979), Elliot et al. (2016) claim that international students' time abroad disrupts their own multi-level ecological system that was the accepted norm prior to contact with a new ecological system through an alteration of sociocultural conventions, norms, practices, and social support. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems highlights the transition of international doctoral students in this study via complex incidences as they temporarily move to an environment with different societal, cultural, academic systems, language(s), and daily interactions. Elliot et al. (2016) address two key concepts, *enculturation* and *acculturation*, with regard to international education, which can potentially cause challenges for students whose overseas study involves learning in different sociocultural settings and where there are different academic norms. Enculturation refers to thoughts, language, and common practices acquired through initial exposure to the original ecological system of the home culture over a number of years, which is imprinted in the student's psychological frame of reference. Acculturation, on the other hand, is often a cause of tension as the student needs to conform to the new ecological system that requires personal introspection to learn, unlearn, and/or re-learn new ideas, thoughts and behaviors in order to survive, thrive, and flourish in the new academic and sociocultural contexts (Elliot et al., 2016). For instance, regarding international students' acculturation experiences, Smith and Khawaja (2011) identified

main stressors including language barriers, educational difficulties, loneliness, discrimination, and changing environments. These could be mitigated by social support and coping strategies dealing with psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Asian students in English-speaking countries in particular might find it difficult to make friends with locals compared to their European counterparts because Asian cultures are typically collectivistic, interdependent, and relationship-oriented, whereas the Western cultures are individualistic, assertive, and independent (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). This study, however, employed the concept of acculturation as it focused on the Thai students' transition and adaptation from Thai to Australian sociocultural contexts.

To scrutinize how Thai students construct and negotiate their identities as legitimate speakers of English in Sydney, which is considered one of the world's most multilingual cities, it is crucial to understand how language users' identities in multilingual contexts are constructed and negotiated, which can be explained by Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004) conceptual framework. They claim that, in multilingual contexts, there is a conflict between linguistic ideologies and identities in terms of language choice and its varieties influenced by particular groups of people in certain contexts. Language choice and attitudes are, therefore, associated with political arrangements, power relations, language ideologies, and interlocutors' perceptions of their own and others' identities (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). In other words, the way Thai students in Australia speak English could indicate what 'types' of persons they are. This not only depends upon what 'types' of persons their interlocutors are, but is also determined by the implicit variables including power relations and linguistic ideologies existing at a particular time and in a particular context.

Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004) characteristics of identities in multilingual contexts are useful for this study because they suggest a variety of factors that can affect Thai students' identity construction and negotiation in multilingual contexts in Australia. There are five characteristics: (1) the interplay between linguistic ideologies and individuals' use of linguistic resources to indicate their identities; (2) the fact that these identities are embedded within local and global power relations; (3) identities can be multiple, fragmented, and hybrid due to the influence of different variables, such as, age, gender, ethnicity, language, and social status; (4) identities can involve a process of imagination to create new identities, and finally; (5) identities can be represented through individuals' narratives (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Identity options, which are *assumed*, *imposed*, and *negotiable*, have a significant impact on each individual to take up various positions under certain sociocultural circumstances (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

Assumed identity is contextually constructed, valued, and legitimized by the imposing authoritative persons or institutions. Imposed identity is constructed when individuals are not able to negotiate, resist, or challenge imposing authoritative persons or institutions at any particular point in time. Negotiable identity, on the other hand, is constructed when individuals feel imposed upon, devalued, or misunderstood by particular persons or institutions and, thus, they contest and resist the imposing persons, groups, or institutions. Although each identity option is categorized, these three identity options in multilingual contexts require an analytical lens through which to decipher how dynamic, complex, and fragmented identities

can be. Individuals, therefore, contextually construct, (re)negotiate, and take up their desirable identity options depending on their personal background, interpersonal relationships, and interactions with their interlocutors and surrounding sociocultural environment (Nomnian, 2017a).

Individuals who do not share cultural assumptions or values are likely to (re)negotiate their relations and identities in such multilingual settings because they have different ideologies and frames of reference when interacting with each other (Wei & Hua, 2013). Nomnian (2017a), for instance, suggests that Thai postgraduate students' participation or withdrawal from particular interactive situations was due to their perceptions of their spoken English and that of others, as well as, due to power relations existing within and outside classrooms. This consequently affected their positioning when they communicated with others in multilingual contexts. They were caught in a web of complexity regarding the way they tried to strike the balanced identity positions that could allow them to construct and represent themselves as legitimate speakers of English (Nomnian, 2017a).

This study focuses on Thai doctoral students' layers of identity options resulting from different degrees of identity construction and negotiation depending on their exposure to diverse interactions and experiences in particular social settings. The importance of sociocultural contexts is associated with language users' sociological and psychological strategies regarding their language use in a particular linguistic ecology (Haugen, 1972). These three identity options are, therefore, changeable, shifting, and fluctuating. It is, however, important to note that a particular identity option legitimized by one group in a particular circumstance may not necessarily be accepted by another group or even the same group at a different point in time and space because of the shifting and fluctuating characteristics of identities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Setting and Participants

A case study approach was employed in this study because, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017) and Yin (2017), it can serve as an empirical enquiry to explore a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context of an individual unit which can be a person, a class, or a community. Located within a qualitative, interpretive research paradigm, a case study can be viewed as personal and subjective, which potentially demonstrates a complex and dynamic reality of individual experiences (Denscombe, 2014; Holliday, 2016).

The research setting was an Australian university located in one of the most multicultural and multilingual cities in Australia. The selection of the Australian university in question was for practical reasons as it was the host university of the researcher, who at that time was granted the Endeavour Postdoctoral Fellowship by the Australian Government. This Australian university is one of Australia's top young research universities not only with strong academic and research collaborations with a number of universities in Thailand, but is also well-known among Thai students and scholars in science and technology disciplines. This study thus highlights various interconnected factors underpinning the complexities of the particular evolving

sociocultural circumstances that Thai doctoral students encounter. It requires the researcher to be more process-oriented, flexible, and adaptable to changes and challenges. It is important for researchers to understand, engage with, and reflect upon their study in order to read the data from different interpretive perspectives through the use of interviews that provide insights into the participants' on-going life trajectories (Denscombe, 2009; Mason, 2018). The following table offers a brief summary of the Thai doctoral research participants in this study.

Name	Gender	Age (years old)	IELTS Overall Band/ TOEFL	Previous Job in Thailand	Funding Type	Previous Education Degree(s) From a Thai/Foreign University	Current Degree(s) at an Australian University	Years of Living and Studying in Australia
Nathan	M	36	6.5	University lecturer	Thai Government	BSc (Computer Science) Thai university	MSc (IT) PhD (IT)	7 years
Alex	M	43	5.5	University lecturer	Thai Government	BSc (Computer Science) MSc (IT) Thai university	PhD (IT)	more than 3 years
Bob	M	43	6.0	University lecturer	Thai Government	BSc (IT) MSc (IT) Thai university	PhD (IT)	4 years
Kim	F	37	6.0	University lecturer	Thai Government	BSc (Computer Engineering) MSc (Computer Engineering) Thai university	PhD (IT)	5 years
Bee	F	35	6.0	University lecturer	Thai Government	BSc (Applied Statistics) MSc (Applied Statistics) Thai university	PhD (Applied Statistics)	more than 1 year
Peach	F	37	5.5	University lecturer	Thai Government	BSc (Maths) MSc (Maths) Thai university	PhD (Maths)	more than 2 years
Rain	F	34	5.5	University lecturer	Thai Government	BSc (Nursing and Midwifery) MSc (Nursing and Midwifery) Thai university	PhD (Midwifery)	more than 1 year
Amy	F	38	n/a	University lecturer	Thai university	BA (Accountancy) Thai university MA (Accountancy) US university	PhD (Accountant)	4 years
Charlie	M	32	99/120	Scientist	Australian university	BSc (Biology) MA (Museum Studies) Australian university	PhD (Environmental Science)	2 years

Table 1. A summary table of Thai doctoral research participants. (Nomnian, 2017c, p. 34).

According to Table 1, a group of nine Thai doctoral students, five females and four males, 30-45 years old, from academic disciplines comprising engineering, IT, midwifery, mathematics, applied statistics, accounting, and environmental science voluntarily participated in this study. All of them had graduated with a bachelor's degree from a Thai university, previously worked at a Thai university, and received grant. Seven students were funded by the Royal Thai Government. Another one received funding from her Thai university whereas the last one was granted by the Australian university in question. The length of their study period at the university varied from one semester to four academic years. Based on the interpretive and qualitative research paradigm, the participants' construction of meanings in their complex sociocultural contexts is understood via interpretation rather than generalization, prediction, and control (Flick, 2014). The Thai doctoral students' construction and negotiation of identities in societal acculturation while living and studying in Australia were, therefore, determined and qualitatively interpreted without generalizing the findings in comparison to other cases.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study employed semi-structured interviews because it allowed the personalized adaptation of main questions to the participants' view. In accordance with Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, and Silverman (2004), there is no need for researchers to adhere to their prepared interview structure and thus can ask additional probing questions to follow-up on the participants' particular responses to gain deeper perspectives and understanding. In this study, the main interview questions concerned the respondents' personal background including education, careers, and current degree qualifications, as well as reasons for studying at an Australian university. The respondents' expectations, their perceived academic and conversational English proficiency, and attitudes towards their use of English with 'native' and 'non-native' speakers of English were then explored. The interview questions also addressed Thai students' views on social activities, characteristics, sociocultural adjustments, and culture shock, impressions of the linguistic and cultural diversity, and main challenges they faced living in Sydney.

These questions were designed to gain an insight into the students' thoughts, emotions, plans, motives, and expectations leading to recognition of each individual's construction and negotiation of identities during the societal acculturation. Identities in this study could be analyzed from the interview transcripts. According to Davies and Harré (1990, p. 62), identities can be represented in talk and through talk between an interviewer and an interviewee as they engage in dialogic exchanges. Each participant agreed to be interviewed for an hour at their chosen location. The interview was conducted in Thai or English depending on the preference of each participant, and digitally audio-recorded. All the interviews were transcribed and translated by the researcher. Both Thai and English transcripts were later returned to the participants for validation prior to data analysis. To comply with institutional research ethics standards required by both Thai and Australian universities, the participants' data was kept highly confidential; and pseudonyms were used for all participants.

This present study adopted thematic analysis to enable the researcher to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. There are six steps to thematic analysis: familiarizing oneself with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). Based on Pavlenko and Blackledge's identity options (2004), three main identity types with key aspects were identified and presented in the findings.

FINDINGS

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) multi-layered systems, Elliot et al.'s (2016) acculturation process, and Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004) identity options in multilingual contexts, the findings expose the layers and complexity of the social acculturation process and reveal the three main identity options available to this group of Thai doctoral students (see Figure 1).

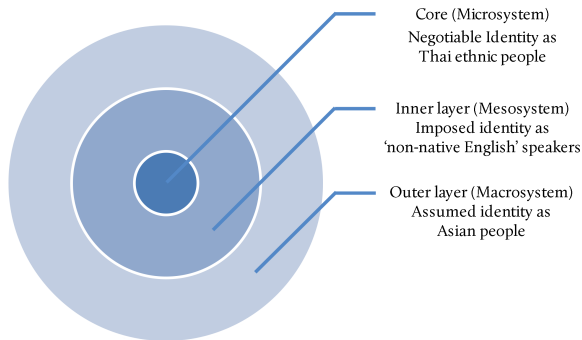

Figure 1. Three main identity options of Thai doctoral students. (figure by Nomnian).

The findings reveal three main identity options, namely *assumed*, *imposed*, and *negotiable* identities, which were constructed on different layers from the outer and inner circles to the core, respectively. Each identity option was contextually constructed and negotiated under situated discursive practices depending on where and with whom the interactions of each Thai student took place. Each identity option will be presented as follows.

Assumed Identity as Asian People

The Thai doctoral students' assumed identities were contextually dependent. They felt comfortable living in Sydney since their identities were valued and legitimized by the prominent Asian community, which enabled them to become more aware of different Asian ethnicities including Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Indian, and Thai. This led to their increased recognition of an Asian identity. Bee, for instance, viewed Sydney's central business district (CBD) as an Asian community where the majority of Asian people were encouraged through their languages used in public and through their physical appearance, especially their black hair.

> In the CBD, there is a mixture of Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Japanese. There are many people with black hair like me, and that makes me feel comfortable. (Bee)

Amy considered Sydney as a mixture of different ingredients rather than a melting pot because each Asian ethnic group and nationality still retained their own collective sociocultural identity. Yet, she positively felt that people there were sociable, relaxed, and easy to be friends with.

> Sydney is very linguistically and culturally diverse. Some people consider Sydney as a melting pot, but I disagree with that. The diversity doesn't melt together in the same pot. There is a mixture of different ingredients because the same nationalities, such as Chinese and Thai, stick together. But I think it's somehow easy to tune in to one another. People here are easy-going. (Amy)

Likewise, Alex also felt happy living in Sydney as an Asian city where he could engage with Thai and other Asian cultures, enjoy Thai traditions and Chinese New Year, even if Australian culture was not always on display, except on television.

> I live in Sydney, where Asian culture is quite prominent. There are Thai traditional festivals in which I can engage, like the Homage Ceremony for the Late King, Loy Krathong, Thai temples, and merit making. I think it's good. It's like killing two birds with one stone. You can learn about other cultures in the same location. However, I don't see much of Australian culture in my daily life. I only learn it by watching news on TV. (Alex)

Feeling homesick at the beginning, Bob gradually acculturated, immersed himself into Australian society, and became accustomed to life in Sydney; as a result, he considered himself a local now.

> At the beginning, I felt homesick. Nowadays, I am used to living here. I think to myself that I have already become the local. I have gradually adjusted my eating, living, learning, and communicating. (Bob)

Initially, despite being nervous about living in Sydney, Peach felt that she had to be flexible in terms of adapting to the new culture where an Asian community facilitated her acculturation.

> Sydney is truly multicultural. There are Arab, Chinese, and Thai people. I can learn about diversity. I have gained more experience living among people from different nationalities. I need to be flexible and adapt myself to different cultures to live together. If I live in a country where there is a strong local culture with fewer Asians, I may need to adjust myself a lot more than I do in Sydney. (Peach)

Rain voluntarily took the 'risk' of living with an Australian host family as she wanted to gain first-hand experience of Australian culture. She chose to adapt to their 'house rules' such as having dinner on time, watching television for an hour

after dinner, and joining in the family's religious activities at Easter and Christmas as a way to acculturate herself to a 'typical' Australian family.

> My host family is a retired Italian couple who have lived in Australia for more than 50 years. I have to rush to get home as I have to have dinner with my host family. If they don't understand my English, they will correct me. I can learn Australian culture and slang which I sometimes don't understand. After dinner, I watch TV with them for an hour. Sometimes they ask me what's on the TV. They will also tell me about Australian history. They celebrate Easter by hiding chocolate. They let me join Christmas with their family. If I want to learn more about Australian history, they advise me watch Crocodile Dundee. We also watch Australian channels. (Rain)

Interestingly, Charlie suggested that new students leave their ego behind, or any exaggerated sense of self-importance for that matter, as it was seen as an obstruction to their learning and could disrupt the acculturation process in the new academic and sociocultural environment. As a biologist and environmentalist, he believes that it is important to encourage Thai students to take risks by leaving their comfort zone and experimenting with new lifestyles in order to become more tolerant and mature.

> I think we all should get rid of our ego. One thing that biologists believe is that diversity is good for biological systems and that should be celebrated. We should not try to be the same as other people. I want new students coming here to be open-minded and stepping away from their comfort zone in order to learn about life besides reading books. Life can be risky but it's worth experiencing. (Charlie)

Regarding assumed identity, Thai doctoral students were satisfied and comfortable with their Asian ethnicity because they could, to some extent, easily blend in with the Asian-dominant population in Sydney due to their similar physical appearance; and thus, they did not have to challenge, contest or resist interacting with others. By adopting an assumed identity, the students in this study became comfortable living and learning in this Asian multicultural society where they could not only express their own Thai identity, but could also socialize with other Asian cultures. However, to acculturate into the Sydney lifestyles and cultures slowly and flexibly, they had to adapt their ways of life and adjust their viewpoints to be more tolerant and open-minded to differences.

Imposed Identity as 'Non-Native-English' Speakers

An imposed identity is constructed when the Thai students are unable to negotiate, resist, contest, or challenge imposing linguistic ideologies of NNES international students at any point in time and space while living and learning in Sydney. Despite their competent communicative English proficiency, Thai students experienced similar linguistic challenges and communicative difficulties in their daily social interactions. They encountered English with an Australian accent and slang, as well as a variety of English accents used by locals, which they found difficult to understand.

Nevertheless, they managed to develop intercultural communicative strategies and linguistic awareness that helped them to overcome such difficulties.

> At first, I wasn't familiar with their accents and vocabulary, so I misunderstood them. I still speak English with a Thai accent. Sometimes I don't understand the accents of Indian and Malaysian speakers. However, you don't need to speak English to survive here as there is Thai language in shops and restaurants. If you don't know what to order on the menu, just say the number. (Alex)

In spite of being unfamiliar with other varieties of English, Alex's exposure to various English accents such as Australian, Indian, and Malaysian raised his awareness of his Thai accented spoken English. However, he noticed that it was not necessary to be able to speak much English to survive in Sydney as he could use Thai in his daily life. He could order food in English by number and picture on the menu. Kim also experienced similar challenges with the Australian accent.

> I don't understand what the locals say. The Australian accent is very hard to comprehend. Although I have to say 'pardon' many times, I can communicate with them because we use body language. Commonwealth Bank has Chinese staff whose English is also good. They will try to understand us. In Sydney, there are a lot of Asian people. They learn to adapt to Asian people by speaking slowly and clearly and using simple English. It is easy for us to understand. We don't need to adjust ourselves much. Sometimes there are Chinese clients and the staff speak Chinese with them. (Kim)

Kim adopted suitable body language to overcome communication obstacles. She noted that Australian-born Chinese, also called 'ABC', tried to accommodate and facilitate other Asians' linguistic needs by modifying their speed, pronunciation, and word choice or even code-switching to Chinese.

Bob, in contrast, enjoyed talking with speakers with different English accents because he believed that it would be useful for him in understanding academic presentations at international conferences.

> I am happy to talk with people whose accents are different although I do not understand them perfectly. At least, I am exposed to these varieties. When I attend seminars or present papers at international conferences, I will be more familiar with various spoken Englishes. (Bob)

Amy, however, was more concerned with plural forms regarding the 's' and 'es' used in a formal academic writing rather than her use of English in social settings.

> But in an academic context, I am aware that I have to develop my communicative English a lot because Thai people do not articulate the 's' or 'es' ending for plural nouns, and use the wrong past tense. But local people do understand me if I don't speak correctly. (Amy)

Despite the local varieties of English spoken in Sydney, Rain and Charlie came to recognize the importance of consonant sounds and stress and the fact that they could cause miscommunication if not properly pronounced. Both of them tried to find various communicative strategies such as listening to public announcements and lip reading to enhance their pronunciation.

> Thai people speak English with clear pronunciation of every vowel and consonant. When I pronounced 'cappuccino' as /kæp/ /pu/ /tʃi:/ /no/, the barista didn't understand. Later I learned that I could just say 'cap' instead. (Rain)

> I have a very strong Thai accent. I don't pronounce the final consonant sounds like /s/ /t/ /d/. I stress every word the same without considering major and minor stresses. For example, I pronounce 'marketing' as /ma:/ /get/ /tiŋ/. I need to listen to the news a lot so that my English accent can be acquired naturally. I also read lips to understand everything. (Charlie)

Besides pronunciation, Nathan and Bee encountered Australian slang, such as 'arvo' and 'mozzies', which mean 'afternoon' and 'mosquitoes' respectively. In addition, the acronym 'BYO' stands for 'Bring Your Own' (drinks) used in restaurants. These Australian slang and acronym were confusing for Thai students as they struggled with comprehension.

> I don't have any problems, except when they use Australian slang; especially during the first few years I encountered it. For example, my friend asked me if I wanted to have coffee together in the 'arvo'. I didn't know what 'arvo' was. (Nathan)

> I couldn't understand when customers said 'BYO,' which stands for 'Bring Your Own' drinks. I was not familiar with this term and didn't know that customers could bring their own drinks to restaurants. Another funny Australian slang term they use is 'mozzies', which means mosquitoes. (Bee)

Peach's construction of her NNES identity was influenced by her spoken English with a Thai accent; thus, her Thai identity was explicitly addressed by another Thai male speaker who greeted her 'Sawatdee krab' in Thai meaning 'hello' in English.

> As a Non-Native English speaker, I need to go through a thinking process of what and how to say it in terms of grammar, accent, and pronunciation. When I listen, I know if they are a native or non-native speaker of English. I was greeted in Thai 'Sawatdee krab' in a shop because of my accent. Although I look Asian, my way of speaking and accent can identify me as a Thai. When I speak, people will know that I am not a native speaker. However, Australian-born Chinese are considered as native English speakers. (Peach)

Peach's experience suggests that her true Thai-speaking identity could not be disguised and mistaken by other Thai speakers. Although she might share her Asian look with Australian-born Chinese, who are considered a dominant group, the way she

spoke revealed the distinct grammar, accent, and pronunciation features of her Thai mother tongue.

In this study, Thai doctoral students positioned their sociolinguistic identity as NNES according to the strong features of their spoken English including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In addition, they had to be cautious of other English accents and varieties, including Australian slang that forced some of them to develop individual strategies for effective communication. However, imposed identity became problematic as they had to overcome linguistic challenges as English was not their first language. They not only had to recognize other varieties of English, but also deal with the Australian accent and slang used in social settings.

Negotiable Identity as Thai Ethnic People

Thai doctoral students' identity negotiation takes place when they encounter 'culture shock', which leads them to feel imposed upon, devalued, or misunderstood by particular persons or groups. Thus, they challenge, contest, and resist the imposing persons or groups.

Living with Australian host families, Rain and Peach experienced culture shock with two different consequences. Rain's culture shock was positive because she had an opportunity to communicate and share her cultural background with her host family. Peach, however, was not informed about her transgression of cultural norms until she had left the house. Because of her religion and being a female, Rain was not comfortable drying her underwear in public as it was considered inappropriate for a Thai woman to do so. She hung them instead on a lower rack that usually got knocked down by the wind and her host had to pick them up every time it happened. In addition, she could not walk under the clothes line as she wore a Buddha amulet. Her host family, however, viewed Rain's 'drying dilemma' from a practical perspective and told her precisely what she should do. Rain responded by explaining her religious beliefs and the position of women in Thai society, which made her host family more aware, and thereby accepting Rain's cultural quirks.

> Australian people are not like Thai people in that Thai people are more emotionally bonded. They are very direct with me and I am not used to that. As a Thai woman, I hung my underwear on a lower rack that could not be publically seen. My host family asked me why I did that. I told them that I could not walk underneath the clothes line as I wore a Buddha amulet. My host family does not mind what I do now as they are aware of my religious beliefs. They used to have students from Indonesia and Japan. I was also shocked to see her grandchild putting his feet on his grandmother's face, which is a serious taboo in Thailand. (Rain)

Rain also experienced other Thai cultural taboos regarding the inappropriate use of one's feet to touch another person's face, which is considered rude and disrespectful for Thai people. Rain's acculturation required two-way communication and tolerance for her to understand and accept different practices.

Peach, on the other hand, experienced implicit culture shock as she was not aware that wearing pajamas for dinner with her host family was not culturally appropriate.

Instead of having an open communication, her host family decided to inform her on the last day of her stay, and that disappointed her since she had obviously not intended to upset her host family during the time she was staying with them.

> I wore pajamas for dinner with my host, who didn't say anything until I was about to move out from the house. She told me that it was not polite to wear pajamas to dinner. I wonder why she didn't tell me earlier. If she had told me earlier, I wouldn't have done that. (Peach)

Based on these two incidences, it is clear that being a host family for international students requires cultural sensitivity and awareness in order to avoid misunderstandings about cross-cultural taboos and inappropriateness. This type of support would help to develop and create positive and rewarding experiences for both parties instead of leaving both with negative feelings and experiences. Two-way communication seems to be an effective tool for alleviating some misunderstandings and promoting better intercultural awareness.

Occasional cultural faux-pas in everyday interactions are inevitable, but for Rain, 'culture shock' came in the form of local social values related to independence that discouraged her from offering help to others – especially the elderly and children – for fear of being seen as patronizing. She came to see herself as unkind and selfish in Australia, which she saw as contrary to normal Thai practices.

> People here do not take care of one another. On the bus, no one gives up their seat for the elderly and children. In Thailand, it is normal to do that. In Australia, I have learned that I do not have to offer help unless asked; otherwise, they may think that I'm undermining their capabilities or consider them as disabled. (Rain)

Considering Sydney to be an ostensibly Asian city, Alex was shocked to see Asian people kissing in public as he thought he shared their cultural norms. He was not bothered, however, by the affection expressed in public by Europeans and Australians as that was part of Western culture.

> Kissing in public was a shock for me at first. Western people kiss in public and it's considered acceptable. However, I can't accept Asian people kissing in public. (Alex)

Despite generally celebrating Sydney's cultural diversity, Nathan also experienced cultural frustration regarding Muslim women's dress code, which was so 'strange' that he purposefully started to learn more about Muslim culture for him to understand and accept such differences.

> Living in Sydney with its many people from diverse backgrounds and cultures is a good thing. I have many Chinese and Saudi Arabian friends who gave me an opportunity to learn some words in their language. I also get to know their cultures and events related to their religion – like Muslim [sic!]. We need to

> respect each other. There is a large Muslim population around Sydney. I felt a bit strange seeing women covered from head to toe including arms, legs, ankles, neck, and sometimes their face. I wonder how they eat or swim or deal with hot summer months. I just try to understand the history and reasons why the cultural differences exist. (Nathan)

Once culturally aware and informed, it is important for Thai students to respect other cultures in order to create a peaceful society. Bob felt strongly that respect was essentially reciprocal and required mutual understanding from both parties.

> I strongly believe that people should respect one another in order to live happily. Buddhism teaches us to live a moderate life. If we respect others, others will respect us. We should not do things that are against their culture. If you invite your Chinese friends to dinner, you should not put the chopsticks in their rice bowls because it means that you are worshiping their ancestors. But some Thai restaurants here do like that. (Bob)

Bob also noticed that some Thai restaurants in Sydney did not seem to respect other cultures such as sticking chopsticks into a bowl of rice, which symbolizes the worship of the dead in Chinese culture.

Comparing cross-cultural encounters in Thailand and Australia, this study shared a balanced view regarding the pros and cons of living in Sydney. On the one hand, it broadened Thai doctoral students' worldview with respect to cultural similarities and differences. On the other hand, they had to accept and be open-minded to the views of others who were not culturally sensitized through the process of social acculturation. Their negotiated identities caused by culture shock were based on their religious beliefs, personal expectations, attitudes, practices, cultural knowledge, awareness, and intercultural communication experiences. They, however, developed cross-cultural awareness and positive attitudes towards such differences in order to acculturate and integrate themselves into a linguistically and culturally diverse society.

DISCUSSION

Drawing upon Figure 1, the findings of this study portray the outer layer (macrosystem) through the representation of Thai students' membership of Asian ethnic identity based on their physical, geographical, and ethnic similarities to other prominent Asian residents of Sydney. The inner layer (mesosystem), however, exhibits Thai students as NNES, whose English was perceived as 'non-standard' and 'illegitimate'; and, thus, they had to develop communicative strategies and become aware of sociolinguistics varieties of English and local slang used in Australia. Considered as the most important and sensitive part, the core (microsystem) represents Thai students' positioning as Thai people whose Thai cultural practices are so prominent and strong that they have to challenge, contest, resist, and question whether certain practices in Australia were culturally appropriate or acceptable for Thai people. In line with Wei and Hua (2013), tensions and conflicts between individuals' ways of being and belonging can happen in different social spaces through multilingual interactions.

In this study, although the three layers of identity options of Thai doctoral students are depicted as mutually exclusive, their boundaries are rather complex, ambiguous, overlapping, and interconnected. Individuals could simultaneously construct or negotiate these three identity options depending on the 'situated' discursive practices they encountered. For instance, living with a host family, Rain felt comfortable talking with her non-Buddhist Chinese housemate as they shared Asian ethnicity and similar NNES proficiency, even if not the same religion. Rain, however, had to negotiate her Buddhist and Thai female identities with her host family as her religion's norms prevented her from drying her underwear in public or walking underneath it. She had to employ all her available identity options with her host family, which can be considered a multilingual and multicultural interactive space where she had to cross layers back and forth or in-between. Rain's situation reflects the multiplicity, hybridity, and liquidity of identities characterized by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004).

An individual's senses of being and belonging in transnational practices are formed by integrating their actions and the kind of identities that their actions signify to demonstrate their historical and sociocultural heritage identities. These identities are enhanced by one's transnational experiences and interactions (Wei & Hua, 2013). Domestic academic staff and students may expect their Asian counterparts to be aware of linguistic and sociocultural differences of the host culture (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Thai doctoral students in this study, however, preferred to maintain their traditional sociocultural beliefs, values, and practices; and thus, following Smith and Khawaja (2011), social support from either co-nationals or fellow international students appears to serve as a significant buffer against acculturative stress or conflict, which can potentially enhance their psychological and sociocultural adaptations to improve their social inclusion and tolerance in the midst of linguistic and cultural diversity.

CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on a group of nine Thai doctoral students' social acculturation yielding insights into understanding not only their experiences of linguistic and sociocultural adjustment, but also their identity construction and negotiation in relation to their senses of being, belonging, social interactions, and community networks in multilingual settings in Australia. These multiple layers of three identity options include assumed identity as Asian people, imposed identity as NNES, and negotiable identity as Thai people. These identity options were constructed and layered from the outer and inner circles and to the core, which were based on Thai students' senses of Asian community membership, English language ownership, and Thai ethnicity, respectively. This study views these identity options as essential to formulating a better understanding of how Thai doctoral students constructed and negotiated their identities in different multilingual and multicultural settings during the course of their education at an Australian university. Different layers of identity options allow deeper insights into the complexity of the Thai students' constructed and negotiated identities that impact on various communicative practices in Australian society. Social interactions and networks outside the classroom play important roles in assisting them to overcome sociocultural and linguistic challenges and familiarize themselves with and adapt to living and learning in Australia.

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Typhoons, Climate Change, and Climate Injustice in the Philippines

William N. Holden

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This article discusses how climate change causes an intensification of Western North Pacific typhoons and how the effects of such amplified typhoons upon the Philippines exemplify the concept of climate injustice. Using a political ecology approach, the article begins with an examination of the concepts of climate change, climate injustice, background injustice, and compound injustice. This is followed by an examination of the causes of typhoons, the vulnerability of the Philippines to typhoons, and how climate change may generate stronger typhoons. These stronger typhoons that may be produced by climate change, and the risks that they pose to the Philippines, are an example of climate injustice, while the legacy of colonial exploitation in the Philippines is an example of background injustice. The struggles faced by the Philippines in coping with climate change augmented typhoons are an example of compound injustice. The article concludes with a discussion of the reluctance of developed countries, such as Australia, Canada, and the United States, to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions notwithstanding the consequences these emissions have on countries such as the Philippines.

Keywords: Climate Change; Climate Injustice; Philippines; Political Ecology; Typhoons

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INTRODUCTION: SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN 8 NOVEMBER 2013

In the early morning hours of 8 November 2013 Super Typhoon Haiyan (referred to in the Philippines as Super Typhoon Yolanda) battered the Philippines (Figure 1). Haiyan was an extraordinary storm, bringing precipitation in some places of up to 615 mm, having an air pressure at its center of only 895 millibars, generating sustained one-minute wind gusts of up to 315 km/h (with wind gusts of up to 375 km/h), and was the strongest typhoon to ever make landfall in the entire Western North Pacific (Esteban et al., 2016; Primavera et al., 2016; Takagi et al., 2015; Takagi & Esteban, 2016). When Haiyan came ashore on the island of Panay, near Concepcion, Iloilo, it still had sustained wind speeds of 215 km/h (with gusts up to 250 km/h) and this was its fifth landfall (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, 2014). Perhaps the most destructive aspect of Haiyan was its storm surge of 7.4 meters, which inundated 98 km^2 of the island of Leyte and 93 km^2 of the island of Samar with the same force as a tsunami (Cardenas et al., 2015; Lander, Guard, & Camargo, 2014). Dr. Wei Mei, a climate scientist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, stated (when interviewed in La Jolla, California on 4 November 2015) that he was "shocked" by the strength of Haiyan.

Amalie Obusan, the Greenpeace Southeast Asia Country Director, indicated (interview, Quezon City, Philippines on 26 April 2017) that she had never seen devastation of this magnitude and, even though more than three years have passed, she still gets emotional thinking about it. While climate scientists and climate change activists may have wondered in amazement at the sheer power of Haiyan, its consequences for the people of the Philippines were catastrophic. Eight of the 17 regions of the Philippines were affected by Haiyan, it generated 28,626 injuries, caused 1,039 people to be reported missing, and officially caused 6,293 deaths – although some say the death toll could have been as high as 18,000 (IBON, 2015; Takagi & Esteban, 2016). The storm caused between USD 12 to 15 billion worth of damages and resulted in the destruction of one million homes (Primavera et al., 2016). Six months after Haiyan, two million people remained homeless (Rodgers, 2016).

The City of Tacloban, on the island of Leyte in the Eastern Visayas, bore the brunt of the winds and storm surge, and some estimate that up to 10,000 Tacloban residents were killed, mostly by the storm surge (IBON, 2015). San Pedro Bay's funnel shape (Figure 1), combined with its shallow bathymetry, stacked the water up and forced the storm surge into Tacloban (Soria et al., 2016). In the storm's aftermath the Philippine Army gathered dead bodies and buried them, unidentified, in a mass grave at the Archdiocese of Palo. For weeks after the storm, dead bodies lined the streets of Tacloban and over three years after the storm, human bones continue to wash up on its beaches. Although many residents of Tacloban had experienced typhoons, they were unprepared for its storm surge, warnings of which were issued beforehand but many of the *Waray-Waray* speaking residents of Tacloban had never heard the English term 'storm surge' before and did not understand its meaning. When local authorities relayed information to the communities they described the storm surge as *dagko nga balod* (huge waves), which was not considered serious by many people (Esteban et al., 2016). During the storm, two ships broke loose from their moorings and ran aground, crushing homes and people in Barangay Anibong, the bow of one of which, the MV Jocelyn (Figure 2), was left as a remembrance of the thousands of lives that were lost. In the immediate aftermath of Haiyan, someone painted "CLIMATE JUSTICE NOW!" on the side of the MV Jocelyn and, in doing so, raised the issues which this article seeks to address: First, does climate change cause an amplification of Western North Pacific typhoons; and second (assuming an affirmative answer to the first question), how do such amplified typhoons, and their effects upon the Philippines, exemplify the concept of climate injustice? Climate injustice is the situation where some people enjoy the benefits of energy use and other emissions-generating activities while those activities cause other people to suffer the burdens of climate change (Bell, 2013). This investigation of climate injustice is based upon an extensive review of the climate change and typhoons literature and was augmented by 40 fieldwork interviews conducted in California (in 2015) and in the Philippines (in 2016 and 2017). Informants were selected for their knowledge of the topic under study and they included climate scientists, government officials (from both national and local governments), environmental activists, and members of the Roman Catholic Church (a highly influential institution in Philippine society).

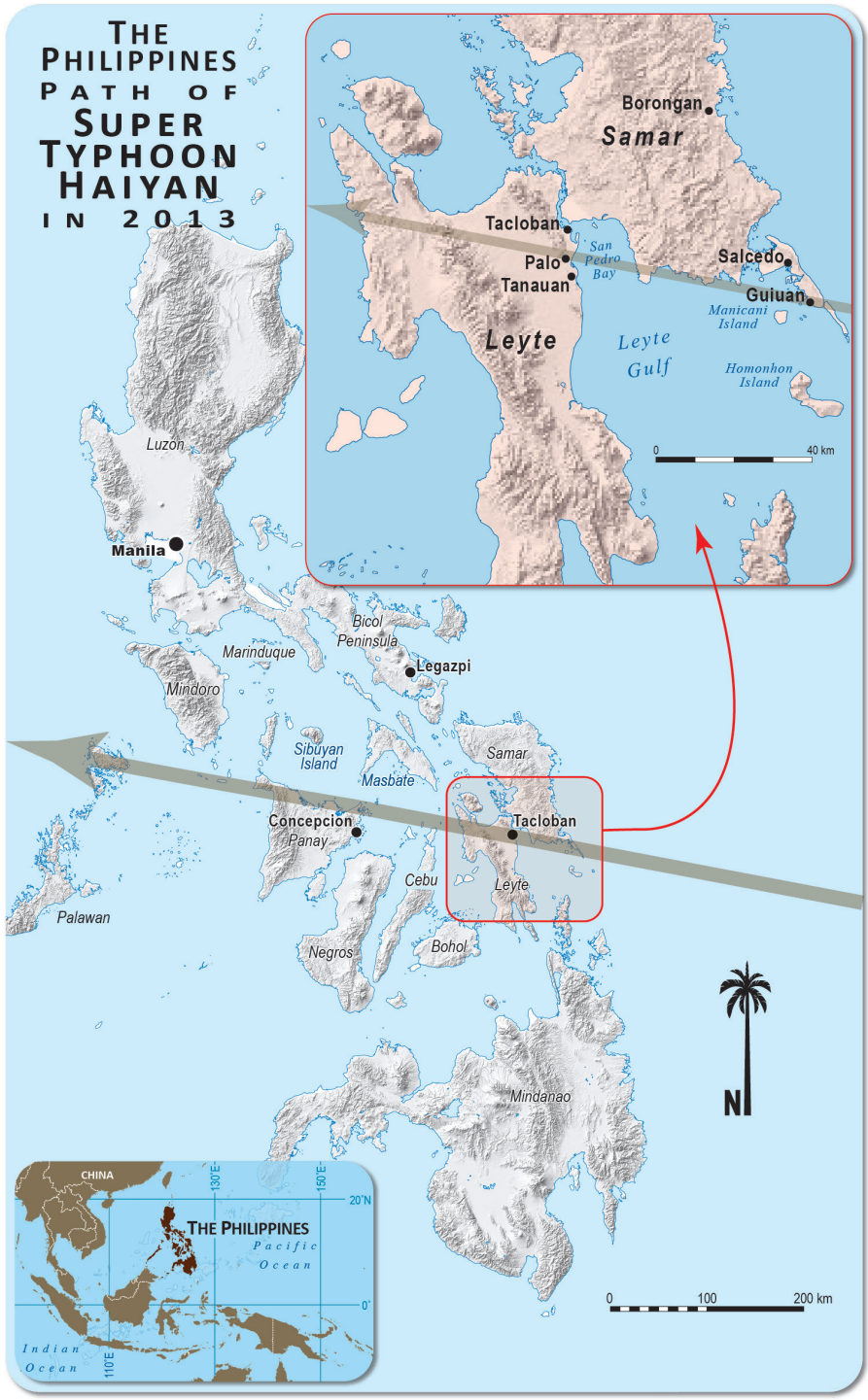

Figure 1. The path of Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. (figure by author).

Figure 2. The MV Jocelyn. (figure by author).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Political Ecology

This article approaches the issue of climate injustice by using political ecology, an epistemologically plural field of inquiry (Tetreault, 2017). Specifically, two subsets of political ecology are used: the study of ecological distribution conflicts and the political ecology of hazards. "Ecological distribution," is defined by Martinez-Alier (2002) as "the social, spatial, and intertemporal patterns of access to the benefits obtainable from natural resources and from the environment as a life support system" (p. 73). The capacity of the atmosphere to absorb greenhouse gases can be thought of as a natural resource. The developed nations of the world, with their historic emissions of greenhouse gases, have used up much of this resource leaving substantially less of it for the developing nations. In this respect, climate change is, essentially, an ecological distribution conflict because, as argued here, it has been caused by the developed countries. Yet, as this article argues, its consequences will be disproportionately borne by the developing nations. The political ecology of hazards is a concept developed by Clark, Chhotray, and Few (2013), which relates natural hazards and environmental injustice. The authors discuss that disasters are not just a combination of natural hazards with vulnerable populations and that it is now necessary to examine the precipitating events that cause these hazards. "This is most obviously the case," Clark, Chhotray, and Few (2013, p. 106) wrote "in hydrometeorological calamities – storms, floods, drought – which are predicted to intensify and become more frequent as global warming proceeds." Since this article examines the impact of typhoons on the Philippines and the extent to which these are augmented by climate change, the political ecology of hazards deserves further discussion herein.

Climate Change

Climate change is occurring due to the increasing concentration of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane, and nitrogen oxides, released into the atmosphere from human activity. Once these gases are concentrated in the atmosphere, they intercept terrestrial radiation and prevent some of this from escaping to space, trapping the energy within the lower atmosphere and re-radiating some of this back to the surface. Many climate change activists (such as those at 350.org) hold out a benchmark maximum safe level of CO_2 in the atmosphere as being 350 parts per million (PPM). In 2016, atmospheric CO_2 crossed 400 PPM, is rising by approximately 2 PPM every year, and (as of 1 April 2018) stands at 410.03 PPM (Scripps Institution of Oceanography, 2018). Much of the atmosphere's CO_2 has been emitted in recent decades because of modern industrialization, with 75% of all anthropogenic CO_2 emitted from 1950 to 2010 and 50% having been emitted from 1980 to 2010 (Nixon, 2011). Although CO_2 concentrations have risen and fallen and do not display a linear upward trend the CO_2 levels currently present in the atmosphere are higher than they have been at any time in the last 800,000 years and they will have a warming effect for years to come (Motesharrei et al., 2016). Research conducted by Gillett, Arora, Zickfeld, Marshall, and Merryfield (2011) found that even if there was to be a complete cessation of all CO_2 emissions in 2100 the impact of emissions up to then would continue beyond the year 3000.

While the media, particularly in North America, may give people the impression that there is strong controversy about the existence of anthropogenic climate change, there is no debate about this amongst climate scientists (Text Box 1). The United States Global Change Research Program (2017), holds that it is extremely likely that human emissions of greenhouse gases, are the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century and there is no convincing alternative explanation supported by the extent of the observed evidence. Although there will always be anomalies and some uncertainty will always exist, the case for a warming climate is about as solid as any scientific case can ever be (De Buys, 2011). While economists, journalists, politicians, and others may have the impression of confusion, disagreement, or discord among climate scientists, this impression is incorrect and there is a robust scientific consensus on climate change (Oreskes, 2004), As Alley (2000, p. xii) declared, "scientifically there is not another 'side' that deserves equal time."

Climate Injustice: The Disproportionate Causes of Climate Change

Climate change is an uneven process when it comes to the contribution of individual countries and the impact that climate change has, and will have, on individual countries (Hariharan et al., 2017). The developed countries of the world have contributed to what Hariharan, Kareem, Tandon, and Ziesemer (2017) describe as "a disproportionate amount of harmful anthropogenic emissions over the past couple of centuries and still contribute disproportionately more in per capita terms to global warming" (p. 19). The developed world is responsible for over 75% of all emissions from 1850 to 2000 (Motesharrei et al., 2016). It is not just the wealthier countries that have emitted more CO_2, but resource consumption within countries is skewed towards higher

income groups and the richest 10% of the world's population are responsible for 46% of all CO_2 emissions; this is eight times as much CO_2 per capita as the remaining 90% of the world's population (Motesharrei et al., 2016). Although the poor of the world have done disproportionately less to cause the problem of climate change they stand to suffer disproportionately more from its effects. The unequal burdens of causation and consequence is the essence of climate injustice; as Yamada and Galat (2014) wrote, "those who suffer climate change are not responsible for producing it" (p. 432).

Background Injustice

Much (but by no means all) of the poverty experienced by developing countries can be attributed to what Shue (2014) calls "background injustice" (p. 39), namely exploitation by their former colonial masters, which is the core argument of dependency theorists. Many developing countries experience varying degrees of poverty as a legacy of having been colonies of (what are now) the developed countries, i.e. they have found themselves in dependency relationships. These background inequalities are, according to Shue (2014), "the bitter fruit of centuries of colonialism, imperialism, unequal development, war, greed, stupidity, or whatever exactly one thinks are the main features of the history of the international political economy" (p. 128). The former colonial powers of today's developing countries became affluent through exploiting their colonial subjects and through their rampant use of fossil fuels. Today, these developed countries emit large amounts of greenhouse gases while their citizens maintain their affluent lifestyles. Differences in the levels of development resulting from exploitation by colonialism, and the differing emissions of greenhouse gases, created the differences in affluence between the industrialized world and the developing world (IBON, 2008).

When discussing climate change, the capacity of the atmosphere to absorb CO2 exemplifies an ecological distribution conflict because it can be thought of as a finite resource, capable of being used up by the countries of the world. According to Agarwal and Narain (1991) a distinction must be made "between those countries which have eaten up this ecological capital by exceeding the world's absorptive capacity and those countries which have emitted gases well within the world's cleansing capacity" (p. 6). The developed countries fit into the former category and the developing countries fit into the latter category. Indeed, Agarwal and Narain (1991) go so far as to state that an expression by the developed countries that the developing countries "must share the blame for heating up the Earth and destabilizing its climate" is an example of "environmental colonialism" (p. 1). The developed countries, through their historic emissions, have created climate change; for them to expect the developing countries to allocate part of their share of the atmosphere's ability to absorb CO2 is tantamount to coming and taking a resource (such as minerals or timber) from the developing countries just as was done during the colonial period.

Compound Injustice

Intimately related to the concept of background injustice is compound injustice – the difficulty experienced by the developing countries of the world in coping with

climate change. The poor countries of the world are starting out in a weaker position when they confront climate change, largely because of their exploitation by their former colonial masters (background injustice), and the poverty that exacerbates their ability to cope with climate change thus creating what Shue (2014) refers to as "compound injustice" (p. 39). As IBON (2008) stated, "The environmental consequences of the policies of industrialized nations have also had a detrimental and costly effect on developing countries – especially the poor in those countries – that are already burdened with debt and poverty" (p. 25).

TYPHOONS, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND THE PHILIPPINES

What Causes Typhoons?

Globally, tropical cyclones are the deadliest and most expensive natural hazard and "typhoon", originating from the Chinese *ta* (big) and *feng* (wind), is the term used to describe a tropical cyclone in the northwestern Pacific Ocean (Collett, McDougall, & Thomas, 2017). Tropical cyclones develop in the northern hemisphere during the months of July to November in an area ranging from 130°-180° East and 5°-15° North (Mei, Xie, Premeau, McWilliams, & Pasquero, 2015). To develop their rotation, tropical cyclones need to be located at a latitude where the relative speed of the earth's rotation differs sufficiently between their northern and southern sides; consequently, they usually do not develop or strike within 10° latitude of the equator (Sheppard, Davy, & Pilling, 2009). Tropical cyclones generally occur over the oceans in regions where sea surface temperatures exceed 26 °C. Such sea surface temperatures are found mainly in the tropics because solar energy per unit area of the ocean surface is greatest there and declines substantially as one moves away from the equator (Sheppard et al., 2009; Trenberth, 2005). Tropical cyclones develop when strong clusters of thunderstorms drift over a warm ocean and warm air from these thunderstorms combines with warm air and water vapor from the ocean's surface and rises. As these clusters of thunderstorms consolidate into one large storm, convergent winds blowing towards the area of low pressure on the ocean surface, along with rotation due to the Coriolis effect, cause the storm to begin spinning (counterclockwise in the northern hemisphere), while rising warm air creates divergence aloft, eventually, the storm will have a low-pressure center (the eye) with no clouds and calm winds, while winds in the eyewall and the outer part of the storm can be extremely strong. All typhoons have five characteristics: low air pressure, strong winds, cyclonic rotation, heavy rains, and storm surge. The air pressure reduction associated with a typhoon can cause the sea level to rise by up to 1 cm for every one millibar reduction in air pressure, and instances have been documented where sea levels have risen by 1.5 m due to air pressure reductions alone (Wang, Lee, & Wang, 2005). This means that when a typhoon strikes land the local sea level will be higher due to the reduction of the atmospheric pressure. Onshore winds add to the strength of the storm surge and the greatest storm surges, those over 5 m, occur when a typhoon makes landfall during a high tide. Storm surges are one of the most destructive aspects of a tropical cyclone and are feared by people living in coastal regions (Loy, Sinha, Liew, Tangang, & Husain, 2014). Since 2009, tropical cyclones have been divided into six categories,

which are presented in Table 1, and the Western North Pacific basin experiences, on average, 26 named tropical cyclones each year, accounting for about 33% of the global total (Wu & Wang, 2004).

TYPE OF STORM	WIND SPEEDS
Tropical Depression	63 km/h or lower
Tropical Storm	Between 63 to 89 km/h
Severe Tropical Storm	Between 90 to 119 km/h
Typhoon	Between 120 to 149 km/h
Severe Typhoon	Between 150 to 190 km/h
Super Typhoon	Greater than 190 km/h

Table 1. The six categories of tropical storms. (Abdullah et al., 2015).

Typhoons and the Philippines

The Philippines (Figure 1) are an archipelago of 7,100 islands located in Southeast Asia. In 2017, the population of the archipelago was approximately 105 million people spread over roughly 300,000 km^2 of land area generating a population density of 352 people per km^2 (Worldometers, 2018). The Philippines are a country firmly ensconced in the developing world and approximately 26% of all Filipinos live in poverty (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2016). The seas, and life near it, are integral components of life in the archipelago and it has approximately 36,289 km of coastline and 25,000 km^2 of coral reefs (Sheppard et al., 2009). More than 80% of its population live within 50 km of the coast, and much food is grown on land marginally above sea level (Broad & Cavanagh, 2011; Magdaong et al., 2014).

Bagtasa (2017) regards tropical cyclones as "the most destructive hydrometeorological hazards in the Philippines" (p. 3622) and Table 2 lists the ten deadliest tropical cyclones in Philippine history. Much of the Philippines is at risk from typhoons and each year about 20 of them, equivalent to 25% of the total number of such events in the world, enter Philippine waters with between seven to nine of these making landfall (Cruz et al., 2016). From 1970 to 2013, 856 tropical cyclones entered Philippine waters and 322 of these were destructive (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, 2014). Approximately 95% of these typhoons originated in the Pacific Ocean, south and east of the archipelago, between the months of July to November, and they travel in a northwesterly direction mainly affecting the eastern half of the country with the most heavily affected portions of the Philippines being Northern Luzon, the Bicol Peninsula, and Samar. Although the moisture provided by these storms has a somewhat positive effect (providing between 38 to 47% of the archipelago's average annual rainfall), their overall effects are profoundly negative setting off landslides, causing severe flooding, and being responsible for more loss of life and property than any other natural hazard.

TYPHOON	YEAR	FATALITIES
Haiphong	1881	20,000
Haiyan	2013	6,300
Thelma	1991	5,000
Washi	2011	1,901
Angela	1867	1,800
Winnie	2004	1,600
Fengshen	2008	1,501
1897 Typhoon	1897	1,500
Ike	1984	1,492
Durian	2006	1,399
Bopha	2012	1,268

Table 2. The eleven deadliest tropical cyclones in Philippine history. (Bankoff, 2003; Gaillard et al., 2007; Ribera et al., 2008; Soria et al., 2016; Takagi and Esteban, 2016; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2017).

Climate Change and Stronger Typhoons

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is cautious as to whether climate change will cause stronger tropical cyclones stating, "confidence remains low for long-term (centennial) changes in tropical cyclone activity" (Stocker et al., 2013, p. 50) and that globally, "there is low confidence in attribution of changes in tropical cyclone activity to human influence" (Stocker et al., 2013, p. 73.) The IPCC declared that it has "low confidence" in any basin-scale projections of tropical cyclone intensity (Stocker et al., 2013, p. 88) and gave the tepid prediction that "the frequency of the most intense storms will more likely than not increase in some basins" (Stocker et al., 2013, p. 107). Nevertheless, notwithstanding the conservative predictions of the IPCC (Text Box 2) a substantial body of scientific literature indicates that climate change is contributing to stronger tropical cyclones and this trend can be expected to continue due to the thermodynamics driving them (Bagtasa, 2017; Camargo, Ting, & Kushnir, 2013; Combest-Friedman, Christie, & Miles, 2012; Elsner, Kossin, & Jagger, 2008; Emanuel, 2005, 2013; Mei et al., 2015; Mei & Xie, 2016; Peduzzi et al., 2012; Rozynski, Hung, & Ostrowski, 2009; Takagi & Esteban, 2016; Takayabu et al., 2015; Trenberth, 2005; Webster, Holland, Curry, & Chang, 2005). Kerry Emanuel, an atmospheric scientist at Harvard University has written extensively on the impact of climate change on tropical cyclones and has found that stronger tropical cyclones "cannot be written off as mere climate perturbations to which we easily adjust" (Emanuel, 2007, p. 51). The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine are composed of some of the best scientists, engineers, and medical doctors in the United States. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016), maximum potential tropical cyclone intensities are projected to rise, and future observations of tropical cyclones with intensities substantially higher than those observed in the past are consistent with what is expected in a warming climate. As the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016) wrote:

> Tropical Cyclones are projected to become more intense as the climate warms. There is considerable confidence in this conclusion, as it is found in a wide range of numerical models and also justified by theoretical understanding, particularly because there is a well-established body of theory for the maximum potential intensity of tropical cyclones. (p. 110)

The principal mechanism by which climate change generates stronger typhoons is the higher temperature of the world's oceans (Bagtasa, 2017). Emanuel (2007, p. 50) states that tropical cyclones are "responding to warming sea surface temperatures faster than we originally expected." As the surface of the oceans warms, the oceans provide more energy to convert into tropical cyclones (Elsner et al., 2008). The higher sea surface temperatures, and increased water vapor, act to increase the energy available for tropical cyclone formation (Trenberth, 2005). During 2013, for example, sea surface temperatures in the genesis location for North Pacific tropical cyclones exceeded 29 °C, providing ample energy for the formation of Super Typhoon Haiyan (Takagi & Esteban, 2016).

The increase in subsurface sea temperatures occurring over the last 30 years are an important component of how climate change leads to stronger tropical cyclones. Normally, during a tropical cyclone, the disturbance of the ocean's surface has an ameliorative effect because it causes an upwelling of cold water from below the surface. As this cold water upwells, sea surface temperatures decline thus acting as a natural break on tropical cyclone strength. Such upwelling of cold water can reduce surface temperatures by as much as 9 °C, which is enough to reduce surface water temperatures below that needed for tropical cyclone maintenance (Subrahmanyam, 2015). One of the first to suggest that climate change may lead to stronger tropical cyclones was Emanuel (1987) who raised this possibility but then discounted it due to "the tendency for strong cyclonic circulations to induce upwelling of cold water" (p. 485). However, research conducted by Mei et al. (2015) shows that over the period from 1985 to 2015 there has been a 0.75 °C rise in the temperature of the world's oceans at a depth of 75 m. Similarly, research conducted by Ortiz et al. (2016) has shown that by 2100, ocean temperatures will increase by up to 2 °C in the top 100 m of the world's oceans. These higher subsurface sea temperatures remove a natural buffer on the strength of tropical cyclones, favor rapid tropical cyclone intensification, and go a long way towards explaining why typhoon intensity from 2005 to 2015 has been, on average, the strongest over the period from 1955 to 2015 (Mei et al., 2015). According to Mei et al. (2015), by the end of the 21st century the average tropical storm will increase from being a severe tropical storm to a typhoon, and even typhoons of moderate intensity will increase by 14%. Takagi and Esteban (2016) predict an increase in the mean maximum tropical cyclone wind speed of between 2 to 11% by the end of the century, in association with deeper low pressures in the core of these systems. "The strengthened typhoon intensity," Mei et al., (2015) wrote, "poses heightened threats to human society" (p. 4). In the opinion of Dr. Wei Mei (interview in La Jolla, California on 4 November 2015), people in the Philippines must be concerned about the intensity of tropical cyclones in the coming future; if he lived in the Philippines he would be very worried about tropical cyclones. The inhabitants of the archipelago are aware of the risks posed by climate change and typhoons. Research conducted by

Combest-Friedman et al. (2012) shows that Filipinos have perceived that there has been an increase in storm intensity over the 40 years from 1970 to 2010. The government of the Philippines is also cognizant of the risks posed by amplified tropical cyclones. In 2010, the Philippine Congress enacted the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (Republic Act 10121), which emphasizes disaster preparedness and mitigation and created the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) to reduce disaster risks. Republic Act 10121 mandates all Provinces, Cities, and Municipalities, to have their own Disaster Risk Reduction Management Councils to reduce disaster risks locally. Amalie Obusan, from Greenpeace Southeast Asia stated (interview in Quezon City on 26 April 2017) she reacts to these predictions "with trepidation" because she has seen what these typhoons can do and the idea of more extreme, and more intense, weather events is very frightening.

When these predictions of stronger typhoons are combined with predictions of sea level rise of between 0.9 to 2.9 m that are expected by the year 2100 their severity increases as a higher sea level generates an even higher storm surge (Brauch, 2012; Church et al., 2013; IBON, 2008). Indeed, these concerns of rising sea levels appear quite justified in a Philippine context as the islands of the archipelago have experienced above-average increases in sea-level. Since 1970 mean sea-level readings taken at Legazpi, in the Bicol Peninsula of Luzon (Figure 1), indicate an increase of 200 mm per year (Lander et al., 2014). While such rates of sea level rise exceed those predicted by climate change and must owe part of their rapid rates to geophysical forces such as land subsidence (or even a tectonic sinking of the Philippine Plate), their consequences are serious. They could cause the Philippines to lose up to 17% of its land area. The Philippines, along with the Caribbean and Sundaland, is one of the three places in the world most vulnerable to land loss due to sea-level rise (Bellard, Leclerc, & Courchamp, 2014).

DISCUSSION: CLIMATE INJUSTICE IN THE PHILIPPINES

This article argues that the stronger typhoons affecting the Philippines are a manifestation of climate change. While the IPCC is reluctant to declare that climate change causes stronger typhoons, other authors, such as Bagtasa (2017), Camargo et al. (2013), Combest-Friedman et al. (2012), Elsner et al. (2008), Emanuel (2005, 2007, 2013), Mei et al. (2015), Mei and Xie (2016), National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016), Peduzzi et al. (2012), Rozynski et al. (2009), Takagi and Esteban (2016), Takayabu et al. (2015), Trenberth (2005), and Webster et al. (2005), regard climate change as augmenting typhoon intensity. If it is assumed that climate change is indeed amplifying typhoon intensity the discussion can proceed to the climate injustice aspects of stronger typhoons. Enhanced tropical cyclones, wrote Flannery (2005), "have the potential to kill many more people than the largest terrorist attack" (p. 314). Eight years later, Flannery was (sadly) proven correct when Super Typhoon Haiyan killed more people than were killed on 11 September 2001 (and arguably killed many more people than officially acknowledged). Climate change amplified typhoons are a departure from the gradually unfolding destruction (slow violence), inherent in climate change. Climate change usually has consequences, such as gradually receding glaciers, occurring slowly in "unspectacular time" (Nixon, 2011, p. 6). Spectacularly

violent tropical storms, however, transcend this slow violence; unlike a gradually retreating glacier, Super Typhoon Haiyan needed no montage of images taken over several decades to reveal the effects of climate change- a comparison of pictures from Tacloban taken on 7 and 8 November 2013 would have been enough. Climate change amplified typhoons move the discussion of climate change from unspectacular time to "spectacular time" (Nixon, 2011, p. 6). As Flannery (2005, p. 314) wrote, tropical cyclones "focus attention on climate change in a way that few other natural phenomena do". At the 19th yearly session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP 19), held in Warsaw, in the days immediately after Super Typhoon Haiyan, Yeb Sano, the lead negotiator of the Philippine delegation (and a Tacloban resident), called for urgent action on climate change. Sano then announced that he would commence a fast during COP 19 to be in solidarity with the people of Tacloban (Vidal, 2014).

COUNTRY	CO_2 EMISSIONS PER CAPITA
Australia	16.3
Canada	13.5
United States of America	16.4
Philippines	1.01

Table 3. CO_2 emissions per capita, 2013. (World Bank, 2017).

1	Vanuatu	12	Timor-Leste
2	Tonga	13	Mauritius
3	Philippines	14	Nicaragua
4	Guatemala	15	Guinea-Bissau
5	Bangladesh	...	...
6	Solomon Islands	121	Australia
7	Brunei Darussalam	...	...
8	Costa Rica	127	United States of America
9	Cambodia	...	...
10	Papua New Guinea	145	Canada
11	El Salvador		

Table 4. The 15 Countries Most at Risk to Climate Change. (Alliance Development Works, 2016).

The Philippines have contributed disproportionately less to cause climate change, yet the archipelago is also disproportionately more vulnerable to its effects. According to Albert Magalang, Head of the Philippine Government's Department of the Environment and Natural Resources Climate Change Office, and the Designated National Authority for the UNFCCC (interview in Quezon City on 20 April 2017), the

top three obstacles to negotiating climate change are the governments of Australia, Canada, and the United States. Table 3 displays the 2013 per capita CO_2 emissions in these three countries along with those of the Philippines, demonstrating that Filipinos are responsible for substantially less emissions than the residents of these countries.[1] Indeed, to some extent, this data understates the difference in per capita CO_2 emissions between these countries and the Philippines. This data compares the emissions of all Filipinos with these countries and does not make it clear that the poorest Filipinos have extremely low emissions. Indeed, it has been estimated that there are 54 million Filipinos who each emit less than 0.42 metric tons of CO_2 per year (Oxfam, 2015). Table 4 displays the 15 countries most at risk to climate change and the Philippines is behind only Vanuatu and Tonga while Australia, Canada, and the United States are substantially less vulnerable to climate change. While damage caused by climate change will be more expensive to repair in these countries, they are substantially more affluent and thus are better able to afford repairing such damage. To Magalang, climate injustice means that climate change impacts are more pronounced in poor communities and in poor countries and those who have done the least to cause the problem bear most of its costs; as Gaspar (2014) wrote:

> The irony of the world today is in the reality of climate injustice: those most responsible for climate change – owing to affluent lifestyles and wasteful consumption patterns that involve the burning of fossil fuels – are the least affected when climate disasters occur. When a Yolanda [Haiyan] unleashes its fury, the poor are far more battered and have the least capacity to recover. (p. 45)

The archipelago's poor are vulnerable because they lack the capacity to absorb and recover (Gaillard et al., 2007; Morin, Ahmad, & Warnitchai, 2016). "Vulnerability", Huigen and Jens (2006) state, "is the opposite of resilience, where resilience is low, vulnerability is high and vice versa" (p. 2117). The vulnerability of a community, such as a coastal *Barangay* in Tacloban, is determined by class, gender, education levels, and access to resources (Huigen & Jens, 2006). Bankoff (2003) aptly described the vulnerability of the poor writing: "Vulnerable populations are those at risk, not simply because they are exposed to hazard, but as a result of a marginality that makes their life a 'permanent emergency'" (p. 12). The vulnerability of the residents of Samar and Leyte, combined with the ferocity of Haiyan, created a perfect storm of hazard meeting vulnerability – essentially an irresistible force meeting a movable object! The "socioeconomic vulnerability" of the Eastern Visayas was, wrote IBON (2015), "the single biggest circumstance that caused the damage wrought to be so vast" (p. 12). In 2012, the last poverty estimates prior to Haiyan, the poverty rate for the Eastern Visayas Region (where Leyte and Samar are located) was 45.2% while the poverty rate for the Philippines was 25.2% (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2013). The economy of these two islands is based largely on subsistence aquaculture and agriculture. From 2013 to 2014 this region's rice production fell by 1.62%, while

1 Other data sources, such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018), give substantially higher emissions numbers for Australia, Canada, and the United States but do not provide an emissions estimate for the Philippines. World Bank data has been used because it provides an estimate for all four countries.

corn production fell by 5.19%, and inland municipal fish production fell by 2.30% (IBON, 2015). In 2013, the Eastern Visayas was responsible for 5.40% of all rice produced in the Philippines, 1.20% of all corn, and 3.20% of all inland municipal fish production; by 2014, these shares had fallen to 5.18%, 1.13%, and 2.70% respectively (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014, 2015). The affected areas had poor, backward, agrarian economies and were profoundly challenged by Haiyan. In the words of Gaspar (2014):

> The Warays have constantly faced hunger, deprivation and powerlessness owing to various factors- slave raiders from the south, oppressive colonization, the vagaries of a tropical climate, the difficulties of producing bountiful harvests despite available fertile lands, the prevalence of schistosomiasis and the tight grip of political dynasties. Migrants from Samar have flooded Tacloban through the years, hoping to improve their lot, only to find themselves barely able to eke out a living. (p. 14)

Background injustice exists in the Philippines as the archipelago was colonized by Spain (1565 to 1898) and by the United States (1898 to 1946). The Spanish used the islands as a source of agricultural commodities and to facilitate the trade of precious metals from their New World colonies for Chinese goods on the Manila Galleons, which were built using Filipino forced labor (Francia, 2010). By the 1890s, much of the archipelago was in what Linn (2000) described as "severe distress, plagued by social tension, disease, hunger, banditry, and rebellion" (p. 16). In 1898, the United States acquired the Philippines from Spain, as an unintended consequence of the Spanish-American War, and ruthlessly repressed an insurgency led by Filipino nationalists during the Philippine-American War of 1899 to 1902 (Linn, 2000). During this war, the Americans killed more Filipinos in three years than the Spanish killed in 300 (Nadeau, 2008). American businesses were given an import monopoly in the archipelago while Filipino commodities were given tariff-free access to the United States (Karnow, 1989). Allowing American manufactured goods tariff-free access to the Philippines stunted the growth of Philippine manufacturing and locked the islands into being an agricultural society dependent on the American market According to Father Edwin Gariguez, the Executive Secretary of the National Secretariat for Social Action, Caritas-Philippines (interview in Tagaytay, Cavite on 26 April 2017), "the Philippines were colonized and exploited and now we need to cope with climate change, which was not caused by us but by our former colonizer". Father Meliton Oso, the Social Action Director of the Archdiocese of Jaro stated (interview in Tagaytay, Cavite on 26 April 2017) that climate injustice is:

> the destruction caused by capitalism and imperialism that cause those who did not cause the problem to suffer the most; the concept of background injustice is very true. We are ill-prepared and we lack the capacity to cope. We suffer because of the evil done to the environment by other countries, which compounds our suffering.

The opinion of Suyin Jamoralin, the Executive Director of the Citizens Disaster Response Center (interview in Quezon City on 21 April 2017), is that the entire Philippines suffered during American colonization as resources were extracted. To Jamoralin it seems that, "the Philippines should not be punished for something it did not contribute to. The industrialized countries should do more to address the problem. This is very sad and disappointing". To Denise Fontanilla, the Climate Policy Coordinator for the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (interview in Quezon City on 23 April 2017), one cannot talk about historical responsibility without acknowledging the history of the colonization of the Philippines.

However, one must not overemphasize background injustice when discussing the vulnerability of the archipelago to climate change. The Philippines has been a sovereign country since 1946 and not all its problems emanate from colonialism; as Amalie Obusan, from Greenpeace Southeast Asia, stated (interview in Quezon City on 26 April 2017):

> The poverty experienced by the Philippines is not totally the responsibility of the former colonial masters of Spain and the United States. As a people, we have never managed becoming a prosperous country. There are just too many political players, there is such a fertile ground for things to be done poorly. As a people, we have not arrived at a place where there is enough political maturity.

The high levels of inequality in the Philippines are an impediment to widespread prosperity in the archipelago. "The Philippines," wrote Yamada and Galat (2014, p. 433), is a nation with severe economic inequalities: the assets of the 25 richest people equal the income of the 73,808,000 poorest." "If your vision of capitalism is one in which a genetically predestined elite runs everything", wrote Mason (2012, p. 201), "then the Philippines is the ideal embodiment of it". There has been a historical pattern of development in the Philippines known as a "plunder economy" (Broad & Cavanagh, 1993, p. 51). The archipelago is ruled by an oligarchy "far more concerned about their intertwining networks of family and friends rather than the needs of a people in distress" (Kirk, 2005, p. 20). This predatory oligarchy has taken control of the state and uses it as a vehicle for furthering its own interests; it has consistently managed natural resources for the benefit of those who control the state. As Broad (1995, p. 331) wrote about natural resources management in the Philippines:

> [The] problem in … the Philippines is not a lack of political will but a political will that represents elite … interests. Policy failure on environmental grounds needs to be grasped for what it is- not an oversight, nor as a faulty judgment. The direction of public policy … is too often shaped, both directly and indirectly, by those with a vested interest in the continued mismanagement of natural resources. In other words, one cannot accurately label these as general policy failures or as mismanaged resources. Rather, they are political successes in managing natural resources for the benefit of the controllers.

The archipelago also suffers from compound injustice because it is a developing country, yet it must now cope with the challenge of climate change. To Albert

Magalang (interview in Quezon City on 20 April 2017), those who have done the emitting should support the developing countries with finance, technology transfer, and adaptation. Historical emissions should always be converted into concrete support that should be given to developing countries to assist them in coping with climate change. One aspect that has contributed to compound injustice in the islands has been the embrace of neoliberalism by various Philippine governments. Neoliberalism can be defined as "a theory of political economic practices [proposing] that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). From 1992 to 2016, governments have adopted neoliberal policies promoting large-scale mining, industrial shrimp farming, timber harvesting, and agribusiness plantations (Holden, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). The environmental degradation caused by these activities (such as the removal of mangrove forests for shrimp farms, run-off from deforested hillsides that covers coral reefs, or the chemical wastes from mining that also kills corals) all reduce resilience to the amplified typhoons expected with climate change (Broad & Cavanagh, 1993; Holden, 2015; Primavera et al., 2016). To Father Edwin Gariguez (interview in Tagaytay, Cavite on 26 April 2017), the most glaring localized environmental degradation is the prolific expansion of large-scale mining. Mining causes deforestation, gives off chemical poisons, removes overburden, and has a tremendous impact on indigenous peoples and farmers. Much mining occurs within critical watersheds and causes flooding. When mining is combined with climate change it increases the destruction caused by climate change. Suyin Jamoralin stated (interview in Quezon City on 21 April 2017) that illegal logging is a substantial contributor to a lack of resilience, there have been a lot of disasters because of illegal logging; the effects of mining are also not insignificant. Big companies, who are only interested in profit, are conducting the mining. Amalie Obusan, from Greenpeace Southeast Asia, indicated (interview in Quezon City, Philippines on 26 April 2017) that she regards the types of localized environmental degradation that can weaken resilience to climate change more than deforestation and mining. Paul Yang-Ed, a member of *Agham* Youth, articulated his view (interview in Quezon City on 22 April 2017) that logging, mining, and plantation agriculture for exports reduce resilience to climate change – the latter does so by creating monocultures and reducing genetic diversity.

One may ask why developed countries, such as Australia, Canada, and the United States (cited as the top three obstacles to negotiating climate change by Albert Magalang) are so reluctant to reduce their emissions? Canada, as recently as 2015, had a government that openly disregarded the significance of climate change (Dearden & Mitchell, 2016). Canada has been reluctant to make the transition to a low carbon economy because it is among the few countries that might conceivably (at least in the short term) benefit from a warming climate as crops may be grown further north and the loss of Arctic sea ice opens new fuel and mineral resources for exploitation; Canada also has large supplies of oil in its tar sands, which themselves require large amounts of energy to extract, and thus generate large CO_2 emissions (Rodgers, 2016). The undue attention given by the media in these countries to climate change skeptics, and the media's discussion of climate change as a theory (as if it is not scientifically proven), manufactures uncertainty about climate change (Vanderheiden, 2008).

Owen Migraso, an environmental activist with the Center for Environmental Concerns (interview in Quezon City on 25 April 2017) expressed familiarity with the concept of manufacturing consent, developed by Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002), and believes that people in developed countries do not want to reduce fossil fuel use because their consent for high emission activities has been manufactured. According to Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002, p. xi) "the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them". These interests include coal and oil companies who have substantial control over what is said on media outlets by purchasing advertisements. The media in Australia, Canada, and the United States are reluctant to discuss climate change, and earn the displeasure of fossil-fuel interests, and will accord climate change skeptics equal air time with mainstream climate scientists without assessing the qualifications of these skeptics (Dearden & Mitchell, 2016). This exemplifies how the media not only allows these disinformation sources to prevail but also protects them against disclosures revealing their dubious credentials (Herman & Chomsky, 1988/2002). Residents in Australia, Canada, and the United States also benefit from an ability to distance themselves from the simple facts of their own existence (Goodell, 2006). Residents in these developed countries tend to enjoy a prosperous life based upon the extensive use of fossil fuels. Indeed, the idea that fossil fuels are an indispensable condition for prosperity has become so well entrenched in these countries that Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony may be used to describe this attitude. To Gramsci (1971), when a concept becomes unequivocally accepted it can be said to be hegemonic. Once this occurs, the concept will never be challenged, and it will operate as guiding principle controlling all thought processes. These fossil fuels impart CO_2 emissions into the atmosphere, which have their impact upon those in distant places (such as Tacloban) who may be thrust into the media spotlight for a week or so after events (such as Super Typhoon Haiyan) and are then forgotten as attention returns to ensuring the prosperity of these developed countries. In this regard, it may be thoughtful to consider the words of Othelia Versoza, a survivor of Super Typhoon Haiyan who stated (interview in Tacloban City on 21 December 2016), "The capitalists of the developed countries only think about the rich people of the world who can buy their products while the rest of the world are only their slaves". Versoza feels that she is one of the "slaves of the developed world" and developed countries are getting rich by emitting greenhouse gases when they should be providing funds to help people affected by climate change.

CONCLUSION

This article has approached the issue of climate injustice by using political ecology, a field that facilitates a study of ecological distribution conflicts and the political ecology of hazards. Ecological distribution conflicts are conflicts about accessing the benefits obtainable from natural resources and the environment. The ability of the atmosphere to absorb CO_2 is a natural resource and much of this absorptive capacity has been taken up by the developed countries of the world and, consequently, they are disproportionately more responsible for climate change. The political ecology of hazards is applicable as this article has argued that the stronger typhoons affecting

the Philippines are a manifestation of climate change. The IPCC is unenthusiastic about such a conclusion, but other authors, as discussed in this article, regard stronger typhoons to be a corollary of climate change.

The relevance of this article can be shown by the discussion at the Decarbonizing South East Asia Forum attended by the author on 25 April 2017 at the University of the Philippines Diliman, in Quezon City. This was a forum attended by members of civil society organizations from across Southeast Asia who were gathering simultaneously with an Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit in Manila. At this forum the participants called on their respective governments to challenge the governments of the developed world to reduce their CO_2 emissions. The participants were mindful of the threats that climate change poses to Southeast Asia, as demonstrated by Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013. They called for their governments to put pressure on developed countries to reduce their emissions as soon as possible, as well as for the developed world to provide mitigation and adaptation. The main argument that emerged was that the nations of Southeast Asia did not cause the problem of climate change but, as the world progresses further into the 21st Century, they will disproportionately bear its consequences. As humanity progresses further into a world affected by climate change, what happened in Tacloban in 2013 shows how those who have caused climate change must assist those who have not caused the problem and stand only to be hurt by it. Ultimately, as humans we only have one planet and all of humanity must share this planet. In the words of Pope Francis (2015, p. 125), "reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage, and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most".

Text Box 1. Increased Solar Radiance as a Cause of Climate Change

An explanation of climate change frequently cited by climate change sceptics is the claim that solar radiation is increasing- essentially a claim that the sun is getting more powerful. This is relevant to tropical cyclones as the principal impetus for their formation are the high levels of solar energy received by the ocean's surface in tropical latitudes. Demonstrating that solar radiance is increasing requires evidence that Earth is receiving fewer cosmic rays from space. When cosmic rays enter the atmosphere, they interact with it and create new types of atoms including beryllium-10. When the sun is more active, solar radiation protects Earth from cosmic rays and less beryllium-10 falls on Earth; conversely, a less active sun allows more beryllium-10 to fall on Earth. During the current warm period, ice cores taken from Antarctica and Greenland show little, if any, change in beryllium-10 over thousands of years and they do not show the marked decrease in beryllium-10 indicative of increased solar radiance (Alley, 2000). Indeed, the number of cosmic rays reaching Earth's atmosphere are now at near record high levels thus indicating that Earth is currently experiencing historically low levels of solar activity (Lean, 2010; Lockwood, 2010). Lockwood (2010) argues that "the popular idea that solar changes are some kind of alternative to greenhouse gas forcing in explaining the rise in surface temperatures has no credibility with almost all climate scientists" (p. 323).

Text Box 2. Lowest Common Denominator Science at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The lack of confidence expressed by the IPCC with respect to whether climate change will generate stronger typhoons is an example of what Flannery (2005) describes as its tendency to engage in "lowest common denominator science" (p. 246). The operations of the IPCC demonstrate how the fossil fuel industry uses proxies to tone down, and slow down, its work. Although the fossil fuel industry is not directly represented at the IPCC it acquires a voice through the government appointees of fossil fuel dependent nations, such as those in the Middle East and the United States. When the IPCC issues any form of statement the world's largest oil exporter (Saudi Arabia), the world's largest oil user (the United States), and the world's largest coal burner (China) are eager to water down wording and slow progress. This imparts a tendency into the IPCC to always avoid any alarming or overly dramatic declarations. According to Flannery (2005), "the pronouncements of the IPCC do not represent main stream science, nor even good science, but lowest common denominator science" (p. 246). Shue (2014) echoes Flannery and regards "the conservative estimates made by the IPCC" to be a result of "the need to reach consensus on its reports" (p. 288).

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The Social Base of New Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Class Struggle and the Imperial Mode of Living

Wolfram Schaffar

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This research note addresses the question of the social base of new authoritarianism and sketches out new directions for future research. In Europe and the United States, this question has led to highly controversial debates between two camps. One side argues for a class analysis and sees a revolt of the disenfranchised and poor behind the electoral success of the right-wing populists. The other side draws on the concept of the Imperial Model of Living and focuses on a cross-class alliance in the North, defending their unsustainable consumption pattern, which rests on the exploitation of resources, sinks, and cheap labor from the South. It will be argued that a view from Southeast Asia – especially data from Thailand and the Philippines – has the potential to challenge some assumptions of this debate and add important insights. Here, a rising middle-class has been in the focus of the debate on democratization in the 1980s/1990s. Starting with the Asia Crisis in 1997/1998, the rise of the new authoritarianism has also been linked to middle-class mobilization. Finally, due to the proximity to China and historical links, the re-orientation of middle-classes towards China provides insights into the micro processes behind the shift in the global economic system.

Keywords: Imperial Mode of Living; Middle-Class; Multiple Crisis; New Authoritarianism

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THE SOCIAL BASE OF NEW AUTHORITARIANISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

By mid 2018, the authoritarian regimes in Thailand and in the Philippines appear fully consolidated. In Thailand, General Prayuth Chan-o-cha took over power in a coup d'état in May 2014. In the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte was elected president in June 2016. Both countries are important examples for the rise new authoritarianism in Southeast Asia because they put a spotlight on the social basis of new authoritarianism. What is remarkable in both cases is the role of the middle-classes in the process of toppling the democratic systems and consolidating the new authoritarian regimes. As of mid-2018, despite his record of over 10,000 extrajudicial killings, Duterte enjoys up to 85% support in the polls, with a strong base among the middle-class inside the Philippines as well as the Philippine diaspora abroad (Bello, 2018; Focus on the Global South, 2017). In Thailand, the general support for Prayuth is most probably not as high. However, the middle-class was instrumental in 'inviting' the coup d'état in May 2014 by mobilizations on the streets of Bangkok between November 2013 and March 2014 (Prajak, 2016; Veerayooth & Hewison, 2016).

This directs the attention to the social base of the new authoritarian regimes in general. In Europe and the USA, a lively and controversial debate has evolved concerning the rise of Donald Trump or the electoral successes of right-wing authoritarian populist parties in France, Germany, and other countries. The two competing interpretations are potentially irreconcilable: One side draws on ideas from Hochschild (2016) and Eribon (2013), who see the base of new authoritarian regimes among the disenfranchised poor who are the losers of neoliberal globalization and who have been abandoned by the Democrat Party in the US (McQuarrie, 2017) or the European Social Democratic Parties (Sablowski & Thien, 2018). As Candeias (2017, p. 2) summarizes Eribon (2013), "the electoral decision for right wing parties is an 'act of political self-defence' – a measure taken in order to appear in the political discourse at all, if only in the form of 'negative self-affirmation' ". These approaches see a distorted class struggle hidden behind the xenophobic and nationalist discourse – distorted, because the elites which are voted into power by the marginalized poor effectively continue to pursue the same neoliberal policies which are the root cause for their misery. The revolt of the working class is described as a passive revolution. It stays conservative and authoritarian since it turns against migrant workers, LGBTIQ* and women's rights, and since – despite of an anti-elite discourse – targets only state representatives and does not challenge the bourgeoisie (Demirović, 2018, p. 41; Sablowski & Thien, 2018).

This analysis is challenged by interventions like Silver (2016), Lessenich (2016), Brand & Wissen (2017), Eversberg (2018). Instead of a class conflict and passive revolution, they see a genuine cross-class alliance with a shared interest as the social basis of new authoritarianism. Central to this line of reasoning is the concept of the *imperial mode of living* – a heuristic concept and research program proposed by Brand & Wissen (2017, 2018a, 2018b, in press) which brings an ecological and global aspect into the debate on the rise of new authoritarianism. It highlights that the dominant Western consumption patterns of the capitalist world – food, goods of daily consumption, patterns of mobility, communication technology – rely on unequal access to resources, sinks, and cheap labor in the Global South. On the one hand, the incorporation of increasing parts of the global population into these consumption patterns stabilizes the growth-based economic system through the demand of consumption goods. The generalization of the imperial mode of living also has the effect to stabilize society through the hegemonic incorporation of large parts of the population into consumerist material well-being. On the other hand, however, the accelerated use of resources, sinks, and cheap labor – triggered by the generalization of the imperial mode of living – is the driving force behind the ecological crisis and the crisis of social reproduction.

Eversberg (2018) and Brand and Wissen (in press, p. 1-3) use this concept to explain the rise of new authoritarianism in the Global North. They see the line of confrontation as mainly between industrialized centers of the North who are trying to defend the imperial mode of living in the face of the multiple crises which unfold since 2008. Rising external violence at the borders and internally against political dissent are explained with the increasing crisis-prone nature of the unsustainable accumulation regime.

Some aspects of this debate are not entirely new: Sablowski and Thien (2018, p. 67) criticize that Lessenich (2016) and Eversberg (2018) replicate and radicalize Lenin's

thesis of a workers' aristocracy or an embourgeoisement of the proletariat. Based on these ideas, one should bear in mind that, in the wake of 1968, internationalist-oriented activist scholars drew the conclusion that the revolutionary subject would have to be found outside the centers of the industrialized world. Consequently, they turned their attention to the revolutionary movements in the 'Third World' (Balsen & Rössel, 1986; Gäng & Reiche, 1967; Horlemann, 1968).

How does this debate about new authoritarianism in the Global North link to the rise of authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia? The global view that Brand and Wissen (2017, pp. 95-123) introduce through their concept has two dimensions: First, a clear (conceptual) split between 'North' and 'South', in so far as the concept stresses that societies of the Global North draw on resources from the Global South through structural or direct violence. Another dimension is that the imperial mode of living – with its inbuilt tendency of generalization – becomes inscribed into societies of the Global South, too, especially in the dynamic capitalist societies of the Newly Industrialized Countries (Brand & Wissen, 2017, pp. 95-123, in press, pp. 1-2). Yet, Brand and Wissen (2017, pp. 109-110) also express their hope that new middle-classes in India and China will evolve as an emancipatory force, because they are exposed to the ecological consequences and the vicissitudes of this system in a more direct way than their Northern counterparts. Brand and Wissen (in press, p. 7) do stress that the situation is quite complex and concede that more research is needed. I argue that research on new authoritarianism in Southeast Asia is a promising field in this respect.

MIDDLE-CLASSES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Analyzes of the democratization in Southeast Asia during the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s heavily focused on middle-classes (Brown & Jones, 1995; Robison & Goodman, 1996). After years of economic growth – arguably a result of authoritarian developmental state policies – the *People Power* or EDSA movement in the Philippines toppled Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. In Thailand, the so-called *Mobile Mob* – Bangkok-based mass demonstrations of people who were recognized as middle-class by the mobile phones they used during the rallies – forced down the military in Thailand in 1992 (Anek, 1993; Callahan, 1998; Englehart, 2003; Ockey, 2004). The democratization processes were seen as an empirical proof of modernization theory, according to which economic growth brings about a rising middle-class which – on the basis of their education, but also of their life-style which allows them to take an interest in politics – starts demanding political participation (Lipset, 1960; Thompson, 1996; for a different analysis see Ji, 1997).

However, in both countries, shortly after the introduction of a multi-party system and free elections, the same middle-class movements – often with personal continuity of the leaders and, in the case of the Philippines, even using the same name – went against the popular elected governments. In 1999, the middle-class based *People Power II* or EDSAII movement forced elected president Joseph Estrada out of office. In Thailand in 2005/2006, activists who were behind the *Mobile Mob* in 1992 also were among those who mobilized against Thaksin Shinawatra (Pye & Schaffar, 2008). In both cases, the elected governments were attacked for being corrupt and populist,

since, in the wake of the Asia Crisis of 1997/1998, they promised the poor population welfare and social benefits (Aim & Arugay, 2015; Thompson, 2008, 2016).

The concept of the imperial mode of living gives us a powerful tool to re-conceptualize the orientation of middle-classes and its connection to class struggle. In the Philippines and in Thailand, the emergence of an urban middle-class the 1980s and 1990s can be characterized as spread of the imperial mode of living since their life-style rested on high consumption of resources and on cheap labor from the rural areas within the country – labor with predominantly informal forms of employment. When the Asia Crisis in 1997/1998 hit the region, this development was halted. Capital had to look for strategies to overcome the crisis and embraced different strategies of externalization. In Thailand, migrant workers from neighboring countries – Myanmar and Cambodia – were recruited to the production sites to lower the wages further. By the early 2000s, the number of migrant workers from Myanmar alone reached one and a half million (Eberle & Holliday, 2011; Kaur, 2010). The Philippines, under state sponsored programs for Philippinos/Philippinas to go abroad for work, became one the biggest exporters of cheap labor themselves (Rodriguez, 2010). It is against this background that processes of de-democratization unfolded.

In Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra offered a growth-based Keynesian economic policy, with investment in rural infrastructure, social security schemes, and access to consumer credits. This "new social contract" (Hewison, 2006, p. 503) promised the poor access to and a co-option into what can be called an 'imperial mode of living'. It was the basis for Thaksin's huge and continuing electoral success, but also the reason behind the middle-class mobilization against him which rejected this social contract and sought to defend middle-class privileges against the aspirations of the poor (Saxer, 2014). The Thai urban middle-class' chauvinism is most clearly expressed in the discourse on alternative development paradigms. The poor in the North and Northeast of Thailand, who voted for Thaksin and his growth-based Keynesian economic policy, are blamed to embrace 'unsustainable' and 'irresponsible' consumerism and are advised to follow a Buddhist-inspired middle-path idea of moderation under the guidance of the royal concept of *sufficiency economy* (Schaffar, 2018; Walker, 2008a, 2008b). This ongoing conflict culminated in an alliance between the urban middle-class and elites to abolish the entire democratic system (Saxer, 2014; Schaffar, 2018).

Sablowski (2018, p. 1) in his criticism of Brand and Wissen (2017) argues that the imperial mode of living should be seen as a life-style of the bourgeoisie, rather than as a mode of living in the Global North. In Thailand, there is no difference between the two views: The class distinction between the middle- and the working-class on the one side, and the distinction of life-styles between an imperial mode of living and the life of the poor (subsistence farmers and informal workers) on the other side fall in one.[1] Moreover, spatial distinctions between consumerist cities (Bangkok) and exploited countryside (North and Northeast) are articulated along the same lines, too. What Brand and Wissen analyze as a North-South divide, in Thailand appears as a class division and a spatial division within the country.

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1 For a more detailed class analysis and a summary of contested views see Somchai (2006), Ji (2009), Naruemon & McCargo (2011), Walker (2012) and Sopranzetti (2012).

The concept of imperial mode of living thus allows us to re-visit modernization theory and add the aspect of ecological limits of growth and the global dimension of the crisis. If the experience of Thailand can be generalized, the predictions of modernization theory concerning the political orientation of middle-classes have to be reversed: Under the impression of multiple crises, and due to the ecological limits of growth and the limits to externalization, a further generalization of the imperial mode of living and an incorporation of wider parts of the working-class into its confines meets its limits within the country. The ubiquitous discourse on sufficiency economy and Sustainable Development Goals in Thailand shows that the middle-class has a strong consciousness of ecological problems and of their own vulnerability to climate change and floods (Brand & Wissen, 2017, pp. 109-110). But contrary to the expectation of Brand and Wissen (2017, pp. 109-110), middle-classes in Newly Industrialized Countries – rather than becoming an emancipatory social force – seem to turn into a base for authoritarianism and fascism (Bello, 2018; Schaffar, 2018).

However, another dynamic can also be observed and needs further investigation: Obviously, the anti-democratic movement in Thailand not only consisted of middle-class people, but also comprised unions and workers (Pye & Schaffar, 2008), part of which were incorporated into the alliance through a nationalist xenophobic (anti-Cambodian and anti-Myanmar) discourse (Pavin, 2015). This points to an interpretation along the lines of Demirović (2018) as well as Sablowski and Thien (2018). The trajectory of the Philippines, where President Duterte is supported by 85% of the population, demands for an explanation for this broad cross-class alliance, too. Bello (this volume) argues along the same lines and speaks of a passive revolution by which the poor are integrated into the authoritarian project of Duterte. However, he also points to a further complication: The vast number of Philippine migrant workers are known to be the strongest supporters of Duterte. Bello suggests analyzing their class-affiliation as two-fold: Frist, inside the Philippines, they count as middle-class in terms of their education, consumption patterns, and self-identification. Second, abroad they are part of a cheap reserve army of labor according to the kind of jobs available to them. This transnational electoral base with its ambiguous class affiliation provide a rich field of research where further studies are needed – studies bringing together debates in and on the Global North with debates in and on Southeast Asia.

One more aspect of this empirical field is worth mentioning. Middle-classes in most countries of Southeast Asia are closely connected to urban overseas Chinese who arrived in subsequent waves and – after periods of political marginalization and even prosecution – today are fully integrated into the societies of the countries (Menkhoff & Gerke, 2002). The support of authoritarian governments in Thailand and the Philippines, however, coincides with the re-orientation of Chinese descendent middle-classes towards China (Somsak, 2016). Kasian (2017) provided an in-depth analysis of the Thai development, where cultural and habitual orientation comes with a political orientation and support of authoritarianism. Kneuer and Demmelhuber (2016), however, convincingly show that the tendency goes beyond the Thai case.

This opens the question to what extent we can conceptualize the imperial mode of living as a 'Western' phenomenon only. As it seems, with the rise of China as the new center of global economy, a new, equally unsustainable, but 'non-Western' imperial

mode of living is gaining ground and is becoming the hegemonic base for the new China-centered accumulation cycle. Can we speak therefore of a Chinese imperial mode of living? Does it constitute a new and different pattern, or does it simply replicate the 'Western' imperial mode of living, with different shades?

In the Global South, the re-orientation to China – explicitly performed by the authoritarian governments in the Philippines and Thailand (Focus on the Global South, 2017; Jory, 2017) – is presented and legitimized by with a post-colonial (or decolonial) flavor, as a shift away from Western domination towards an Asian alternative. Sometimes this shift is even connected with the hope for a different, non-neoliberal, and more sustainable version of development (Hoering, 2018; Solmecke, 2016, 2018). It seems, however, that the heavily growth-based Chinese economic projects, such as the Belt-and-Road Initiative in its present shape, are as much a "false alternative", as the Green New Deal[2] (Brand & Wissen, 2017, pp. 147-164). The post-colonial pose of this turn towards China and towards a Chinese version of globalization, also serves as legitimization of the rejection of Western liberalism and of democracy as such. In the search of a progressive internationalism, this ideological cleavage will be difficult to overcome.

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2 *Green New Deal* is an umbrella term referring to stimulus packages and investment programs, which were discussed in the wake of the multiple crisis of 2007/2008, such as the policies outlined in French, Renner & Gardener (2009).

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"Trust Me, I Am the One Who Will Drain the Swamp": An Interview With Walden Bello on Fascism in the Global South

Wolfram Schaffar

▸ Schaffar, W. (2018). "Trust me, I am the one who will drain the swamp": An interview with Walden Bello on fascism in the Global South. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 11*(1), 149-155.

Since the election of Narendra Modi in India in 2014 and Donald Trump in the USA in 2016, political analysts and commentators around the globe have increasingly used the concept of fascism to capture the rise of new right-wing authoritarianism in various countries. Activists and academics in Europe are much more reluctant to use the word fascism, for several reasons. One reason is that – because of the alarming associations which fascism evokes in German – the term was often instrumentalized, and used to discredit political opponents, without a sound theoretical analysis. There is also a big reluctance to transfer the term to countries outside Europe, especially to the countries in the South – because it would further relativize the concept. Walden Bello is a prominent voice who started using the concept of fascism since early 2017 for the new regime under Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. He repeated his analysis of Duterte as a "fascist original" and his regime as "creeping fascism" at the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) in July 2017 as well as in recent articles (Bello, 2017). In October 2017, Bello was among the founding members of a new group, the *Laban ng Masa* coalition to combat the "fascist" policy of Duterte (Villanueva, 2017). In his most recent paper in the *Journal of Peasant Studies,* he broadened his analysis and compared the rise of Fascism in Italy in the 1920s with the establishment of the New Order under Suharto in Indonesia in 1964/1965, Chile at times of the coup d'état in 1973, Thailand in 1976, and the Philippines today (Bello, 2018). With his articles and his political campaigns, he opened a new chapter of academic discussion and political activism on fascism in the South. Walden Bello is currently a professor of sociology at the State University of New York at Binghamton and senior research fellow at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies of Kyoto University in Japan. He served as a member of the House of Representatives of the Philippines from 2009 to 2015, during which he was chairman of the Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs. In our interview conducted in December 2017, we discussed theoretical problems in dealing with the concept of fascism as well as strategic challenges for political activism.

Keywords: Fascism; Middle-Class; New Authoritarianism; Philippines; Thailand

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Wolfram Schaffar: *Since early 2017, you started using the word fascism for the new regime under Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. Recently, in a meeting of academics and activists from different parts of the world on the current rise of authoritarianism, many participants from the South rejected the analysis of a new fascism as too alarming and Eurocentric. They argued that in the South, people have continuously been exposed to authoritarian regimes of different kinds. Now, you do use the term fascism, you use it for regimes and movements outside Europe, at different historic periods, and with an explicit political agenda. What is the basis of your analysis?*

Walden Bello: Since the post-war period there have been several right-wing dictatorships that have taken over a number of countries in the South. Rather than stressing too much the nomenclature – whether to use fascist, neo-fascist, or something else – for me the important thing in terms of looking at these movements in the South has been the counter-revolutionary aspect that they have. Are they a counter-revolutionary force, reacting to an upsurge of the left or a reaction to a failure of liberal democracy to deliver the goods? The other thing important to me has been the role of the middle-class. In quite many countries where right-wing dictatorships took over, these two aspects – counter-revolution against a perceived revolutionary threat or a counterrevolution in the sense of disaffection with liberal democracy and the central role of the middle-class in these movements – have been really the focus of my attention. When people say that we always had such phenomena in the Global South I think, that on the one hand that's true. But what I would say, though, is that, on the other hand not all these dictatorships that have prevailed in the South would count as counter-revolutionary or fascist. Some of them would be just pure predatory governments such as the government of Mobutu in the Congo in Africa and Marcos in the Philippines. In my study, I have looked at Indonesia, Chile, Thailand, and the Philippines at different historic periods (Bello, 2018). What I think distinguishes these regimes is the counter-revolutionary aspect that they have. That would fit the fascist tag.

Schaffar: *Now one thing you are mentioning is this disaffection with liberal democracy. Isn't that a little bit too weak? Fascism in the 1930s came as a reaction to an enormous economic crisis. Wouldn't you see an economic trigger and not just disaffection with liberal democracy?*

Bello: Well right, what I understand from my acquaintance with European history is that fascism certainly in Italy and in Germany were responses to what was perceived as threats from the left. Whether real or not, there was a strong perception that the left was the enemy. I think the secondary aspect of this process was a disaffection with liberal democracy. This disaffection took different forms in France, Britain, or in Germany. But the disaffection with liberal democracy was about the perception that it had proven to be a weak barrier against the rise of the left. Moreover, many classes in Germany and France had never been reconciled to the emergence of democracy. Now, in terms of the countries that I have looked at in my study (Bello, 2018), this certainly is very much the case in the Philippines. I think the left is quite weak in the Philippines, so I don't think that the mobilization of the middle-class for Duterte could be explained with a revolutionary threat. But what happened is that the middle-class, which was behind the 1986 EDSA[1] uprising and was a central force behind bringing forth democracy in the Philippines, basically has now turned around, precisely because the expectations that had come with the liberal government were not fulfilled. From being the base of a EDSA revolution now the middle-class has become the base of Dutertismo because of the failure of the EDSA uprising.

1 EDSA is the acronym for Epifanio de los Santos Avenue in Metro Manila. Since all major demonstrations took place on this highway, it stands for the uprising against President Marcos. Walden Bello also uses the term "EDSA republic" for the political system which was established after the ousting of Marcos.

Fascism comes in different ways in different countries. But there are some similarities with respect to Thailand, which I also have looked at in my study. In 1992 the democratic upsurge, which people thought would finally put an end to authoritarian rule, was a middle-class based revolution. But when that system and the emergence of Thaksin began to provide the opportunity for the lower classes to organize for class demands, then the middle-class goes into a different direction, which is to endorse the right-wing military regime. So, this is the difference between the disaffection with liberal democracy in the European interwar period and what we see right now happening in some countries in the South like the Philippines and Thailand.

Schaffar: *Thailand seems to be a very clear case: The rural poor make good use of the electoral system, the middle-class feels threatened and demands to abolish the entire system of voting, introduces this corporatist way of political representation, very close to 1920's Portuguese* estato novo*. But in the Philippines, we are struck by the rate of approval which Duterte enjoys. If Duterte is supported by currently 85% of the population, then it's more than the middle-class. It seems to be a broad class alliance.*

Bello: Yes definitely, I would be the first to say that large numbers of people that are marginalized at some point – workers in traditional industries, the poor – were definitely part of the electoral wave that brought Duterte to power. But when I am talking about the middle-class, I focus on ideological activists – the people who dominate the internet, the people who express their anger in all sorts of ways via the internet. These are not working-class people, these are definitely middle-class people, including a whole range from lower-middle-class people to the elite who are very much supportive of Duterte. In the case of the Philippines, there is definitely more than a middle-class base. But the distinction I make is that – drawing on Gramsci's concept of active and passive revolution – the middle-class has an active consensus whereas the poor classes are more passive.[2] Their link is also weak. Especially now, that it is becoming clear that the people who were being killed by the regime are mainly from poor communities. There is a wider and wider acceptance that Duterte, in his so called "war on drugs", is waging a war against the poor. This is why Duterte's base among the poor is eroding; slightly perhaps at this point, but it is going to be a big problem if the government does not deliver in terms of economic goods or social reform. That will determine the future of this regime: Will it deliver on social reform?

Schaffar: *Do you have an explanation why in so many countries new authoritarianism/ fascism comes exactly at this point of time, both in the North and the South?*

Bello: What unites the North and the South has really been the experience of globalization, the kind of corporate-driven globalization with its accompanying neoliberalism

2 Antonio Gramsci's distinction between an "active" and "passive revolution" was a contribution to the Marxist debate on the nature of fascism in the early 1930s (Gramsci, 2011). The question was in how far fascism has to be analyzed as purely reactionary and counter-revolutionary, or also shows revolutionary elements. Gramsci argues that there are revolutionary elements to be considered – albeit in a short-lived, top down process, where subaltern masses are incorporated only passively. A "passive revolution" in his sense describes the development of a new political formation without any reordering of social relations.

which has created tremendous problems in the North in terms of the expectations and institutions that supported the working-class. In the United States, we have seen that with the base of Trump. Those are people who have been hurt by globalization. The same happened in the South, for example, with the kind of economic regimes that were promoted by the EDSA republic.[3] The common denominator has been that all regimes in the North and in the South endorsed neoliberal policies, and these neoliberal policies have now created all these undercurrent impacts. This is what unites phenomena of rising right-wing movements in the North as well as in the South.

Schaffar: *You are also writing that in the Philippines, there is not much of an ideological orthodoxy. Duterte has no real program – neither political nor economic. But who are the drivers, what are their economic interests? Fascism in the 1920 in northern Italy was about securing the capitalist interests. Is there something that compares to that? Is there a political economy of new authoritarianism?*

Bello: Depending on the country where it manifests itself, authoritarianism or fascism has its own unique features. In Thailand, what we are seeing is the effort by middle-class to create an ideology that would attack the very basis of democratic rule, which is the majority rule. It is basically the effort to institutionalize this in a system with an Upper House consisting of 250 people that will be hand-picked by the military, and which will be able to overturn any kind of legislation coming from the national assembly. In the discourse, you find a cherry-picking from different theories of democracy – the idea that you need a body that would act as a break on the masses, this notion of the *tyranny of the majority*. We find this kind of re-articulation of conservative drives with some aspects of traditional democratic ideology, coming together and trying to institutionalize it in the new constitution.

In the Philippines, there is no ideology like that. What you have is a discursive style where the president basically leads. He is creating this image, that the country is suffering from what has been brought about by the Yellow Forces[4] – parts of the traditional elite and all these forces in the past that had adopted Western notions of human rights, Western notions of democracy, but were out of touch with what people really wanted. These were also the people who were corrupt. But it is not articulated in a more coherent ideological form. It is more of an image, it is more of a discourse. The notion of coherence of Duterismo, to some extent, would be like that of Mussolini or Hitler, although there was much more of ideological content of course – both Hitler and Mussolini; Duterte does not have that.

Schaffar: *You also pointed out that migrants – the Philippino/as outside the Philippines – are among the most ardent supporters of Duterte. The same may be true for Thailand, where many Thai abroad are supporting the military regime. Why is that so?*

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3 The political system and the governments following the overthrow of the Marco regime.

4 Yellow Forces refer to the people who got into power after the overthrow of Marcos during the EDSA or Yellow revolution. It is sometimes called Yellow revolution due to the presence of yellow ribbons in the demonstration following the assassination of Ninoy Aquino in 1983 – one starting point of the 1986 EDSA revolution.

Bello: I think if you look at the class affiliation of Philippino/as abroad, quite a number of them are from the lower middle-class: People who are educated but have no economic opportunities in the country, who think that a lot of the problems of the country come from political corruption. Many of them also feel that the big oligarchy has really controlled the country and that the solution to that is a strongman to break that oligarchy as well as to imprison the corrupt politicians. I think this simplistic view is a very strong motivation, which they share with the middle-class people inside the Philippines. The simple issues that people focus on are corruption and oligarchy, and the idea that an authoritarian leader like Duterte is going to break that. So even though they are in a working-class occupation, say in Europe or in the Middle East, their ideological cast is still very much in the middle-class. The structural analysis, which focuses on land grabbing in the Philippines, on globalization, on the structures that keep the Philippines marginalized in the global economy, is ignored. Also, many of the people who are abroad are women who have left their families behind. They have been particularly permeable to the appeals of Duterte's war on drugs. This idea that all that they have worked for will be taken away by drug addicts who will corrupt their children is a very effective electoral mechanism and Duterte was able to appeal.

Schaffar: *You have set up new coalition in the Philippines countering Duterte's politics. What is the specific strategy? When we look into history for instance, Otto Bauer in Austria strongly argued to defend parliamentarism as a strategy to counter fascism, because they were confident that they would win on the parliamentary floor. But if – according to your analysis – the parliament and the democratic institutions as we know them are discredited, what can be our vision to argue for, in order to counter new authoritarianism?*

Bello: There is definitely a lot of educational effort that needs to be done, because we cannot be defending a system that has failed. Clearly what happened in the Philippines was that the elites – economic and political elites – were able to hijack the EDSA revolution. The economic structures were frozen. At the same time there was electoral competition, but only electoral competition among the elites. What we need to do is to move people to understand that the reason the EDSA revolution failed was that it was corrupted by the elites which brought the system into an anti-democratic direction. We need to fight for a thorough economic change: Pushing for completing the land reform and fighting for the right of labor. On the democratic front we need to move from a system of very limited representative democracy to a more participatory democracy. As you can see it's a tall order at this point in time. On the one hand, you have to defend an open system, but at the same time not defend the processes and the discourse that in fact led it to become quite ineffective. This is a challenge of the left all over at this point of time. How do we divorce ourselves from the formal democracies that have been corrupted by corporate driven globalization and have a different vision that is much more profoundly democratic? I think that is really the big challenge to all of us at this point of time. It's a big challenge because I think whether it's in the North or in the South, the big enemy that we are up against are authoritarian figures like Trump that promise simplistic solutions. "Trust me, I am the one who will drain the swamp" – that is what he says about the elites in Washington, establishing this personalist relationship between him as an authoritarian figure and

the people. This is what figures like Trump and Duterte have in common, and we will be having more and more figures like them coming up on the political scene all over.

Schaffar: *Did it help your discussions and your political campaigns in the Philippines to call Duterte a fascist? Does it trigger something in the Philippines' discourse? Obviously, it doesn't trigger that much in Thailand.*

Bello: The problem we have in the Philippines is that, to some extent, "fascist" to many people is still a foreign word. Although some of us might feel that it expresses precisely what the regime is all about, in that it combines a charismatic figure with a middle-class based authoritarian project. Maybe we need to have a better term for it, but for the meantime, popularizing what fascism means, is the best way to go. First, we need to break down what we mean by fascist. And then we need to engage people to think whether this is what Duterte fits to, whether we agree with the future that he is offering. The discourse is going to be one of the terrains, and so far we still have to win the battle on discourse, because the Duterte discourse obviously has captured quite a number of people.

Schaffar: *A final question: Considering the correlations and mechanisms in different countries, what would be an international answer, an international strategy to counter these new authoritarian / fascist tendencies?*

Bello: I think it would be extremely important to link up with kindred spirits everywhere. But the analytical expertise has to go hand-in-hand with the political effort. I think international solidarity will be very important at two levels: One is of course exchanging our analysis of these different regimes, and secondly, forming links across borders in which we will be able to help one another in terms of support of our particular new progressive projects. But I think definitely, international solidarity, both at the discursive level, the ideological level, and the level of actual mutual support will be extremely important.

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Book Review: Robinson, B. G. (2018). The Killing Season. A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66.

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▸ Duile, T. (2018). Book review: Robinson, B. G. (2018). The killing season. A history of the Indonesian massacres, 1965-66. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 11(1)*, 157-159.

More than half a century after the bloody eradication of the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI), irrational fears of alleged communists still haunt the archipelago. In recent years, a coalition of the military and conservative Muslim groups has increased its efforts to keep these imagined enemies alive in order to discredit any endeavors to come to terms with the past. While there have been previous efforts by civil society organizations and even by the National Commission of Human Rights to seek the truth, recent years have seen a setback for reconciliation. Narratives originating from the Suharto era have been revitalized to depict the PKI as a latent threat to the nation.

In this political context, it is a pleasant fact that the academic debate continues. Geoffrey B. Robinson, professor at the Department of History at the University of California in Los Angeles and expert in the study of genocide and human rights as well as in modern Indonesian history, has recently contributed to this debate with his book *The Killing Season. A History of the Massacres, 1965-66*. After providing a brief overview of the history of the mass killings and the preliminary events, the author critically discusses patterns of explanation in academic and non-academic discourse in the first chapter. In doing so, Robinson stresses the importance of cultural, psychological, and socio-economic factors for the killings. However, the author also points out the shortcoming of these approaches. Cultural approaches such as patters of "running amok", for instance, are criticized for being reductionist and unable to explain the program of mass arbitrary detention that lasted even after the killings had come to an end. Socio-economic explanations, to draw on another example, are said to be unable to explain why these tensions escalated to mass killings. Additionally, the international context is taken into account: While repudiating analyses that state that the mass killings were mainly a result of a conspiracy by foreign forces such as the MI6 (Secret Intelligence Service) and CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) – a popular approach among leftist circles in Indonesia – Robinson nevertheless argues that "in the absence of support from powerful states and in a different international context, the army's program of mass killings and incarceration would not have happened" (p. 22). The international context plays a considerable role throughout the book and Robinson dedicates Chapter 4 (Cold War) to the international circumstances and Chapter 7 (A Gleam of Light in Asia) to the role of foreign forces. He argues that Western states, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, played a crucial role and it can be shown that even long before the coup, Western forces sought to delegitimize Indonesia's first

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president Sukarno and the PKI by both supporting and encouraging anti-communist parties. Robinson shows that following the alleged coup of 30 September 1965, foreign forces have facilitated the violence against the PKI in economic, military, and logistic matters. Taking into account Cold War politics, he shows that Western powers contributed to the rewriting of the events and Indonesian history by the army. It is not just Cold War conditions that fueled tensions between communists and anti-communists in Indonesia. The split between the Soviet Union and China, and Sukarno's decision to ally with China, are, according to Robinson, the main reasons why the Soviet Union was reluctant to protect fellow communists in Indonesia. Additionally, the author points out that international institutions and networks within civil society concerned with human rights were still weak at that time. The killings therefore gained almost no attention on the international stage.

Historical conditions, as Robinson stresses, are also crucial to understand the developments in Indonesia after the alleged coup. In Chapter 2, the author provides an overview of these conditions and points out several of their features, namely the ideological split between communist and right-wing factions within the Indonesian Revolution, narratives depicting the PKI as hostile to the nation, militarism resulting from the process of state formation, the army's tradition of working together with civilian militia, and the historical precondition of mass mobilization and militancy within Indonesian politics prior to 1965.

The main part of the book, however, deals with the role of the Indonesian army. The author proves that the pattern of violence suggests a pivotal role for the army's leadership in provoking tensions between PKI and PKI-affiliated organizations on the one hand and religious and other right-wing forces on the other hand. Similar patterns can be found when it comes to the way in which mass killings, arrests, tortures, rapes, and other crimes in collaboration with paramilitaries and militias were facilitated and organized. This is illuminated in detail in Chapters 5, 6, and 8. Contrary to the hegemonic narrative in Indonesia that the violence was a rather spontaneous outbreak of *amok* of the people against the communists, and, unlike approaches stressing socio-economic conditions, Robinson instead focuses on the army's role which is an important contribution to the Indonesian debate.

Chapter 9 deals with the efforts of the New Order regime to stigmatize and control former prisoners and alleged communists. Finally, in Chapter 10, measures for reconciliation and truth seeking in post-Suharto Indonesia (with a focus on recent years) are discussed, as well as the successful efforts of the anti-communist coalition of politicians, military officials, religious authorities, and paramilitary groups. The final chapter of the book provides a conclusion and discusses the legacies of the killings.

It becomes clear throughout the book that the main lines of argumentation and the focus on the army, international contexts, and historical conditions are highly influenced by the author's academic background as he is an expert not only on genocides and mass violence in general but also on Indonesian history. Indeed, Robinson shows his profound expertise in his detailed explanations. I found Robinson's book a very interesting read, offering new insights especially when it comes to the military's role. A profound insight into the army's norms and patterns of behavior and perception (what Robinson terms "institutional culture"), and the repertoire of

violence inherent in that institutional culture can also help to explain more recent developments in Indonesian politics. These insights are most of all important for the Indonesian discussion, since a large part of the population still perceives the army as the nation's savior and a critical view of the army is discussed only in limited circles of leftist activists and among very few scholars. Therefore, an Indonesian translation of Robinson's work would be highly desirable.

From a political economic perspective, however, the minor discussion of socio-economic conditions could be criticized. It would be misleading to stress the role of the army or the international circumstances at the expense of socio-economic conditions, since the latter falls into a different category of claims. The category of socio-economic conditions might rather fit into what Robinson terms "historical condition". Here, the author discusses important components of a political perspective. He does so convincingly and in great detail, but rather in a manner of discussing ideologies, worldviews, and the army's self-conception according to its history. Adding more information about economic tensions, for instance, between peasants and plantation workers on the one hand and local aristocrats, Islamic institutions, and the military on the other, could enrich the analysis of the historical conditions leading to the mass killings and incarceration. Regarding the historical conditions, it could also be added that the split between communist and religious forces was not the only or even the main condition, at least at the beginning. Emerging from the struggle for independence, there were plenty of efforts to merge Islam and communism of which Sukarno's concept of NASAKOM (an acronym of *nasionalisme, agama* (religion) and *komunisme*) is only the most well-known (e.g., Cribb & Kahin, 2004, pp. 286-287).

In conclusion, Robinson's work is a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate on the 1965 events that draws on a rich body of primary and secondary sources. The book is an easy read when it comes to language and an enlightening read when it comes to the details of army operation and strategies. It is a must-read for Indonesianists, and many parts of the book might also draw the attention of people dedicated to genocide and military studies in general.

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