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ETHNO-NATIONAL SEPARATISM IN EAST ASIA: THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Final reviewed draft *Non-Traditional Security in East Asia*

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INTRODUCTION

Ethno-national separatism is increasingly influencing the domestic and foreign policies of East Asian States (1). This, of course, is not unique to East Asia and it is not uncommon for even long-established states to grapple with the challenges of institutionalising their borders according to the preferences of political agents at the centre of regime in the face of challenges from groups within that territory who view themselves as forming a distinct ethnic group and who believe this group should form the basis for autonomous or independent political institutions (2). There is no easy response for states to such threats. One of the hardest possible policies for a state to adopt is to agree to contract its territory (3). There is also an active debate about whether granting greater territorial independence to ethno-national minority groups through decentralisation or federalism actually placates a group and helps to secure the existing integrity of the state or if it merely enables separatist groups to push for further independence and possibly even secession at a later stage (4). What is more, there are ongoing critiques about whether many of the existing understandings about nationalism in general, and the management of ethno-national separatism in particular, have much traction outside of the largely European context in which they originated (5).

An important dimension to the promotion and sustenance of ethno-national separatism is the influence of international politics and the norms of international society, a dimension that has

been neglected historically in studies of ethno-nationalist conflict in general (for an example of this general neglect see Horowitz (6)). Interdependence theories, such as that of Krasner (7), although not written with nationalist conflict in mind, serve as a useful corrective by showing the importance of the international dimension upon domestic politics. Krasner argues that changes in the structure of international relations as a result of globalisation and the rise of greater economic interdependence create more peaceful relations and trust between states. In other words, interdependent states should see a decline in security threats, certainly between different nation-states.

Bringing in Krasner rightly reorients our attention towards the significance of the international dimension, but it is possible that such approaches underestimate the potential impact of international politics in sustaining and promoting ethno-national tensions. It is important not to overlook that the norms and values of international society around sovereignty and self-determination, and the increased reach and hegemony of these values as a result of globalisation, may in fact fuel ethno-national separatism. Where Krasner rightly assumes that interdependence will reduce conflict between states, there is the possibility that the spread of a particular set of shared values may promote separatist demands from within a state's borders. In this way, the international and national dimensions interact, with ethno-national groups using the norms of popular sovereignty and the view of self-determination as a human right to promote their demands for greater separatism, thus straining their relationship with the incumbent state.

In this chapter we argue that where ethno-national separatists exist in East Asian states, many of these groups are using the norms of international society around democracy and human rights, linked explicitly to the right to self-determination, to promote their demands for more autonomy and express their dissatisfaction with the sovereign regimes they reside within. Broadly speaking there have been two sets of responses to these demands. Firstly states may comply with these

rules and principles and grant some degree of autonomy, such as with Aceh in Indonesia, albeit this was a long and contested process. Secondly, states may perceive the rise of ethno-national demands as a threat to their territorial stability and an indirect Western intervention if international actors are involved or if separatists use the international norms to seek legitimation for their cause. Therefore, states might respond through policies of suppression, as in the case of Chinese policies towards its ethnic minorities and the very limited degree of autonomy they are willing to grant to these groups, the most notable examples of which are the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and the Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

This chapter begins by looking at forms of nationalism in East Asia. It looks to explore the dominant forms of nationalism in this region and how these relate to existing theoretical understandings that were originally developed in the context of 19th century Europe. We show how the different forms of nationalism adopted at the state level did not prevent the emergence of ethno-national separatism in some countries. Next we move on to exploring the role of the international dimension in sustaining and influencing separatist ethno-nationalism. We offer a conceptual framework of international society that focuses on its promotion of the norms of sovereignty and self-determination and how these rose to a largely hegemonic position. We then argue that these international norms provide a context for separatist ethno-national groups to justify their demands for greater autonomy and self-determination. We discuss how the increase in ethnic separatism is, in part, the outcome of the rise of self-determination rights based on claims of having a distinct identity from the majority identity of a state. In our final section we look at the specific context of East Asia from this perspective, highlighting the international dimension of some of the cases. Throughout this chapter we use 'ethno-national' in a broad sense to refer to distinct identities. We use ethno-national to refer to ethnic, religious and linguistic groups who perceive their group as a nation and demand their own governing

institutions. We use separatism to refer to demands for greater autonomy from the state, which may take the form of secessionist demands but may also just include demands for the decentralisation of power (8).

NATIONALISM IN EAST ASIA

It is widely accepted that there is no single trend or conceptualisation that defines Asian or East Asian nationalisms. The literature on Asian nationalisms encompasses a range of debates, such as when Asian nations emerged, the reasons that led to the formation and re-formation of Asian nationalisms, and their similarities and differences to Western nationalism. Our aim here is not to resolve these debates or explain Asian nationalisms with a mono-theoretical approach. Rather we aim to give a very brief overview of the explanations of nationalism in Asia, highlighting how a single national identity in some multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic states could not contain all nationalist sentiments and minority ethno-nationalist groups exist at the sub-state level.

Essentially, ethno-national separatist conflicts can be seen as conflicts over two competing desires for what groups should define ‘the people’ in any political system that asserts sovereignty over a population. State nationalism and separatist ethno-nationalism have different causes, they follow different trajectories and they are exposed to different internal and international issues and influences. However, there are parallels in the development of nationalism in many East Asian countries – for example, many state nationalisms emerged in a post-colonial context in multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic societies. What is more, a state’s national identity often emerged and evolved in a specific context of developmental and security concerns which it was hoped that a single over-arching identity would help to tackle. It was in such political

contexts that many national identities in East Asia defined the minority identities that were included or excluded from the state's national identity.

The most common debate about Asian nationalisms is whether they are somehow organic to that region and therefore differ from the forms of nationalism that emerged in Europe in the 18th century or whether Asian nationalisms can essentially be understood as imitations of European nationalisms. This debate tends to reflect the well-established division within nationalist studies between perennialist and modernist understandings of the roots of nationalisms.

Ethno-symbolist explanations, which sit within the perennialist camp, view Asian nationalisms as organic to this region, albeit they draw on the European model when shaping their distinct forms of nationalism. Smith famously argues that each national group is built around a pre-existing 'ethnie', which he defines as 'named units of population with common ancestry and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historical territory and some measure of solidarity' (9). In other words, the ethnie is an objective and pre-existing core at the heart of a national group (it is perennial), but then that ethnie is interpreted and filled out in specific forms according to the particular political or social context. According to Smith, Western nationalisms and nation states emerged through an elite and top-down process of bureaucratic incorporation of the ethnie into a concrete set of institutional and political nation-state structures. This form of building and incorporating nationalisms into a state was then diffused to other countries beyond the West, mainly to those territories that were penetrated through colonisation. Elite individual members of a specific ethnie in places such as Eastern Europe, parts of Africa and parts of Asia, received a Western education or some Western socialisation through the colonial presence, which they subsequently combined with their own ethno-histories and the distinct linguistic cultures of their ethnies in order to build a mobilising nationalism and to modernise their nation-states (9). Smith labels this 'vernacular mobilisation' and 'ethno-historical appropriation' (10).

Chatterjee (11) has built on such understandings, arguing that postcolonial Asian nationalisms have managed to imitate Western nationalisms successfully while preserving their distinct culture.

A modernist approach, on the other hand, sees Asian nationalisms as emerging and evolving by imitating the processes originally seen in the forging of European national identities in the 18th century. Gellner (12), who limited his theorising of the nation to the European context, saw the rise of nationalism as a sociologically necessary response to the requirements of the modern industrial world and its new organisational character. Anderson (13) attributes the creation of nationalisms to the rise of print capitalism and the ability to produce mass media which could shape an overarching identity, something which was deemed necessary by communities to enable their cohesiveness to continue beyond the death of individual members after the abatement of religious and dynastic sources of continuity. Thus nations were 'imagined' by their members who identified themselves with other members of their nation without necessarily coming into contact with them. This was imagination not as form of crude delusion to posit the nation's existence, but it was the use of imagination as a way of envisioning one's community, its boundaries and major demarcations of identity.

In the most insightful framework that attempts to capture the varied forms of nationalism in Asia, Tonnesson and Antlov (14) draw on the perennialism and modernism debate as well as different versions of modernist theories of nationalism to identify three forms of nationalism, linking these to state formation – official nationalism; plural nationalism; and ethno-nationalism. Official nationalism refers to when a state uses its bureaucracy to establish, sustain and disseminate the idea of a nation and a national homeland through cultural practices, traditions, historical texts, and so on. Tonnesson and Antlov give Japan, Thailand and Malaysia as successful examples of official nationalism, although they indicate that official nationalism is only one of the routes that led to the creation of Malaysia. Another example is Korea, whose official

nationalism was halted by the Japanese invasion and assimilation policies. China also represents an example of official nationalism. Plural nationalism refers to multi-ethnic, multi-religious or multi-linguistic states that formed mainly where the inhabitants of a certain territory seceded from a larger state or colonial power. Indonesia and the Philippines are examples of plural-national states. Finally, ethno-nationalism leads to the formation of a state based upon the identity of a distinct ethnic, religious or linguistic group. This same doctrine can also drive sub-national and separatist groups who aspire to a state of their own. One such example would be the separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965, which was largely based on ethnic and religious differences.

The key point in understanding ethno-national separatism in East Asia is that the creation of a nation-state in this region, and elsewhere, along either ethnic or official lines inevitably entails an attempt at homogenising the population under a single overarching identity. Not all groups will be willing to sublimate their actual or imagined ethno-national identities under this singular overarching umbrella. The ethno-symbolist approach may expect states to form based around ethnies almost through a naturally occurring or logical process but, even if this is the case, this cannot eliminate the fact that many other ethnies are pushed aside, undermined or excluded in the process of valorising a single dominant national identity and building the political institutions of the state around this. The case of Tibet in China is a strong example of the desire to achieve greater separation and recognition of what is seen by its group members as a distinct identity.

This process is also true in plural-national states. While plural-national states may be, by definition, more tolerant of recognising multiple identities at the state level, there may still be conflict over the degree of recognition afforded to different identities and whether all identities are recognised or if this is limited to a favoured few. The Christian Karen in Myanmar or the

West Papuans in Indonesia are examples of minority groups in plural-national states who are refused recognition or granted only limited recognition.

The same is true of more modernist understandings. Even if we do not assume that identities remain fixed at their core, as in the ethno-symbolist understanding, minority identities that challenge the state may well still emerge in certain conditions. Modernisation may render it necessary to structure increasingly complex societies around a single national identity or a favoured set of plural identities and, thanks to technological advancements, this may have become possible in the 18th century for the first time in human history, but the success with which this is done is certainly not a given. For the modernist, the identities these states were founded upon were constructed ethnic categories created by colonial regimes and the formation of states based on these ethnic categories also created its own majority-minority politics (14). Again, some national identities are inevitably excluded in the process of creation and these may continue or re-emerge to demand political recognition.

Asian forms of the nation are no different, in this regard, than those in other parts of the world. One of the great challenges facing the modern nation is aligning a nation's borders and political institutions with a single over-arching identity and having this accepted by the population that falls within those borders. In fact, in the Asian case this may be even more difficult given the challenges of post-colonialism facing many of these states (15). Given the multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic nature of many East Asian states, building a single overarching national identity and gaining support for this was always going to be challenging. Table 1, drawing on data from Alesina et al (16), provides an index of ethnic, linguistic and racial fractionalisation for countries in East Asia. This is a score between 0 and 1 where the higher the value the greater the degree of fractionalisation. This shows that although there are certainly some very ethnically homogenous states in East Asia (notably Japan and North and South Korea, but also China, Cambodia and

Vietnam), the average fractionalisation in this region is relatively high and some states have very high levels of ethnic, linguistic and religious fractionalisation (notably Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar).

Of course, there is no simple correlation between ethnic fractionalisation and ethno-national separatism. Other factors, such as the geographical concentration of an ethnic group and the policies adopted by the state, need to be taken into account. After all, the XUAR and TAR in China highlight how low fractionalisation does not prevent ethno-national separatism. However, this data does show the challenges and limits to creating a homogenous state based around a dominant national identity.

[Table goes here]

There is a thriving body of literature that discusses under what conditions minority nationalisms within a country will emerge as ethno-nationalist separatist movements. The vast majority of such explanations place the emphasis on the internal politics within a state. These can relate to the structure of the state itself, notably the degree to which a state's institutions allow for the representation of minority interests (17); avoiding regression to exclusive politics based around essentialist ethnicity following decolonisation (15); the extent to which the institutions in a country build cross-cutting identities or a single non-divisive identity (6; 18; 19; 20); and, the extent to which political elites at the centre of a state are willing to accommodate the group (3). Alternatively they can relate to the minority ethno-national group, such as the sense of grievance within the minority group, the degree to which they desire power, or the depth of their national identity (21; 22).

What has been overlooked in many discussions of the rise of minority ethno-nationalist movements and how they promote their goals has been the international context. There can be little doubt that many of the domestic factors mentioned above are at play in the case of East Asian separatist movements, as can be seen from much of the literature on specific cases (23; 24; 25). However, what is less clear is how these groups respond to influences from international society and, more specifically, how they incorporate these influences into their goals and discourses.

INTERNATIONAL NORMS AND ETHNO-NATIONAL SEPARATISM

Prior to looking at the influence of international society in the specific context of East Asia, we first wish to outline a framework for understanding why looking to international society is valuable to understanding minority ethno-national separatism in general. In this section we use Krasner's (7) notion of international regimes to bring in an international dimension and place the focus on the rise of sovereignty and self-determination as international norms. We combine this with an understanding of how globalisation has influenced nationalist movements by giving them the opportunity to frame their appeals and values within the normative framework endorsed by international society. As a result we see many separatist ethno-national groups framing their grievances and justifying their demands using the idea of self-determination as a liberal democratic human-right they should be afforded. Thus, rather than assuming that the international dimension will reduce nationalist tension it may well be adopted by ethno-national separatists to promote their goals.

Both incumbent states and ethno-national separatists often justify and legitimate their goals and policies using the same principle, namely sovereignty, but interpreting this principle in very

different ways. This can be seen in how they adopt and frame their claims within the values of the dominant international regimes. International regimes are 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations' (7). These principles and norms emerge as a form of repeated behaviour, which in turn constrain the possibilities of acceptable behaviour for future actors. In order for an actor's or an organisation's behaviour to be accepted as legitimate in the international arena, it must abide by these dominant norms and principles. What is more, the need for international legitimacy has increased in the age of globalisation (26). According to Krasner, the most significant such principle in the international arena is that of 'sovereignty', and given the way in which sovereignty is exercised and framed today, the notion of 'self-determination' can easily be added alongside this.

Ethno-national groups aspiring to become their own sovereigns, either through secession or through the creation of decentralised or autonomous regions, posit a strong link between their national identity and their right to govern a specific territory. From this perspective, sovereignty over a defined territory should be exercised by the people due to their distinct ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious identity which they inextricably link or root in a specific area of land. Such an interpretation actually embodies a very specific reading of popular sovereignty, one inextricably linked with, and reduced to, self-determination. Yet this comes into conflict with other interpretations of the meaning of sovereignty often favoured by incumbent states and, more importantly, it may come into conflict with territorial integrity and regional security.

Although sovereignty forms one of the dominant principles underpinning international regimes, this is not a singular concept. It is necessary to disaggregate this concept to understand how both incumbent states and separatist ethno-national movements can simultaneously use this idea to promote two often, but not inevitably, competing claims. Sovereignty embodies varying

definitions ranging from classical Hobbesian sovereignty through to Rousseau's popular sovereignty to present day understandings of sovereignty grounded in covenants and international law (27). In fact, Krasner (28) identifies four different types of sovereignty. Firstly there is 'domestic sovereignty', which reflects the classical meaning of sovereignty as the ability to control domestic affairs in a specific territory. This embodies the vision of the state as holding the monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Secondly, there is 'Westphalian sovereignty', which refers to the adoption of the idea that a state has control over its domestic administrative, political and economic affairs and that, through the recognition of its borders, the state should be immune from external intervention. Thirdly is the notion of 'interdependence sovereignty', which acknowledges the impact of globalisation on sovereignty and the consequent reduction in a state's ability to control its boundaries. In a globalised world, states are less able to control movements and issues that cut across their boundaries due to the increasing accountability and responsibility of states to the outside world through individual petition processes, international organisations, and limits on the use of force, human rights abuses, gas emissions and so on. Finally, there is 'international legal sovereignty' which refers to the international recognition of states by other states and international bodies.

What is observed in the 20th century is the rise of interdependent and legal forms of sovereignty to sit alongside the domestic and Westphalian forms. That is not to say that the traditional notions have evaporated or have been replaced, but rather they now exist alongside these different conceptions and understandings and, at times, challenge them. This is important for the case of ethno-national separatists because if sovereignty now includes the notion of 'international legal sovereignty' and the need for international recognition of a state's legitimacy to rule over a specific territory and people, then issues arise regarding which people a state is legitimately entitled to rule over and how this should be decided. What gives a state legitimate authority on a

particular territory and its people or can those people legitimately make an alternative claim to sovereignty?

The principle of self-determination, which has become embedded within international regimes today, raises further challenges about who can legitimately rule over a group of people and it enables the separatist aspirations of ethno-national groups. Self-determination has risen to become a universal principle, along with the idea of popular sovereignty, or the idea that in order to gain ‘international legal sovereignty’ you need the consent of the governed (29). The principle of self-determination has risen to become a prominent part of the norms and rules that shape the interaction between different actors within international society (30). This principle has a strong influence over the development and evolution of nationalisms, both those which aim to build a nation within an existing state and those that aim to forge a new independent territory for an ethnic group. For minority ethno-national groups self-determination is presented as a human right which is violated if the group is not given political recognition and which forms the basis to their appeals to international society. However, for the incumbent state, self-determination is more akin to that associated with the Westphalian model of sovereignty – the international order should not intervene in the domestic affairs of a sovereign country who may not wish to recognise the minority ethno-national group.

Self-determination as a modern democratic entitlement dates from the aftermath of WWI and has since risen to become an international norm. In January 1918, the US President, Woodrow Wilson, announced his vision for instigating a new post-War order in Europe once the war ended. He declared that the world should be ‘made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression’ (31). Despite some

strong opposition to these plans he was successful in convincing other state leaders at the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919 to support his implementation of these policies.

Although the implementation of self-determination was limited to Europe, this did not stop the leaders of other communities and colonised peoples elsewhere from perceiving self-determination as legitimating their claims to statehood. The Versailles Peace Conference received numerous telegraphs and letters from individuals and organisations claiming to represent national groups from all over the world, requesting the support of the US and other Western powers for their national liberation – requests that typically ended in vain (32). Such was the unintended consequence of fuelling these claims that even Wilson himself eventually questioned the principle because, ‘as he put it, nationalities began appearing everywhere’ (33). Throughout the next 50 years, the principle of self-determination, and its definition through the subsequent UN Charter and other international covenants, became enshrined as a widely recognised international norm. The 1945 UN Charter explicitly refers to self-determination in Articles 1(2), 55 and 73(b). Article 1(2) states that one of the purposes of the UN is ‘To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal right and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace’. A more encompassing meaning of self-determination appeared in the twin UN 1966 Covenants, Article 1, which was adopted from the United Nation General Assembly Resolution 1514 (1960): ‘All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of their right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development’.

By the 1970s, and following the widespread period of de-colonisation, the use of self-determination in legal documents indicated an increasing emphasis on the cultural and human rights of communities and the expansion of self-determination to cover all peoples – the people of states, people within one state, and people that resided in more than one state. The 1970

Declaration on the Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Principle VIII of the 1975 Helsinki Accord suggested that, if there were human rights or minority rights violations executed in the host state, and if minority rights could not be realised within the incumbent state, then external self-determination in the form of secession could be considered legitimate (34; 35). In short, since the end of World War II the meaning of self-determination as a universal principle became further embedded in the international normative framework, but it also began to take on a strong rights-based dimension.

Following the end of the Cold War, self-determination was even further enshrined and linked to the international recognition of the new states. It was also suggested that self-determination needed liberal-democratic political institutions to be realised fully. The 1990 Conference on Security and Cooperation 'explicitly associated internal self-determination with Western-style democracy' (36). At the same time, the European Commission declared that they would recognise the new republics emerging in the ex-communist state territories only as long as their people enjoyed self-determination, human rights and democracy as described in the main international covenants, such as the UN Charter, the Helsinki Act and the Charter of Paris (37). The US, too, announced that it expected self-determination claims to be based on a democratic political process in the dissolution of the USSR and Yugoslavia.

Through its gradual evolution and since the post-Cold War period, sub-state ethno-nationalist groups were able to view self-determination as a device that could facilitate greater autonomy or even breaking up states. Despite the detailed explanations on self-determination in legal documents, there are no clear criteria for defining who has the right to self-determination or who the people/nation should be. This allowed minority groups to assert a claim to self-determination and to frame this within a context of human rights, particularly in ethnically diverse societies. This offered the possibility of gaining international support and recognition for

separatist claims given its resonance with the norms of the dominant international regimes. The dissemination of this rights-based framework as a result of the spread of globalisation facilitated minority ethno-nationalisms rather than eroding them. Minority ethno-national groups can claim to rely on the same principles and norms as official nationalism, namely those principles emanating from the dominant international regimes, such as a desire for self-government and democracy. Here appeals for sovereignty are conflated with self-determination and demanded as a human right. Abuses of human and minority rights are seen as reasons for doubting the legitimacy of the incumbent state's sovereignty and promote separatist claims.

To summarise our conceptual argument, key principles that constitute international regimes today place a heavy emphasis on sovereignty and this concept is used by both incumbent states to justify the existing order and by minority ethno-national groups to advance their claims. This is made possible by the competing meanings of sovereignty. Incumbent states view sovereignty in a Westphalian light that grants them independence from external interference to rule their territory and respond as they wish to internal groups with alternative claims to sovereignty. In contrast, minority ethno-national groups view sovereignty in a more popular light, viewing it as a rights-based conception of self-determination. In this way it is not inevitable that the international dimension will reduce ethno-nationalist tensions within states by promoting interdependence and regional security, but rather the international dimension and the spread of key ideas may be appropriated by groups to advance their claims.

ETHNO-NATIONALISM IN EAST ASIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TENSION BETWEEN SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

States containing separatist ethno-national groups in East Asia often associate the demands of these groups with international principles that potentially weaken their sovereign power. The demands of ethno-national movements appear as threats to the security of their boundaries, power and influence at regional and international levels. Of course, this is not unique to East Asia, but in this region there is an easily observable discrepancy between the states' strong emphasis on traditional forms of sovereignty, such as Krasner's 'domestic' and 'Westphalian' sovereignty, and the popular sovereignty demands of minority nationalist groups. More recent interpretations of the meaning and implications of the principle of self-determination, especially since the end of the Cold War, have had a significant impact on minority groups and facilitated their claims. Demands for self-determination in the forms of separation, autonomy or a more plural society pose a threat to the traditional understanding of sovereignty of these states. This may, in turn, feed into East Asian states' anti-colonialist and anti-interventionist scepticism towards international norms.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) offers a good illustration of the discrepancy between the traditional forms of sovereignty and self-determination principles interpreted in the context of democracy and human rights. The main norms and principles ASEAN is founded upon are potentially incompatible: 1) non-interference in the internal affairs of other member states as the basis of regional peace, which was enshrined in the establishment of ASEAN; and 2) promoting democracy and fundamental freedoms, which is emphasised in the new Charter signed by member states in 2007 (38). Achieving 'a more democratic, transparent, tolerant and pluralist regional order', as aspired to in the 2007 Charter, necessitates prioritising human rights and democratic principles over the sovereignty of the state in some cases (38). However, ASEAN members, rather than defining their regional and domestic policies in line with these democratic ideals, conduct their interactions based on protecting regional order and stability and ensuring the protection of their sovereignty (38). Therefore, the existing

international regime among ASEAN states holds contradicting principles, where regional security and stability concerns appear to take precedence over democratic principles when these principles come into conflict.

The prioritisation of concerns for security and stability over democratic and human rights is not unique to the member states of ASEAN and can also be observed in other East Asian states. The significance of sovereignty and security concerns lead these states to develop predominantly assimilationist or suppressive policies towards their ethno-national minority groups in some cases. At the foundation of such policies is the incompatibility explained above between key international principles – the principle sovereignty and non-interference and the principle of self-determination in the context of human rights and democracy. Ethno-national separatist groups claim to struggle against the violation of their human rights and democratic rights. Most of the incumbent states with separatist ethno-nationalist groups in their territories, on the other hand, perceive the activities of these groups as threat to their security and economic stability coming under the guise of democratic and human rights, and use anti-colonial or anti-interference rhetoric to justify their suppressive policies.

The Chinese constitution officially recognises 55 minority groups and it protects the interests of these minorities, prohibiting ethnic discrimination and supporting the economic and cultural development of minority inhabited regions (mainly concentrated in the southern and western border regions) and permitting the use of minority languages (1). Yet at the same time, official Chinese nationalism demands assimilationist policies in spite of the constitutional protection of minority identities afforded by the constitution. This has led to tensions between different competing identities. The resettlement of the Han Chinese in Western parts of China since the 1980s has been influential in the increasing rise in Uyghur nationalism in that region, where the Uyghur grievances have mainly focused on the perceived suppression of their identity and

demands for greater separation and autonomy (1). These grievances are often expressed in a human rights framework with appeals being made to the international arena, such as through groups like the Uyghur Human Rights Project. In response, China's perceives such demands as challenges to its sovereignty and threats to its ability to control its internal territorial integrity. The response is one of suppression and limiting this to an internal sovereign issue.

Tibet offers a similar illustration and China's refusal to discuss this issue in the international arena can be seen as a reflection of its aim to protect its sovereign interests and insulate internal threats to its territorial integrity from outside support (39). The dispute between China and Tibet dates back to the 1950s when Chinese troops entered Tibet. Although initially the two parties agreed to Tibetan self-rule under Chinese sovereignty, this agreement soon fell apart due to local resistance, including the failed armed uprising in 1959 which resulted in its leaders fleeing to India. Since the 1990s, Tibetan leaders have shifted their position from one of making secessionist demands to one of seeking more autonomy and decentralisation. What is more, in the last few decades, no other states have publicly or explicitly promoted the idea of an independent Tibet as a solution to the Tibet-China issue (39). However, Tibetan attempts to involve international actors in 1987 led to even further deterioration in the relationship between the two sides, which had been in informal talks since the late 1970s. Again many of the appeals by Tibetan leaders to the international community took the form of appeals based on democratic and human rights, including the right to self-determination. The international support that Tibetan leaders aspired for was never fully realised, undermining their attempt to use international norms to challenge traditional notions of Chinese sovereignty. Roeder's (40) segmental institutional thesis, which he developed in relation to the dismemberment of the USSR may also have some applicability here. Roeder developed hypotheses on the circumstances under which the ex-republics and autonomous regions of the USSR were more likely, or not likely, to secede and become new nation-states. One of his arguments focused on the role of

outside allies, where he argued that the existence of international allies was one of the important factors that led a region to aim for secession, whereas international isolation might lead the region to give up that aim. Therefore, in the Tibet-China case, it can be argued that the possibility of having international support increased the scale of pro-secession/independence movements, and this, in part, led to the state adopting suppressive policies as a reaction to possible international involvement in an ethnic-dispute. The isolation, in turn, led to a dilution of Tibetan separatism away from seeking secession towards demanding more autonomy.

States that formed through plural nationalism in East Asia have not been immune from separatist threats either, even though the response of plural states may differ and be somewhat less suppressive and less concerned with enforced assimilation. For Tonnesson and Antlov, Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar represent the form of plural nationalism that emerged following the end of colonial rule (14). In Indonesia and the Philippines, shifts towards multiparty democracy and transparency were observed following periods of military rule and dominance by strong political leaders, largely deriving from the development of national economies and the emergence of an urban middle class (38). In the case of Indonesia, the Acehese's ethno-national demands were accommodated and East Timor seceded, however, the demands of West Papuans have been suppressed. In the Philippines, increasing tensions between Christian and Muslim sections of society can be observed and the separatist demands of Muslims in the south have grown.

International principles played a significant role in the separation of East Timor from Indonesia. East Timor, previously colonised by Portugal, declared its independence in 1975 when it was annexed by Indonesia with the covert support of Australia and the US (5). The denial of the East Timorese demand for independence in 1975 was followed by military resurgence and a brutal conflict between the East Timorese and Indonesian military until 1999 when the United Nations

played a significant role in ensuring the implementation of self-determination for East Timor and its eventual declaration as an independent state in 2002 (41). Philpott argues that international support for East Timor arose in response to the brutal repression of the East Timorese at the hands of the Indonesian government and, more importantly, due to the changes in a world where democratic sovereignty was seen as the more legitimate source of authority.

The case of Aceh also reflects the role of international involvement in reaching an agreement for a protracted and long-term conflict between the Free Aceh Movement and the government of Indonesia, albeit again contingent domestic factors were also highly important. The Acehese movement mainly draws on discourses concerned with the protection of the religious rights of the Muslim population and their right to self-determination given their religious and territorial identity. The Acehese rebellion against Indonesia began soon after Indonesia included Aceh as one of its provinces in 1950. The conflict between the separatist Free Aceh Movement and Indonesia continued throughout the second half of the 20th century, resulting gradually in increasing autonomy for Aceh and freedom in its religious affairs. The peace agreement between the Acehese movement and Indonesia came after the tsunami disaster of 2004 when internationally facilitated peace talks in Helsinki took place in 2004 (42). According to the agreement, Aceh was granted special autonomy where political parties could function and enter the elections.

This is certainly not to claim that all states formed through plural nationalism in East Asia respond in a more tolerant fashion to ethno-national separatists than those states based on a doctrine of official nationalism. Indonesia's response to the separatist demands of West Papua stands in contrast to its recognition of Aceh since 2005. Myanmar, another example of plural nationalism as identified by Tonnesson and Antlov, is an authoritarian presidential republic where the military has been dominant and violently suppressed its separatist minority

movements. Myanmar's domestic scene has been marred with constant ethnic and religious separatism since its independence from British rule in 1948. Ethno-religious conflict has evolved hand-in-hand with the evolution of the state, first during a democratic stalemate under a parliamentary regime until 1962 and then during the subsequent period of military rule. The Karen, Mon, Kachin and Shan are among many ethnic separatist groups in Myanmar, and the Muslim Rohingya people are considered by some observers to be one of the most severely suppressed minority groups in the world (43). Although ethnic separatism appears to be in decline in Myanmar, the signs of a solution to ethno-national challenge are yet to appear on the political horizon (44).

Having followed differing trajectories in state formation, this leads East Asian states with separatist ethno-nationalist movements to developing different policy responses towards separatist or autonomist ethno-nationalist groups within their boundaries. Incorporating the socio-historical causes of how East Asian states treat their ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and separatist groups is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the history of colonialism and foreign intervention is common to East Asian states and might partly explain the attitudes of some of the East Asian states towards their separatist groups and their scepticism towards international norms that appear to strengthen the self-determination demands of separatist ethno-national groups. Scepticism towards international norms when observed arguably comes from the history of colonialism and Western interventionism in this region, as anti-colonialist ideology has shaped these states' perceptions of international ideals (45). Another explanation for assimilationist and suppressive responses of the majority of states is the weakness of the democratic character of many of their political systems (45). Some of the democratisation theories are in line with this explanation, along with the lack of regional democratic powers who could provide linkages and leverage for democratic pushes (46; 47).

CONCLUSION

The trajectories followed by ethno-nationalist groups and the outcomes of their struggles have varied among East Asian movements and states. This is partly because of the fact that, since the early 20th century, nationalism and state formation in East Asia have followed varying routes due to different colonial pasts and distinct processes in which their sense of nationhood was established. Moreover, the types of political systems and levels of social cohesion in these states also varies, inevitably shaping and influencing the depth and impact of ethno-national movements. Again, this takes us back to the understanding that there is neither one form of East Asian nationalism nor one type of separatist ethno-nationalism in East Asia. However, a common theme across these cases is the role of norms within international society which are appropriated by minority ethno-national groups to promote their claims and give them greater impact. In this context Krasner's notion of international regimes is useful as an explanatory framework in understanding how nationalist movements frame their appeals and values within the normative framework endorsed by international society. This has often come into conflict with the more traditional sovereign claims by the incumbent states who may treat such claims with suspicion and scepticism towards outside influence or who may, in a limited number of instances, respond to such claims by granting a degree of autonomy.

This chapter provided a conceptual framework to understand the international dimension to some of the East Asian ethno-national separatism cases. We do not claim that this framework is fully explanatory in all ethno-nationalist cases in East Asia. The observations made here lack extensive empirical testing and would need a deeper integration with the internal political and sociological aspects of ethno-nationalism in each state. However, the chapter points to the need to understand the impact of international regimes, and the principles that constitute them, on

ethno-nationalism in this region. Further empirical research to test the assumptions made in this chapter might lead to fruitful research and help to understand further the trajectories followed by different separatist movements in East Asia.

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Table to be inserted in page 5

| Country | Ethnic Fractionalisation | Linguistic Fractionalisation | Religious Fractionalisation |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Brunei | 0.34 | 0.34 | 0.44 |
| Cambodia | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.10 |
| China | 0.15 | 0.13 | 0.66 |
| East Timor | - | 0.53 | 0.43 |
| Indonesia | 0.74 | 0.77 | 0.23 |
| Japan | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.54 |
| North Korea | 0.04 | 0.00 | 0.49 |
| South Korea | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.66 |
| Laos | 0.51 | 0.64 | 0.55 |
| Malaysia | 0.59 | 0.60 | 0.67 |
| Mongolia | 0.37 | 0.37 | 0.08 |
| Myanmar | 0.51 | 0.51 | 0.20 |
| Philippines | 0.24 | 0.84 | 0.31 |
| Singapore | 0.39 | 0.38 | 0.66 |
| Taiwan | 0.27 | 0.50 | 0.68 |
| Thailand | 0.63 | 0.63 | 0.10 |
| Vietnam | 0.24 | 0.24 | 0.51 |
| Average | 0.33 | 0.39 | 0.43 |

Note: scores are a measure between 0 and 1 where the higher the number, the greater the level of fractionalisation. These are taken from Alesina et al (16).