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## **Dealing with diversity: State strategies on ethnic minority management in Southeast Asia**

*Matthew David D. Ordoñez, Hansley A. Juliano,  
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Abstract—Southeast Asia’s ethnic, political and cultural diversity continues to pose major policy and governance hurdles in enforcing a common community born out of the post-colonial nationalist baggage of almost all the region’s countries. ASEAN’s “non-interference” clause gives leeway to each member state to respond to its ethnic diversity with nation-building projects through exclusionary governance. With this leeway, each Southeast Asian country’s nation-building policies legitimize a particular, existing ethno-nationalist or “ethno-religious” majority at the expense of democratic accountability. This study proposes a preliminary quantitative model which uses regression analysis to compare Southeast Asian countries’ data on their religious and ethnic populations. The initial model categorizes the types of minority management strategies depending on their respective ethnic heterogeneity. This study hypothesizes that a) states with more ethnically homogenous populations will have more exclusionary and violent state policies towards minorities, while b) states with more heterogeneous populations will have fewer exclusionary and violent policies. The results indicate a moderate causality between the two variables and may be correlated with additional variables such as the level of democratic consolidation (as tabulated by the Polity IV democratic index) and the centralized structure of governance.

Keywords: Southeast Asia, nationalism in Southeast Asia, state-building in Asia

## **The challenge of regional diversity**

Studying Southeast Asia as a region remains a constant challenge for area scholarship, due to the region's eclectic characteristics and a seeming lack of commonality. However, one observable commonality among the countries is their ethnically and culturally diverse populations. As a post-colonial region, Southeast Asia consists of young sovereign nation-states plunged into a fast-moving, competitive global system. Their perceived tardiness towards modernity has pressured the nation-states to "fast track" their consolidation of power and resources along trajectories undertaken by non-Asian countries, particularly their colonizers.

This trajectory, while producing some economic "tigers," is not free from problematic elements. Hattori and Funatsu (2003: 145) have written how "the latecomer Asian countries' encounter with Western modernity (through not only modern institutions but also new pieces of knowledge, new values and blue-prints for what societies should be like) had the effect of aggravating or mitigating the conflicts they faced." From this pressure to modernize, these nation-states have made ethnicity-based policies at the expense of vulnerable minorities.

. The region's most prominent example of ethnically motivated state action is the still ongoing Rohingya crisis, where Burma's Islamic Rohingya minority have continued to be driven out of their homes by their own country's military since 2015 (BBC 2018a). As of October 2015, the number of Rohingya refugees has risen to 700,000—with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) being unable to curb this ongoing crisis (Lee 2018). Though the Rohingya crisis is the most violent case, Southeast Asia is still home to more varied, sometimes more benign, types of state-sponsored ethnic exclusion and discrimination (Juliano, La Viña and Ordoñez 2016). For example, in an ethnically pluralist country, Indonesia, the Chinese minority is still denied the right to land ownership (Yuniar 2018). These instances of ethnic conflict, discrimination and violence persist in spite of the many international rules and norms in place against such policies. It is even more peculiar that the state is the main culprit in such atrocities. This complicates the assumed predominance of liberalism even in the electoral democracies within the region. While each country differs in its intensity in managing ethnic minorities, they seem to follow ethno-nationalist logic as a framework to their respective on-going nation-building processes.

This study intends to tackle the following research questions from the aforementioned puzzle: 1. *Why do Southeast Asian countries continue to conduct ethnicity-based policies in the context of 21st century ASEAN ?*; and 2. *Why do some Southeast Asian countries manage their minorities more violently than others?*

For these questions we propose a set of preliminary answers. These initial claims are coupled with a proposed quantitative model categorizing the types of minority management strategies a state employs depending on its respective ethnic heterogeneity. The study operates on the following hypotheses:

All Southeast Asian Nation-states enact policies that favor an ethnic majority while persecuting minorities as a means of consolidating an ethno-nationalist framework.

More ethnically homogenous populations (i.e., large ethnic majorities) within Southeast Asia would be more predisposed to utilize more violent and exclusionary methods for managing minorities.

By contrast, Southeast Asian countries with more ethnically pluralistic or heterogeneous societies (i.e., small ethnic majorities) may be less inclined to commit violent exclusion.

The main objective of this study is to quantitatively describe the region-wide trend of ethno-nationalist policies in managing ethnic minorities and classify each country based on its mode of minority management. We articulate our claim in three ways. The first section summarizes existing literature on the ethnic dimension of nation-building in the region and the variety of policies involved. The second section presents data on the correlation between a country's ethnic diversity and its mode of minority management. The third section presents possible additional variables relevant to the established pattern such as democratic consolidation, economic development, the minority as threat discourse and the structure of government.

## **The ethnic crisis of modernity in Southeast Asia**

As Fukuyama (1989) declared in his now clichéd proclamation of “the end of history,” Southeast Asia remains one of the areas of the globe where illiberal ideologies, non-democratic ideas and nationalisms continue to thrive in one form or another. Interestingly, during the early years after the Cold War, Southeast Asia became a model region in terms of development and state-modernization (Rigg 2004: 3). The paradoxical coexistence of illiberal nationalisms and efficient state-building is a key phenomenon to understanding the current ethnic relations of the state. This section illustrates the consensus within the literature on ethno-nationalism and the policies they motivate from being tied to the emergence of “modern states” in Southeast Asia. However, the literature also provides a wide range of ethnically motivated policies and conflicts beyond the extremes of genocide and violent displacement. As state capacity varies, so do the kinds of actions that the ethno-nationalist state can enact on minorities (Brown 2003: x).

Michael Ignatieff (1995: 8) has discussed the political and ideological conflicts between the ideas of *ethnic nationalism* (based on biological ethnicity) and *civic nationalism* (based on performative acts of citizenship and belonging). He specifically points to how ethnic nationalism is “a revolt against civic nationalism itself.” This does not necessarily mean ethnic nationalism is specifically sustained by authoritarian attitudes and politics nor civic nationalism by democratic values. Subsequent research by Stilz also suggests that while this conceptual distinction exists, “the most developed accounts of civic nationalism currently on offer do not adequately disentangle the state from the promotion of the majority national culture in practice” (Stilz 2009: 260). This contentious relationship between exclusivist notions of national identity and the role of the state in sustaining them is at the heart of the phenomenon we seek to visualize.

As mentioned previously, many of the countries within the region gained sovereignty in the late 20th century. Being a post-colonial region, much of the modernization and state-building processes were motivated by colonial administration and discourse (Reid 2010). Prior to colonial intervention, the region was “state-averse” since ethnic groups remained geographically decentralized and tribal (Reid 2010: 18). Thus, much

of the pre-colonial and colonial ethnic and cultural divides seeped into their state-building discourse, evolving into the nationalist agenda observable today.

Regardless of the area, much of the literature considers modernity and the modern state to be harbingers of classification and legibility. James Scott (1998) articulated the role of the state as an agent of the “administrative ordering of nature and society,” controlling both the physical environment and human populations. Wimmer (2002) strongly argues that ethnic and nationalistic principles are contingent to modernity itself and are the “shadow of modernity.” For Reid (2010: 20), the starting point of Southeast Asian modernity has been “imperial alchemy” or the colonial origins of nation-state in the region.

### **Politicized dimensions of ethnic identity**

Ethnic identity is a complex variable in the social sciences and leads to many methodological issues. Many have tried to distinguish the objective markers of ethnic identity, namely the biological traits and familial lineage, from the subjective markers, namely shared culture, history and imagination (Anderson 2006; Chandra 2006; Malesevic 2006). Such complexity, however, may provide enough flexibility to acknowledge the arbitrary invocation of ethnic identity by state power. Though the idea of nationalism has evolved throughout the years, ethnic identity remains its key ingredient.

Anderson’s (2006: 46) conception of nations as “imagined communities” is one of the most salient ideas on the subject. It complicates the assumption of nationalism relying on seemingly overt signs of national identity. Rather, Anderson’s nationalism comes from shared languages and narratives as propagated by creole intellectuals through early forms of mass communication. When Chandra (2006) attempted to focus on familial lineage as the objective core of ethnic identity, she found it had little to no causality with ethnically motivated violence or discrimination. By extension, Chandra reveals that much of the power in the politicization of ethnic identity lies in the subjective aspects of ethnic identity or psychologically and the emotionally charged aspects of ethnicity. Malesevic (2006: 227) analyzes ethnic identity as an ideology that may motivate both societal inequality and, in extreme cases, mass murder.

Though very much intertwined, nationalism and ethnic identity are still distinct. It is mainly political actors that conflate the two concepts. A common distinction (Stavenhagen 1996; Wolff 2006: 31) is between ethnic-nationalism, which is based on ethnic identity and civic nationalism, which includes immigrants and formalized citizens into the nation regardless of biological traits or familial lineage. The latter nationalism has been more commonly associated with pluralistic liberal democracies. Wolff (2006: 31) further notes that ethnic groups seek self-determination but this does not necessarily lead to independent statehood in the way nationalism does. In his latest work, Wimmer (2018) argues that countries have better political integration with linguistic homogeneity, thus motivating policies favoring a linguistic majority. However, Stavenhagen (1996: 93-94) states the mere existence of shared attributes is not enough to trigger conflict that requires specific actors such as “ethnic entrepreneurs” or ethnic groups which deploy ethnic ideology.

In addition to these, the formation of ethnic identities is further affected by another significant social force: dominant religious identities. The tendency of many Southeast Asian countries to ethno-religious identification has been noted in the literature. Searle (2002: 1) suggested that this is usually “spurred by the conjunction of economic and social marginalization with significant demographic change,” while other research claims that this is neither as clear-cut nor deterministic as implied (with Frith [2000] implying this is also a matter of exposure to relative and reflexive modern conditions), so the reality of ethno-religious identities serving as a mobilizing ideological platform should not be ignored. It is due to these that we employ these three demographic markers (*ethnicity*, *religious identity* and *national identity*) in our model visualization below.

### **Methods of ethnic management**

Besides the subjective and ideological motivations for ethno-nationalism, there are also material conditions that necessitate the management of ethnic diversity. There are two main motivations in nation-state building. First is maintaining political legitimacy among the populace (Horowitz 1993; Wimmer 1997, 2018; Brown 2003), in

order to preserve its authority, presence and unencumbered freedom of action. Second is the consolidation of limited economic resources (Chua 1995, 2004; Wimmer 1997), for the purpose of accomplishing the first motivation. The capacity of each Southeast Asian nation-state varies as much as its ethnic demographics. As argued by Pierre Bourdieu (1994: 15), only by maintaining unquestioned or “doxic submission to the established order” can the nation-state maintain legitimacy and its attendant powers. This, understandably, is more easily accomplished with a relatively-homogenous population. Due to these realities, there are various types of strategy that states employ to manage the ethnic plurality of their respective populations.

Horowitz (1993: 20-21) acknowledges that ethnic identity and its conflicts act as obstacles to even the most democratic countries in the Southeast Asian region. Patterns in ethnic inequality produce changes in inclusion and exclusion from political participatory practices. Wimmer (1997; 2002) argues that ethnic identity is closely linked to state legitimacy particularly in post-colonial states. By the end of the Cold War, many ethnic divides emerged in many countries before civil society took root and turned politics into “an arena of ethno-nationalist competition” (Wimmer 2002: 113). His data found that once an ethnic faction declared independence, many other ethnic minorities also contested independence and claimed autonomy (Wimmer 2002: 88). In a much later work, Wimmer (2013), appropriates Charles Tilly’s dictum of “war-making as state-making” when he observes states using violence against ethnic masses and in favor of a dominant elite.

Despite this resonance in the literature regarding ethnic violence not all ethno-nationalist policies lead to violence. Stavenhagen (1996: 192-202) makes among the earliest classifications of ethnic policies across multiple regions where ethnic conflicts are present. He classifies them into three types: assimilation, where a dominant “nationhood” is imposed on the polity to incorporate immigrants and minorities; exclusion, which ranges from physical violence to institutional discrimination; and pluralism, which permits the multiplicity of ethnic and cultural identities. Despite the frequency of assimilationist and exclusionary policies, Stavenhagen (1996: 202) finds pluralism to be the most common policy. Pluralist policies range from a *laissez-faire* mode, which does not recognize ethnic identity, to a mode that explicitly recognizes these differences and allows for judicious negotiations.



Such policy schemes, despite their commonality and benefits, can have expected mixed effects. While they may guarantee a level of concord and possibly foster positive multicultural contact, perceived inequalities in treatment may become touchstones of public dissent and debate.

Chua (1997) expounds on the more explicitly economic policies and documents the cycle of privatization and nationalization of property in Southeast Asia and Latin America. Once these regions became independent, ethnic minorities began privatizing land and patrimonial resources, leading the government to “re-nationalize” these resources from them. Chua (2004: 17) attributes this trend to the spread of liberal democracy which exacerbated inequality with the rise of market dominant minorities. Here, state policies seem to correct these economic inequalities on ethnic lines particularly against Chinese businesses in Burma and Indonesia.

David Brown’s *The State and Ethnic Politics and Southeast Asia* (2003) is a foundational foray into a region-wide study of ethnic politics in Southeast-Asia. Rather than strict typologies based on variables, Brown uses five specific case countries to highlight particular ethnic dynamics:

- a. Burma exhibits an ethnocratic state where the central government violently crushes ethnic rebellions (23-45).
- b. Singapore has an ethnic corporatist regime that organizes the concerns of different ethnic groups (47-76).
- c. Thailand has an ethno-regional model which favors a core region with economic development policies (109-142).
- d. Indonesians have a neo-patrimonial regime which normally deploys ethnic-identity during elections via patron-client relations (77-108).
- e. Finally, Malaysians exhibit class conflict between the Chinese economic elite and the local Malays (142-179).

In summary, while much of the literature cites Southeast Asian countries as cases on ethnic politics (Horowitz 1993; Chua 1995, 2004; Stavenhagen 1996), there are hardly any other works like David Brown’s (2003) key work that focus on the entire region. Furthermore, though there are clearly distinct strategies, there are not many studies explaining under what conditions would a state favor an assimilationist, exclusionary or pluralist strategy. Such a question may help predict

certain actions of countries under certain conditions. There have been many significant political changes since its publication (e.g., the Rohingya crisis in Burma). Hence, this work seeks to further integrate the region's case with larger theories to either confirm or update certain assumptions on ethnic politics in Southeast Asia.

### **Reading the region: An ethnic profile of Southeast Asia**

This section provides a general profile of the post-colonial development and ethnic majorities within the region. The ethnic profile identifies the ethnic majorities and measures their proportion with the country's population while identifying the religious majority. From here, the coded ethnic majority values are measured against religious majority values to derive a variable that we call religious-ethnicity (R-E) quotient. The data on ethnic composition was sourced from the most recent edition of the CIA Factbook available online as of 2018. While this may not be the most exhaustively accurate picture of the region's ethnic composition, it is detailed enough for the overview purposes of this study. Subsequently, we correlate the R-E quotient with data from the Center for Systemic Peace's *Polity IV Project* on government regime type. These values are possible intervening variables that may affect the type of ethnic minority management each country employs. Finally, this section gives an overview of state actions against minorities throughout the countries in the region.

The qualitative nature of the field and the historicizing tendency of the literature on Southeast Asian politics can give the impression that each country's ethnic minority issues are primarily internal/domestic affairs. It is easy to presume that inquiries on ethnic politics require a clear sense of the distinct cultural and historical developments experienced by each country. This presumption, however, belies the historical record. While each Southeast Asian nation's case and history may indeed be characterized as unique, nearly all of them, with the exception of uncolonized Thailand, had undergone decolonization by the tail-end of the Second World War. At the same time, the vulnerabilities of newly-decolonized states (and the state-building demands each country faced) in the context of the Cold War (1947-1991) definitely contributed to their choices of governance (Goscha and Ostermann 2009)—with a significant impact on their populations, especially their minorities.

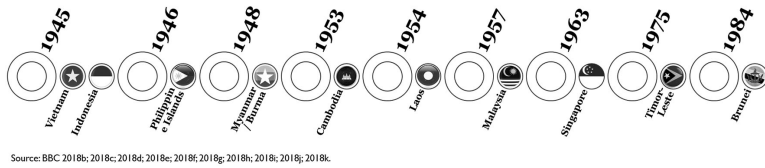


Figure 1. Timeline of decolonization in Southeast Asia

When taking into account the treatment of ethnic minorities it is very important to take into consideration the nature and makeup of the majority population. In this, Southeast Asian nations still have significant differences. However, as is shown in Table 1, there is a clearly visible commonality.

Table 1. Religious and ethnic majority demographics of Southeast-Asian nations (CIA 2016)

Country	Religious Majority	Percentage	Ethnic Majority	Percentage
Brunei	Muslim	78.8	Malay	65.7
Cambodia	Buddhist	96.9	Khmer	90
Indonesia	Muslim	87.2	Javanese	40.1
Laos	Buddhist	66.8	Lao	54.6
Malaysia	Muslim	61.3	Malay	50.1
Myanmar	Buddhist	89	Burmese	68
Philippines	Christian	92.5	Tagalog	28.1
Singapore	Buddhist	33.8	Chinese	74.2
Thailand	Buddhist	93.6	Thai	95.9
Timor-Leste	Christian	97.6	Austronesian (Tetun)	30.6
Vietnam	None	80.8	Viet	85.7

It can be demonstrated that most Southeast Asian countries (save for Singapore, Indonesia, Timor-Leste and the Philippines) range to a near-1:1 correspondence between their ethnic majority and their religious majority populations. This is codified using an *R-E (religion-ethnicity) quotient*, wherein

$$R-E \text{ Quotient} = \frac{(R.M. \text{ Percentage})}{(E.M. \text{ Percentage})}$$

The relationship between such variables is illustrated below in Figure 2.

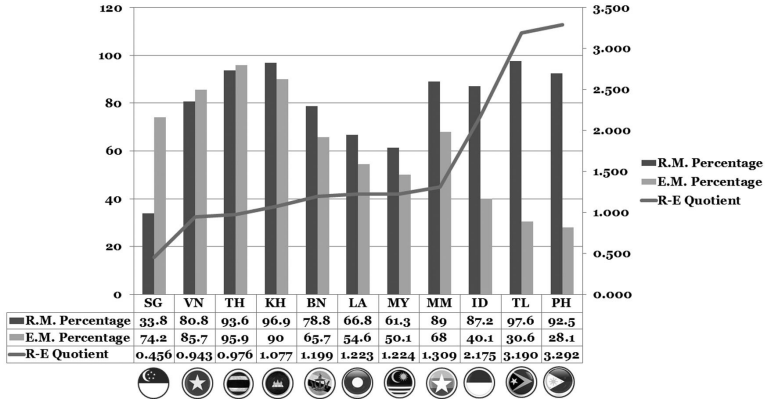


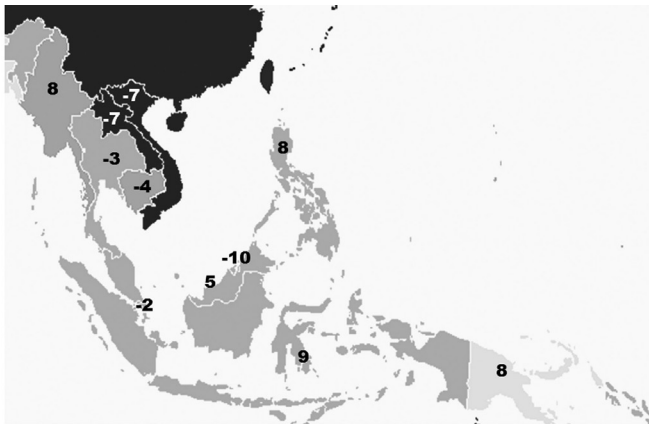
Figure 2. Religion and ethnicity correspondence in Southeast Asian populations

Understandably, there is no demonstrable model suggesting that membership in a dominant ethnic group guarantees membership of a religious majority as well. However, a correspondence between the religious and ethnic identity of a population may provide certain points of consideration. The codification of a common ethnicity and religion into a national narrative is still integral to the state’s capacity to governance and maintaining social cohesion

Such factors can have considerable effects on the kind of institutional evolution a government may take. This can be illustrated by data from the Polity IV Project, an “annual, cross-national, time-series and polity-case format coding democratic and autocratic ‘patterns of authority’ and regime changes in all independent countries with total populations greater than 500,000.” The project “captures this regime authority spectrum on a 21-point scale ranging from “-10 (hereditary monarchy)” to “+10 (consolidated democracy).” The Polity scores can

also be converted into regime categories in a three part categorization of “autocracies” (-10 to -6), “anocracies” (-5 to +5) and three special values: -66, -77 and -88), and “democracies” (+6 to +10).” (Center for Systemic Peace 2018; *emphasis is ours.*)

The 2017 dataset of Polity IV data classifies countries in the region into three categories. Brunei, Vietnam and Laos are deemed to be *autocratic*, while Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore are classified consistently as *anocratic* regimes. Finally, the Philippines, Indonesia and Timor-Leste continue to score along the *democratic* spectrum. Myanmar is an outlier after recently being classified as democratic after years of being considered *autocratic* (1962-2009), and *anocratic* (2010-2015). This change in classification is understandable, considering the longevity of the military junta and the only-recent ascension of Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy to government in 2016 (BBC 2018b).



Source: Center for Systemic Peace 2018 (map adapted from Wikimedia).

Figure 3. 2017 Polity IV scores for Southeast Asian countries

To test the quantitative basis for the relationship between population demographic and form of government, we subjected the country cases’ R-E quotient and Polity IV scores to regression analysis. Below are the results.

Table 2 and 3. Regression Analysis Results.

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SUMMARY OUTPUT

*Regression Statistics*

Multiple R	0.669404135
R Square	0.448101896
Adjusted R Square	0.386779884
Standard Error	0.727316728
Observations	11

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	Intercept	X Variable 1
Coefficients	1.512017867	0.085993612
Standard Error	0.219770454	0.031811635
t Stat	6.879986999	2.703212546
P-value	7.23E-05	0.024265699
Lower 95%	1.01486256	0.014030693
Upper 95%	2.009173174	0.157956531
Lower 95.0%	1.01486256	0.014030693

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The regression analysis returned a Multiple R value of 0.669- or around 66.9%. Furthermore, the residuals returned an x variable coefficient of positive 0.085993612. Both these results suggest a moderate positive correlation between a country with a visible ethno-religious majority and that country having autocratic or anocratic regimes. In brief, it suggests that if a Southeast Asian country's population is near-homogenous, there will be significant basis for a government to primarily appeal to the majority even at the expense of excluding their resident minorities.

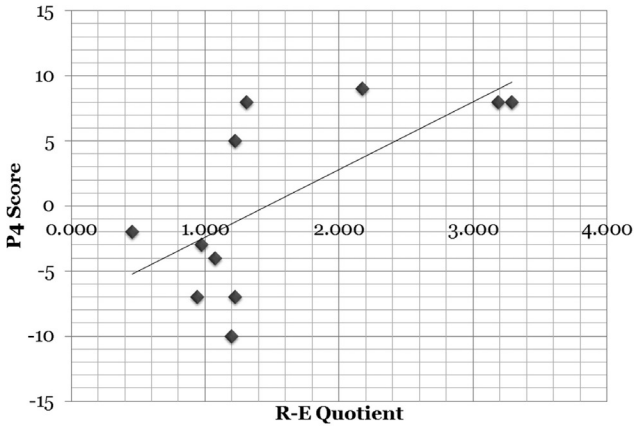


Figure 4. Regression analysis scatterplot of data.

Logically, countries with solid majorities, particularly countries with insecure borders and emerging political cultures, have larger bases for governments which tend to centralize power—at the expense of wider representation and devolved powers at the local level. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that these developments are set in stone.

The historical events experienced by Southeast Asian nations for most of the 20th century, as we will detail below, suggest such developments have tended to be triggered by particular historical flashpoints and crises. In the case of Southeast Asia, most of these events occurred during the context of the Cold War and the early years of regional decolonization. At the same time, there are also long-standing enmities between ethnic groups which can be traced to historical, pre-modern conflicts even prior to colonization—and some of these conflicts have been elevated the moment one particular ethnic group became the dominant population in a Southeast Asian country immediately after decolonization and partition.

We managed to document, via archival analysis as well as recent local and international news coverage, the history of minority populations within nine Southeast Asian countries. The most relevant facts for each country have been listed in Table 4.

When a nation-building ideology develops towards an homogenous narrative, it is likely to gloss over the actual ethnic composition of a society. Anderson (2006: 110) acknowledged this when he pointed to how “[i]n almost every case, official nationalism concealed a discrepancy between nation and dynastic realm.” This poses significant risks to ethnic minorities, whose perceived non-compliance to the dominant identity renders them vulnerable to varying levels of management. As shown in Table 4, it is the countries that a) have had long histories of autocratic and anocratic governments with b) a significant level of population homogeneity (Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia) that have been known to engage in violent and exclusionary policies against its minorities.

Table 4. Summarized data on documented actions towards minorities in Southeast Asia<sup>1</sup>

<i>Country Case</i>	<i>Minority</i>	<i>Historic Conflict Point(s)</i>	<i>Modes of Treatment</i>
Thailand	Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat Muslims	1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty	Illegal execution & torture
		The Pattani Insurgency	Other human Rights abuses
Myanmar	Rakhine / Rohingya Muslims	1948 Post-Independence Conflicts in Arakan	Dispersal/deportation
		The Rohingya Crisis	Abetting human trafficking “Mass graves” & denial of asylum Burning of mosques
Laos	Highland/lowland minorities & Hmong	The Secret War	Highlanders: forced relocation / reeducation
			Hmong: killings and persecution
Malaysia	Malay-Chinese	1964 “race riots”	Bumiputera / NEP policies
		Singapore’s secession	



Table 4. Summarized data on documented actions towards minorities in Southeast Asia<sup>1</sup>

<i>Country Case</i>	<i>Minority</i>	<i>Historic Conflict Point(s)</i>	<i>Modes of Treatment</i>
Vietnam	Hmong, Dega-Montagnards, Khmer-Krom	The Vietnam War	Hmong: economic / social services neglect
			Dega & Krom: cultural & religious persecution
Cambodia	Viet	The “Killing Fields” & Ethnic Cleansing	Denial of citizenship
			Human trafficking
Indonesia	“Nonprotected” religious minorities	1965 Blasphemy Law	Non-approval/ destruction of houses of worship;
		Decrees on Houses of Worship	Blasphemy/conversion prosecutions
		2008 Anti-Ahmadiyah Decree	Non-prevention of minority mob killings
Philippines	“Moro”	American-era discrimination	Mismanagement of ARMM
		Martial Law (1972-1981) & the Separatist Movement	Arroyo-era support of local strongmen
		Global Terrorism	Island-wide “martial law” (2009 & 2017)
		2015 Mamasapano Clash	Uncertainties of the BBL Process (under Aquino and Duterte)
		2017 Marawi Siege	
Singapore	Malays, Indonesians, “others”.	1982 Mendaki	MIO’s: unequal economic opportunities
	Immigrant “workers” & “talents”	“CMIO” vs. immigrants	Immigrants: unequal “employment pass” access

Source: Juliano, La Viña and Ordoñez 2016; 2017.

By contrast, modern-day Indonesia and the Philippines are countries with a significant disconnect between their ethnic and religious majorities, as well as a relatively-higher level of democratization in the region. While it does not guarantee that minorities in such countries are protected from violent forms of discrimination, such policies tend to be unsanctioned by their government, therefore demonstrating shortcomings in governance rather than embedded institutional prejudices against minorities.

Singapore is another outlier as a country with an anocratic government but one that conducts assimilationist policies vis-à-vis its minority populations (albeit employed inconsistently). This may be explained by Singapore's structure as a cosmopolitan space—despite its limited land mass for its growing population. This contradiction provides an opportunity for partitioning policies between its “prioritized residents” and its migrants, who are treated as potentially destabilizing elements (Juliano, Ordoñez and La Viña, 2016: 98).

### **Analysis: Towards a new typology?**

This section presents a typology-based ethnic profile of the countries in the region. We subsequently compare each country via the type of ethnic policies deployed by their respective states. In testing our hypothesis, this study uses the level of ethnic homogeneity or the proportion of the ethnic majority to the population as the independent variable. From there, the countries are classified in the compass from a continuum between pluralist states or countries that permit multi-ethnic countries, and exclusionary states or countries that perform more overt policies of violence and discrimination against ethnic minorities. The typology assumes that while all the countries have an ethno-nationalist agenda, their respective state's capacities in relation to their respective ethnic and demographic profiles are necessarily limited to committing outright genocide or the exclusion of multiple minority groups. Thus, more homogenous societies may be more inclined to overt exclusion while heterogeneous societies remain pluralist or perform less violent exclusion.

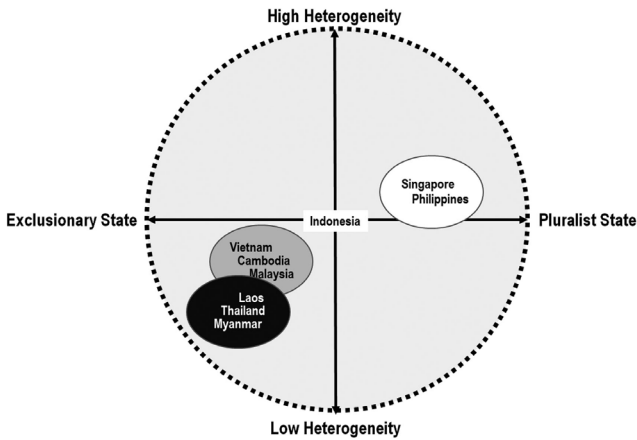


Figure 5. Compass of ethnic minority management based on ethnic heterogeneity

The data shows the negative relationship between the level of ethnic heterogeneity and the level of state violence against ethnic minorities. The relationship between the two variables can be divided into four quadrants. In the upper-left quadrant are countries that have both a high level of ethnic heterogeneity and a relatively exclusionary state, while in the lower-right quadrant are cases of states with low levels of ethnic heterogeneity and a relatively pluralist state. The absence of Southeast Asian countries in either quadrant supports our hypothesis that more homogenous populations are more likely to have exclusionary and violent state policies towards minorities, while less homogenous populations have fewer exclusionary and violent policies.

In the upper-right quadrant are countries that have high levels of ethnic heterogeneity and a relatively pluralist state. The lower-left quadrant shows countries that have lower levels of ethnic heterogeneity and a relatively exclusionary state. Thus, Southeast Asian countries either have low heterogeneity and a force-based governance strategy towards minorities (Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia) or have high heterogeneity and less violent governance strategy towards minorities (Singapore and the Philippines). Indonesia is the exception in the region as it cannot be neatly categorized as a

high-heterogeneity/pluralist or low-heterogeneity/exclusionary state. Still, an examination of Indonesia's governance of ethnic minorities supports its classification as a pluralist state. An analysis of each country's regime type explains its respective minority-governance strategies.

Southeast Asia "presents a perplexing political patchwork" since the region is home to electoral democracies, authoritarian regimes and regimes that have both the competitive and authoritarian characteristics of varying state capacities (Slater 2010: 7). Hence, there are regime distinctions even within the exclusionary state and exclusionary state categories. In the case of the exclusionary states, Thailand, Myanmar and Malaysia are all countries with centralized authorities, while Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are communist-led states. Communist-led states in Southeast Asia, on the other hand, are characterized by "closed and nominally communist political systems with open and mostly competitive market economies" (Reilly 2013). As for pluralist states, the Philippines and Indonesia are both considered to be personalistic regimes, which are defined as states "where factional dynamics revolve almost exclusively around access to patronage resources distributed by the dominant leader" (Fionna and Tomsa 2017). According to Winters (2011: 135), these personalistic regimes are dominated by oligarchs whose near-monopoly of legal institutions is complemented by the "vicissitudes that accompany personalistic rule." Singapore, in contrast, is characterized by Levitsky and Way (2002: 53) as an electoral authoritarian regime due to "the uneven playing field between government and opposition."

An examination of Southeast Asian regime types indicates a relationship between the degree of authoritarianism and whether they can be characterized as exclusionary states. Countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are more likely to employ exclusionary management mechanisms. Myanmar, while classified as democratic by Polity, is still dominated by the military which led the expulsion and massacre of the Rohingya (Wong 2018). Pluralist states, on the other hand, are relatively more democratic, as demonstrated in the cases of the Philippines and Indonesia, which have been less intrusive in the affairs of minorities. The exception is Singapore, which has a Polity score lower than Malaysia and Myanmar. Singapore, in contrast to the

Philippines and Indonesia, “developed institutions and systems that would allow it to control, manage and harness its residents’ diversity towards state-defined interests” (Juliano, Ordoñez, and La Viña 2016: 75). Hence, while exclusionary policies in Singapore are rarely explicit or violent, they are nonetheless enforced with a severity and consistency while affected groups can hardly contest them in a systemic, political process-oriented manner.

### **Conclusion**

This study has presented data showing a moderate correlation between ethnic homogeneity and the types of ethnic minority management a state employs. The region, indeed, currently experiences ethno-nationalist policies, albeit with constraints. Though our model admittedly paints many broad strokes across the countries in the region, these results justify further elaboration on the particularities of each country and the general type of management. There are also further opportunities to test other intervening variables such as the level of democratization and economic development. Democratic and authoritarian countries necessarily have different norms regarding minorities and will definitely complicate the model. Another variable worth testing is religion, another ingredient of nationalism which remains relevant for certain countries such as Thailand and Malaysia but may not be as significant in others. This study presumes ethnic minorities to be politically-neutral elements and would benefit from distinctions between minorities actively engaging in forceful or violent resistance, as well as those who have chosen non-violent engagement. Overall, despite the preliminary nature of its findings, this study is an important initial step in understanding the logic behind the current ethnic minority crises throughout Southeast Asia.

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