

The Global Context of Regime Change

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Prepared for the *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Democratization*

**FIRST DRAFT: August 13, 2013
THIS DRAFT: August 15, 2013**

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Over half a century ago John Smail outlined a vision for an “autonomous history” of Southeast Asia, one in which the colonial encounter was one moment in the long trajectory of Southeast Asian history (Smail 1961). This perspective rejects both the traditional colonial history in which major historical shifts in Southeast Asian polities are understood wholly through the eyes of an external actor, and the “anti-colonial history” which perceives the colonizer in negative terms but nevertheless adopts the same Eurocentric perspective. This chapter follows Smail’s approach to understand international influences on regime change in Southeast Asia. Regime change in Southeast Asia always reflects national political concerns, domestic social and economic conflict and local histories, but global politics everywhere mediates the dynamics of regime survival, breakdown, and transition.

The focus of this chapter is conceptual and descriptive. I outline six mechanisms through which external forces may shape regime change in Southeast Asia: colonial legacies, direct intervention, great power politics, international linkage, external economic shocks, and global ideas. Multiple mechanisms are frequently at play at the same time in particular cases of regime change, and in important instances such as the removal of Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, the exact nature of international influence remains contested. Nevertheless, detailing the six mechanisms clarifies the possible relationships between domestic political change and global forces in the post-independence era, and outlines an agenda for inquiry on how local regime dynamics in Southeast Asia are embedded in the broader changes in the global political economy.

Following Smail, nothing in this chapter implies that domestic politics is unimportant or even secondary for understanding regime change in Southeast Asia. I will not argue, for example, that Cold War rivalry caused the rise of the New Order, or that international linkage with the United States and the Catholic Church was drove Philippine democratization in 1986. The more modest claim is that global factors always shape democratization processes, in

Southeast Asia and elsewhere, and that in no instance is it possible to conceptualize or describe regime dynamics in Southeast Asia without systematic reference to the external environment in which regime change take place. One implication of this argument, however, is that the widely-lamented disciplinary divide between “comparative politics” and “international relations” is particularly unhelpful for area-focused scholarship. Southeast Asianists must always be sensitive to the global context of regime change, and work on Southeast Asian politics that embraces the interaction between domestic and global political forces warrants particular celebration. A second implication is that moving from constitutive to causal arguments about the effects of global forces on regime change in Southeast Asia is the frontier for contemporary research on the global context of regime change.

For the purposes of this chapter, I conceptualize democracy and democratization in minimalist terms (Alvarez et al. 1996). Democracies are political regimes in which the executive and legislative branches of government are chosen through free, fair, and irreversible elections. The terms dictatorship, authoritarianism, and non-democracy all refer to regimes that are defined by the absence of these three characteristics. Political regimes, in turn, are the “system of rules and practices that determine who has political rights, how they can be exercised, and with what effects for the control over the state” (Przeworski et al. 2000: 18). Because not all democratic regimes and dictatorial regimes are identical, it follows that there are four logical types of regime change, of which democratization is one. Table 1 catalogues these four types of regime change, with examples drawn from Southeast Asia.

Table 1: Typology of Regime Change with Southeast Asian Examples

Successor Regime	
<i>Dictatorship</i>	<i>Democracy</i>

Initial regime	<i>Dictatorship</i>	Dictatorial regime change Example: Guided Democracy to New Order in Indonesia	Democratization Example: EDSA I Revolution in the Philippines
	<i>Democracy</i>	Democratic breakdown Examples: 1969 in Malaysia 2006 coup in Thailand	Democratic regime change Example: n/a

Dictatorial regime change refers to change from one dictatorship to another, whereas democratic regime change refers to change from one democratic regime to another.¹

Democratization and democratic breakdowns are changes between regime types. Note that global forces may be said to affect regime dynamics not only when they cause regime change, or shape the process of regime change, but also when they *prevent or delay* regime change.

Importantly, the concept of political liberalization is distinct from democratization, and political liberalization may take place within either a democracy or a dictatorship. Liberalization of a dictatorship does not imply that the regime has democratized, as illustrated by the liberalizing reforms in contemporary Burma that have left the military regime in power. Political liberalization in a procedurally democratic regime involves the progressive extension of civil and political rights and protections to citizens. In sum, the conceptual model of how regimes vary in this chapter is based on a taxonomic hierarchy that distinguishes democratic regimes from the set of all regimes, supplemented by a series of “family resemblance” categories (Collier and Mahon 1993) that clarify the different features of democratic regimes and the extent to which they approach the ideal of a liberal democracy.

¹ Democratic regime change is the most difficult type of regime change to observe. Constitutional reforms that involve shifts from presidentialism to parliamentarism, or from indirect to direct executive elections, might be interpreted as democratic regime change. Here, I follow Przeworski et al. in defining regime change such that any constitutional change enacted *through existing legal channels* does not connote democratic regime change.

While conceptualizing and explaining political liberalization in Southeast Asian states is an important task, this chapter focuses on regime transitions.

Armed with this understanding of democracy, political regimes, and regime change, the following sections of this chapter outline the six mechanisms that link global context to regime change. In the conclusion I return to the topic of disciplinary organization of Southeast Asian politics and its implications for the study of democratization, and explore some new directions for research on the global context of regime change.

Colonial legacies

The deep and lasting impact of colonialism on Southeast Asian politics is obvious, and warrants no discussion as a general phenomenon. Its relationship to regime change in the post-independence era comes primarily through the long run legacies of colonial rule as reflected in the configurations of social and economic power in post-independence states. Colonial legacies help to define, at least in part, who the relevant actors are in contemporary politics, and therefore the implications of regime change for the distribution of power within Southeast Asian polities.

The impact of colonial legacies on regime change is easiest to see in the cases of the Philippines and Vietnam. Powerful oligarchic families have long played an influential role in Philippine politics, resulting in a pattern of political organization often described as bossism. Sidel (1999: 5-19) argues that bossism emerged not simply because of the presence of landed oligarchic families, but rather through the distinctive process of state formation under American rule, which in turn was shaped the lineages of the Spanish colonial presence (see also Hutchcroft 1999: 23-30). The implications of the political dominance of oligarchs for Philippine democratization—and the links between the current oligarchy and the Spanish and American colonial administrations—are neatly captured in Anderson's (1988) analysis of Corazon Aquino's administration, which rode to power through populist mobilization but

quickly settled into a narrow and fractious coalition. Regime change in the Philippines, which necessarily reflects battles among oligarchic families as much as it does the fight for popular voice and accountability, follows patterns whose origins lie in the Spanish and American periods.

The French colonial regime in Indochina shaped post-independence regime dynamics in Vietnam, but in a very different way. Vu (2010: 105-108) notes that the French colonial regime relied to a large extent on traditional structures of political authority, preserving the monarchy and making relatively few contributions to economic development. French rule was most consequential in its final years, during Vietnam's independence struggle, during which French opposition to Vietnamese independence led them to sponsor an alternative to Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the semi-autonomous State of Vietnam under former emperor Bao Dai, to be succeeded after 1954 by the Republic of Vietnam under Ngo Dinh Diem. French forces were also instrumental in taming the "wild South" and helping to prepare it for Diem's rule (Chapman 2013: 13-39; McHale 2013). In this way, the long conflict between competing visions of the Vietnamese state and the political regime that would rule it was, if not set in motion, at least prolonged and sharpened by the legacies of French colonial rule. Overlaying Vietnam's anti-independence struggle, of course, was the broader question of a revolutionary socialist independence movement (the DRV) versus a pliable nationalist and anti-communist government (RV), which implicated the United States and other allies; I treat this more extensively below under the mechanisms of "Direct intervention" and "Great power politics."

Differences in colonial rule across Southeast Asian states, in turn, yield different kinds of domestic conflict over political regimes. For example, the landowning oligarchs in the Philippines have no close analogue in most of Indonesia, a result of the different nature of Dutch colonial rule and the social and political transformations that accompanied Indonesian independence. The absence of a legacy of landed oligarchs meant, first, that no landed

oligarchy entrenched itself during the early post-independence period (as in the Philippines); second, that New Order Indonesia could be centralized to a degree almost unimaginable by Marcos; and third, that Indonesian democratization in 1998 did not feature the same kind of struggles among landed oligarchs as found in the Philippines before and after the Marcos regime. To be sure, local political and economic elites have emerged in the post-New Order period, but only after democratization, implying a different kind of local bossism in post-New Order Indonesia than in other Southeast Asian cases (see Sidel 2005). Colonial legacies in these examples are not *causes* of democratization, they are the background conditions that shape the *consequences* of democratization.

These cases illustrate just some of the ways in which colonial legacies matter for regime dynamics—including democratization but also democratic breakdown and dictatorial regime change—in post-colonial Southeast Asia. There are many others, including the importation of plantation and mining labor to Malaysia and its implications for ethnic politics in Malaysia, British rule in Burma “establishing the primacy of coercion in state-society relations” (Callahan 2003: 21-44), and even the effects of British and French territorial advances in mainland Southeast Asia on the development of Thailand’s powerful bureaucracy (Stifel 1976). The lineages of colonialism are readily apparent in post-independence regime change—when Malaysia’s Barisan Nasional was promulgated in the wake of the 1969 elections, when Ne Win seized power in 1962 and when Saw Maung put down the 8888 Uprising in 1988, and in each military coup wresting control from an elected Thai government. Yet they are comparatively less spectacular than the most visible mechanism through which international forces shape regime change in Southeast Asia: direct foreign intervention.

Direct foreign intervention

By intervention, I mean the deliberate use by a foreign country of military or intelligence forces to implement regime change.² While this is the most spectacular mechanism through which external forces can shape regime change, it is empirically the rarest. The clearest case of direct foreign intervention is the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979, leading to the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime and the installation of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (Carney 1982; Slocomb 2003). The Pathet Lao victory over the Royal Lao government in 1975 represents a second instance of direct foreign intervention for regime change, as the Pathet Lao benefited from direct military support from the North Vietnamese Army (Dommen 1979; Stuart-Fox 1980).

A third case of dictatorial regime change through direct foreign intervention is the November 1963 coup in South Vietnam, which led to the arrest and execution of Ngo Dinh Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu and precipitated the transition from Diem's regime to the Second Republic of Vietnam, which lasted until 1975. The exact role of the United States Central Intelligence Agency in the coup against Diem remains a subject of debate. The infamous Cable 243 makes clear that the United States government found Nhu intolerable, and that it was unwilling to support Diem so long as his brother remained in a position of power. There is also rich documentary evidence of the Kennedy administration's discussion of the possibility of a coup, and of monetary support provided by the CIA to the South Vietnamese officers who carried out the coup (see e.g. Prados 2003). In the context of the close yet fraught relationship between the United States and Diem in the 1950s and early 1960s (see, recently, Chapman 2013; Miller 2013), this suffices to classify the Diem coup as an instance of direct foreign intervention.

² Note that this definition excludes the use of foreign military or development aid to prop up a foreign ally, and likewise the withdrawal of such aid in order to destabilize a former ally. These are treated separately below.

Beyond these instances, however, there are no further of direct intervention by foreign countries for the purposes of regime change.³ Much more common are cases of indirect foreign pressure as a result of great power politics.

Great power politics

Some of the most contested debates in Southeast Asian politics during the Cold War era involve distinguishing direct foreign intervention at moments of regime change versus the indirect—yet no less political and no less significant—effects of great power politics. In this conceptual space, we may locate not only the obvious roles of the US, Soviet Union, China, and other powers in shaping the fates of North and South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, but also the rise of the New Order in Indonesia, of successive conservative military regimes in Thailand, the short constitutional democratic era in Malaysia, the rise and fall of Marcos in the Philippines. Even the development and implementation of a Burmese Way to Socialism following Ne Win's coup refracted great power competition in its eschewal of alignment and embrace of autarky and a local interpretation of Marxism.

The Indochinese cases are the signature illustration of great power politics in Southeast Asia. Beyond the direct intervention of the US in Vietnamese politics in the coup against Diem, and of Vietnam in Laos and Cambodia, the trajectories of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese politics from independence until 1975 were fundamentally shaped by extensive US and allied assistance to the governments of Lon Nol and Souvanna Phouma (Castle 1995; Clymer 2007). Unlike the case of Diem, there is no compelling evidence that the US or any Western ally directed or funded the 1970 coup that brought Lon Nol to power, although Lon Nol's government was considered a welcome change from the neutralist government that had preceded it. Instead, the concrete effect of great power politics in these

³ The Indonesian occupations of East Timor and West Papua, and the unification of North and South Vietnam, are cases of direct foreign intervention in a trivial sense. However, these are best understood as *annexation* rather than regime change.

cases was to prolong the survival of incumbent regimes and delay the dictatorial regime change that brought the Khmer Rouge and Lao People's Revolutionary Party to power, and extended communist control the south of Vietnam. Of course, Western interests were hardly alone in attempting to shape the course of regime change in Indochina, for inasmuch as Western power hoped to prevent regime change, communist powers hoped to foster it. Some of the most fascinating new research in Cold War history and Southeast Asian politics examines Chinese relations with the Pol Pot regime (Mertha 2012) and the "Beijing-Hanoi rivalry" in revolutionary-era Laos (Zhang 2002).

Outside of Indochina, Western aid and assistance proved a key political resource for non-communist regimes. The US funneled development assistance and military aid to support the Marcos regime as a bulwark against communism in the Philippines (Brands 1992: 298-318). US support for the Thanarat and Kittikachorn governments during the Vietnam era also bolstered military rule in Thailand, at the expense of both democratic and radical oppositions. Moreover, the predominance of the military in Thai politics rests on a deep relationship between the US and the Thai military that dates at least to the late 1940s (Fineman 1997). British military action against the Malayan Communist Party during the Malayan Emergency (Stubbs 1989) ensured that when the Federation of Malaya achieved formal independence in 1957, the Alliance would govern in a parliamentary system in which communists had no political representation. In Malaya, as with French decolonization and the Republic of Vietnam, the mechanisms of great power politics and colonial legacies were deeply intertwined.

Of all the cases of great power politics and regime dynamics in Southeast Asia, the Indonesian case may be the most controversial. New Order Indonesia's firm opposition to communism certainly strengthened relations between Washington and Jakarta during the Cold War, although there is no prominent literature holding that US support played much of a role ensuring the durability of the New Order regime over three decades once Soeharto had

consolidated power and the PKI had been exterminated. Rather, the central debate about great power politics and the New Order concerns the moment of dictatorial regime change: to what extent, and in what specific ways, was the US implicated in the events of late 1965 that brought Soeharto to power and led to the mass killings of 1965-66?

It is inarguable that the US government—through the CIA, the embassy, and other channels—was closely linked to conservative elements in the Indonesian army (Roosa 2006: 176-201), but from there, accounts differ. At the extreme is the argument that the US and allied great powers directly supported the overthrow of Sukarno, making the events of late 1965 analogous to the coup against Diem, and an instance of direct foreign intervention to bring about dictatorial regime change (see e.g. Scott 1985). An alternative view holds that the rise of Suharto was more akin to that of Lon Nol: the US and its allies (for reasons of great power politics) welcomed the outcome, and had even tried to bring about regime change, but in the end were essentially bystanders to the attempted coup and successful counter-coup as the events actually unfolded (see e.g. Brands 1989).⁴ Recently, a more considered approach brings into focus the interrelationships between modernization theory, military rule, anti-communism, and US foreign policy towards Indonesia during the Cold War (Simpson 2008). The US, in this account, was not directly involved in the September 30th Movement, but Washington “did everything in its power to encourage and facilitate the army-led massacre of allied PKI members” that followed (Simpson 2008: 193; see also 184-206). Additionally, other powers—including the Soviet Union, due to its rivalry with China, the PKI’s closest foreign ally—are also implicated as supporters of the PKI’s annihilation. The point here is not to adjudicate among these accounts, but rather to emphasize that every account of dictatorial

⁴ Roosa (2006) argues that September 30th Movement was not directed or masterminded by Suharto or his allies in the military or abroad, but nevertheless that “the upper echelons of the army officer corps were waiting for an opportune moment to attack the PKI and displace President Sukarno. They were prepared to take state power. They turned the movement into their long-awaited pretext” (203).

regime change and the rise of the New Order bears some relationship to foreign interests in a time of when Indonesia's political future figured prominently in great power politics.

In all of these cases, great power politics plays a central role in understanding the dynamics of regime change and survival in Southeast Asia. The focus here has been on great power politics in the Cold War, because this was the era in which the effects of great power politics were most apparent. In the post-Cold War era, great power politics no longer has the same implications for regime dynamics in Southeast Asia as it once did.⁵ Yet external forces still play a fundamental role in shaping regime dynamics in the post-Cold War era through different sorts of mechanisms: international linkage, economic shocks, and ideas.

International linkage

The concept of international linkage in regime dynamics is most notably associated with Levitsky and Way's (2010) analysis of competitive authoritarian regimes in the post-Cold War era. Their focus, however, is on linkage to the West.

The extent of a regime's linkage to the West is defined by the density of its ties to the United States, the EU, and Western-dominated multilateral institutions. There are at least five dimensions of such ties: 1) *economic* linkage, which includes credit, investment, and assistance, 2) *geopolitical* linkage, which includes ties to Western governments and Western-led alliances and organizations; 3) *social* linkage, which includes tourism, migration, diaspora communities, and elite education in the West; 4) *communication* linkage, which includes cross-border telecommunications, Internet connections, and Western-media penetration; and 5) *transnational civil society* linkage, which includes ties to international NGOs, churches, party organizations, and other networks (Levitsky and Way 2005: 22).

Competitive authoritarian regimes, they argue, are less durable in countries with more deeper and more extensive linkages to the West. For simple geographic reasons Southeast Asia features a relatively low linkage to the West, especially as compared to the links between

⁵ There are some exceptions. In cases such as Burma under the State Peace and Development Council it may be argued that Chinese-US rivalry has strengthened ties between China and Burma, which in turn bolsters the durability of the SPDC regime (Than 2003)

Eastern Europe and Latin America and the West. Yet in some cases it is still possible to see international linkage at work at moments of regime change.

The best case for international linkage at work in Southeast Asian democratization the Philippines in 1986. There is clear evidence of four out of five of Levitsky and Way's dimensions at work: the Reagan administration's impatience with Marcos which manifested itself in aid reduction (economic linkage) as well as clear support for Fidel Ramos, who would play a key role in the transition by leading the military against Marcos (geopolitical linkage) (Lee 2009: 653-654). Support for democratic reform from the large Filipino diaspora, in turn, represents both social and transnational civil society linkages (Shain and Thompson 1990). Only communication linkage is absent from the Philippine case. Insofar as the Catholic Church in the Philippines is part and parcel of a transnational organization that has long sought to influence politics, then the role of the Catholic Church in opposing Marcos also comprises a form of international linkage. To be clear, to observe these kinds of international linkages in Philippine democratization is not to deny the primacy of domestic political opposition to Marcos's rule in democratization. Nor does it ignore the anti-democratic histories of both US policy towards the Philippines (Brands 1992: 298-318) and of the Philippine Catholic Church as an organization (Barry 2005). It does, however, clarify much of the conditions, timing, and course of the Philippine transition.

The role of communication technologies and the new media have received some attention as a harbinger of democratization, especially in Southeast Asia's authoritarian stalwarts of Malaysia and Singapore which have high levels of internet penetration. Discussion of new media's effects on political change have been largely domestic in nature (Ortmann 2011; Pepinsky 2013), but one might imagine that the internet might help to provide the international communication linkages which may someday hasten democratization or shape the liberalization of authoritarian rule. Indeed, the internet is already a primary channel through which Malaysian and Singaporean diasporic communities express

social and political criticism, and such criticism is widely followed by local populations and incumbent regimes like.

External economic shocks

External economic shocks represent a fifth mechanism linking global context to regime change. Global economic integration exposes national economies to the volatility of global markets through trade and investment ties, cross-border bank lending, stock market investment, and speculative capital flows. For Southeast Asia in the post-colonial era, external economic shocks include most notably the downstream effects of the global oil crisis of the 1970s, the recessionary crises in the US and Europe in the early 1980s, and the Global Economic Crisis beginning in the late 2000s. They also include the Asian Financial Crisis of the late 1990s, a regional economic whose origins—as an external shock driven by spooked investors, or a series of temporally correlated domestic crises—remains contested, but whose effects on regime dynamics in Southeast Asia attracted wide notice (Pempel 1999; Haggard 2000; Rodan et al. 2001; Macintyre et al. 2008).

The breakdown of the New Order regime in Indonesia in 1998, in the midst of one of the worst peacetime economic collapses in modern world history, illustrates well how and why external economic shocks translate into regime change—especially in contrast to Malaysia, which experienced a severe crisis but no democratization (Pepinsky 2009). Yet the obvious and immediate link between an international economic crisis and the collapse of an authoritarian regime in Indonesia stands out as rather exceptional in the universe of Southeast Asian cases. In other cases, external economic shocks have indirect effects that interact with other factors (internal and external) to produce regime change. Two illustrations of the indirect and interactive effects of external economic shocks are the Philippines in the early 1980s and Thailand in the late 1990s.

Early 1980s were period of economic hardship for the Philippines as a direct consequence of a run-up in foreign debt in the 1970s and the oil price shocks that had followed (Dohner and Intal 1989). Yet the Marcos regime did not collapse as an immediate result of the severe economic contraction that accompanied the external shocks. Nor is it possible to understand the magnitude of the external shocks without close attention to domestic macroeconomic management and the Philippines political economy under Marcos:

There were two fundamental economic difficulties. First, the Philippines failed to develop self-sustaining growth that would have eased the burden of servicing its external debt. Second, the country failed to shift resources towards the traded goods sector, as was required both by its increasing debt burden and by its declining terms of trade. In more concrete terms, the problems were poor returns from investments, difficulties in mobilizing domestic resources to fund investment, and the maintenance of a trade regime that did not sufficiently encourage exports. In addition, the Marcos government created a political-economic environment that discouraged independent investment, led to capital flight, and eventually crippled much of the productive economy (Dohner and Intal 1989: 175)

The depth of the Philippine debt crisis notwithstanding, Marcos's regime survived for six more years before succumbing to popular pressure for democratization. This can be explained at least in part by the observation that Marcos's regime had never depended on widespread popular legitimacy, so the heavy burden of crisis and adjustment borne by ordinary Filipinos did not much phase it. Only after deteriorating domestic politics interacted with and deepened the economic crisis did threats to the Marcos regime become clear; in one analysis, "it was the assassination of Aquino...that precipitated the present economic crisis which has now turned out to be the worst ever" (Kintanar 1985: 279). So the fate of the Marcos regime cannot be understood as simply an outcome of adverse international conditions, even if acute oil shocks represent one of many precipitating conditions for the eventual collapse of authoritarian rule.

The case of Thailand is more complex still, yet just as illuminating in tracing the indirect effects of economic crises on regime dynamics. Thailand's 1997 crisis helped to set in motion a fundamental reorganization of the Thai political economy. In the short term, the crisis necessitated the harsh strictures of an International Monetary Fund-mandated structural

adjustment program. In the medium term, the domestic backlash against these reforms facilitated the rise of the populist Thai Rak Thai Party under Thaksin Shinawatra, which Hewison (2005: 318) labels “a party of the big domestic capital” and whose interests were most directly threatened by stabilizing and liberalizing reforms. In the long term, however, the conservative backlash against Thaksin’s political juggernaut (McCargo and Ukrist 2005) culminated in the 2006 coup, a decisive moment of democratic breakdown.⁶ The rise of Thaksin, of course, represents more than just a populist response to the hardships of externally-imposed adjustment measures following a several economic crisis—Hicken (2006) shows that the 1997 constitutional reforms were instrumental for allowing Thaksin to build the political juggernaut that proved so threatening to the Thai political establishment. Yet the progression from short term responses to democratic breakdown over the course of nearly a decade illustrates well how the indirect effects of external economic shocks emerge over time.

In Hewison’s analysis of Thaksin’s rise, however, the Thai crisis was significant not simply because it required adjustment and stabilization, but because the measures enacted to reform the Thai economy were specifically neoliberal in nature. This brings us to the final mechanism through which global contexts shape regime dynamics in Southeast Asia: global ideas.

Global Ideas

By “ideas” I simply mean “particular beliefs—shared by large numbers of people—about the nature of their worlds that have implications for human action” (Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 7). Ideas are global insofar as they are at least partially external in origin, and they are a mechanism linking global forces to domestic politics insofar as they have implications for political organization. A partial list of global ideas with particular relevance for Southeast Asian politics in the post-colonial era would include democracy, capitalism,

⁶ Thaksin’s government was procedurally democratic, if also violent and highly corrupt.

communism, modernization theory, developmentalism, Third Worldism, Asian values, neoliberalism, and Islamism.

The role of capitalism, democracy, and communism as ideas that shape regime dynamics is difficult to distinguish from that the roles played by great power politics, direct intervention, and colonial legacies. Indeed, a close analysis of communism and capitalism in Southeast Asia as *ideas*—rather than as proxies or ciphers for great power conflict, nationalism, or anti-colonialism—remains unwritten. More revealing are analyses of particular country cases that focus on other global ideas. Simpson (2008), for example, emphasizes the ideational compatibility of military rule and with capitalist modernization and illustrates how this amplified US opposition to Sukarno and support for rightist elements of the Indonesian military. Thompson’s (2001) analysis of the declining discourse on Asian values after the Asian financial crisis emphasizes how authoritarian regimes in Malaysia and Singapore deployed the concept of Asian values as a weapon against regime critics—the implication being that these critics were somehow transgressing their own culture and embracing a foreign or even neo-colonial project by advocating for democratization or liberalization. Ideas about the particularities of Third World politics and economics, and the distinctiveness of national political circumstances in Southeast Asia, fit under the broad label of Third Worldism. These range from the Burmese Way to Socialism, Guided Democracy and Pancasila in Indonesia, Mahathirism in Malaysia, Thai-style democracy, and others. These sought to uncover distinctly local models for political organization, but set against a global political and economic order defined by conflict between East and West rather between North and South (Berger 2004)—with all Southeast Asian states as members of the South.⁷

⁷ The phenomena of Mahathirism (Hilley 2001), Thai-style democracy (Maisrikrod 2007), and Pancasila Democracy (Gunn 1979)—each an essentially conservative vision for political order, and each comfortable with close political and economic ties with the United States and Western powers (periodic outbursts by Mahathir Mohamad notwithstanding)—stray far from the earliest instantiations of Third Worldism from the 1950s.

The global ideas just listed are best understood (following Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 8-9) as “world views.” Yet global ideas may also take the form of “principled beliefs...that specify criteria for distinguish right from wrong and just from unjust” and “causal beliefs... about cause-effect relationships” (Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 9, 10). These encompass a different way that global ideas shape regime dynamics in Southeast Asia, through the foreign policy priorities of major allies and donors as construed by their conceptualization of which policies are just, necessary, and/or efficacious. Terrorism and radical Islam following the September 11th attacks in New York City illustrate this mechanism well. Any regime, democratic or not, can be a strategic ally for the US in the so-called Global War on Terror so long as it proves effective in containing terrorism and radical Islam. This contrasts with Simpson’s (2008) argument that a particular regime form—a military regime committed to economic modernization—was most conducive to US visions for Indonesia as a bulwark against communism.

An understanding of terrorism and radical marked by a particularly essentialist understanding of Islam (Renwick 2007) and as a domestic political problem (Boyle 2008) gives the US and other Western allies a preference for political stability and vigorous anti-terrorism activity in democracies such as Indonesia and the Philippines as well as dictatorships such as Malaysia and post-coup Thailand. The fear for regime change is less that it would bring radical Islamists to power (as in parts of Central Asia or North Africa) but rather that regime change may produce instability or weakness that militants or terrorists may exploit for operational advantage.⁸ While there is scant evidence that Western military aid has had much of an effect on regime stability, even local observers critical of US’s labeling of Southeast Asia as the “Second Front” in the War on Terror advocate that “Washington

⁸ There is evidence that, cross-nationally, moments of regime change are associated with a higher likelihood of civil war (see, recently, Cederman et al. 2010). The evidence is more tentative for regime change and *domestic* terrorism (Chenoweth 2013), and even more shaky that regime change abroad increases terrorist attacks *in the West*.

should... build on its now cordial relations with Jakarta and continue to provide assistance for the myriad problems that Indonesia faces as a developing country making a painful transition to democracy” (Acharya and Acharya 2007: 87).

Conclusion

Having reviewed six mechanisms through which global forces shape democratization and other forms of regime change in Southeast Asia, I conclude here with a brief discussion of the disciplinary organization of the study of regime change in Southeast Asia, as well as some directions for future research.

The perspective in this chapter amounts to a contemporary restatement of Smail’s (1961) vision for an autonomous history of Southeast Asia. This perspective takes seriously the distinctive political forms of different Southeast Asian states, and stresses the long view of political change driven by domestic political conflict. It embeds global forces into such an analysis of Southeast Asian politics by asking how they shape, constrain, and interact with domestic political forces. Assuming such a perspective is desirable, the question is, what kind of disciplinary organization is best suited to nurturing it?

The answer is probably not the traditional model of political science in the United States and other parts of the English-speaking academic world, which is built around a distinction between international relations—studying the international system and the relations *among* states and non-state actors—and comparative politics—the politics *within* states. This is not to imply that mainstream political science is incapable of seeing past disciplinary boundaries in the study of Southeast Asian politics (see e.g. Doner et al. 2005; Felker 2008; Pepinsky 2009). And the artificiality of the divide between political science subdisciplines has long been lamented by prominent voices from within the discipline itself (Milner 1998). Yet the “area studies model” for Southeast Asian political studies—rooted in the problems facing states rather than the debates of a discipline—is probably most naturally

suited for conceptualizing and describing the global context regime change in Southeast Asia. This model thrives more in “centers” and “programs” than in political science departments.

The frontiers of research on the global context of regime change, however, lay in bringing causal claims into conversation with conceptualization and description. This chapter has only described mechanisms; none is a falsifiable proposition about the effect any global force on any instance of regime change. Future research will profit from more explicit formulation of causal hypotheses about these mechanisms, and in uncovering variation in regime dynamics across countries and across time. For many problems in Southeast Asian regime change this endeavor will surely be difficult: how to conceptualize the relevant counterfactual to understand the effect of the CIA on the overthrow of Diem? For others it will require new questions and concepts: if neoliberalism is a background condition that is ever-present in the modern world, then (following a counterfactual theory of causation) it is never a proper cause of any phenomenon that varies. The question becomes *under what conditions* neoliberalism affects regime dynamics in Southeast Asia, a task well suited to an autonomous Southeast Asian politics in Smail’s sense.⁹ It will also require more careful attention to the problem of equifinality in causal explanation: in what non-trivial sense can colonial legacies, great power politics, international linkage, external economic shocks, and global ideas about democracy all be causes of Philippine democratization? Tackling these questions will require that the area studies model engage more directly with the disciplinary concerns of mainstream political science.

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⁹ An alternative is to propose varieties of neoliberalism or neoliberal experiences in Southeast Asia, or levels or degrees of neoliberal influence or exposure. Yet another is to define neoliberalism as a policy enacted by a government—which may be implemented or rolled back and therefore vary across space and time, as in Stokes (2001)—rather than a single global idea.

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