

## Research Outline

Cluster on “State Responses to Extremism in Post-Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia”

3 October 2019

### I. Background

In Southeast Asia, we had already witnessed many tides of incidents which states consider “extreme”. Contrary to moderate and pluralist characteristics underpinning societies in this region, that emphasize co-existence among the people with diverse backgrounds, extremist challenges to the state portray acute criminality, such as killings of innocents, and violence. To this, the states in Southeast Asia responded to the tides of extremist incidents by various means: through strengthening legal frameworks and law enforcement, policies that reaffirm socio-culture diversity, tackling economic disparity among citizens and ensuring equitable income distribution, and other political measures which engage challenges from opposition political parties and civil society. These measures successes and failures. Hence, we believe that there is a need for assessing how states responded to various kinds of extremism in Southeast Asia and provide policy recommendations. This research hopes to deepen our understanding of policy responses to extremist threats to the state foundations, and contribute to the dialogue on containing extremism in the region.

### II. The Research

A state needs to respond to its social demands of various kinds while its responses carry different strategies and intentions. Depending on regime types (liberal democracy, authoritarianism, sultanate, dictatorship, etc.), state responses may vary but we assume that the ultimate goal of state response is regime survival. We, therefore, assume that a state is resilient if its responses achieve the goal of regime survival despite the extremist challenges whereas a state is vulnerable if the extremist challenges influence to change the “shape” (extremist-preferred new law is introduced, for example) of the state. We also recognize state responses do not always achieve intended goals.

In this research, we define “extremism” as challenges by groups seeking to overturn the very foundation of state. As for the foundation of the state, we define it as any policy, doctrine, actions to ensure co-existence of people with diverse backgrounds. Given the acute sensitivities of inter-ethnic relations in this region, it is appropriate to locate

maintenance of diversity (or social cleavages such as ethnic, religious, racial, and class, for example) as the foundation of the state. Different maritime Southeast Asia states adopt different ideologies to cement its foundation: *Pancasila* and *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* for Indonesia; *Rukunegara* for Malaysia; Republicanism for Philippines; and multiculturalism and meritocracy for Singapore. In other words, any disturbances of social cleavages seriously challenge the existence of the state in this region. For example, because Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore consist of socially diverse population, the critical state policy has been to ensure the people's co-existence – in other words, logically, any provocations of social cleavages to divide a society almost always require state responses.

As for the extremist cases in this research, we choose the following two: (1) Religious challenge that seeks to install alternative systems of government (eg global caliphate regime, or Islamic constitution with *hudud* laws) and (2) Seeking alternative institutions (eg to establish own educational institutions, and banking systems). As for the former, the alternative Islamic governance does not recognize democratic political system because the governing mandate must come from god, not from the people. Therefore, the revivalist challenge aims to overturn the existing representation system, and given the attachment of Islamism to a particular racial group, the challenge provokes to divide the society into ethnic lines. As for the latter, instilling Islamist principles in existing educational institutions also carries significant divisiveness among diverse populations, hence, being another example of provoking social cleavages and potentially overturn the state foundation.

This research is three-fold. (1) We first identify the cases of above-described two Islamist challenges in the following maritime Southeast Asian countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

In our view, it is important to pick at least 3 cases of each challenge in each country in order for us to see the process during which state is “shaped” as a result of these challenges. By looking at the process, we hope to see the trajectories of state formation in these countries.

These countries are selected for obvious relevance to the theme, and in addition, two (Indonesia and Malaysia) are Muslim majority countries while the other two (Singapore and the Philippines) are Muslim minority countries. The section of these countries may

highlight interesting insights into the discussion on majoritarianism – key characteristics of democratic governance. The proposed time period in this research is from the democratic openings (1997/98 financial crises in some countries) to present because this covers reasonable years during which political opening in these countries become visible, that there is enough material for the research, and allows the team to finish the research to meet the early 2021 project deadline.

(2) Second, after identifying the cases of extremist challenges, we then assess the state responses in the areas of law enforcement, socio-culture, economy and politics. In this analysis, we categorize the types of state responses as: suppression, cooptation, adaptation, and any combination of above. In this analysis, we pay close attention to the international dimensions in which key international actors are, to a certain degree, “involved” in the process of state responses.

(3) Third, in order to provide policy recommendations, we evaluate how “effective” these responses were, and in that, our goal is to decide with careful nuance that if the given state is resilient or vulnerable in each case, and why. Here, Fukuyama’s work on state scope and capacity will be useful for comparative purposes. As mentioned above, we are aware that different regime types at different times employ available methods for responding to these challenges, and not all responses achieve intended objectives. By describing the trajectories of state formation overtime, we hope to capture dynamic interaction between extremist challenges and state responses.

### III. Timeline

September 2019

Kickoff meeting among the team and decide on the research concept and direction

26 June 2020

SKYPE meeting among the team

February 2021

Presentation at Tokyo Forum

### IV. The Team

Dr. Takeshi Kohno of Japan (Toyo Eiwa University, GRIPS Alliance)

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