International Relations of the Asia-Pacific Volume 9 (2009) 1–18
doi:10.1093/irap/lcn024 Advance Access published on 6 November 2008

Teaching international relations in Southeast Asia: historical memory, academic context, and politics – an introduction

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Abstract

The teaching of international relations (IR) at universities in Southeast Asia plays a role in the production of knowledge about the IR of Southeast Asia. As a complement to the scrutiny of published research output, a focus on teaching offers one pathway toward comprehending the constitution of meaning in both the IR of Southeast Asia and the broader IR discipline. This introduction to a collection of essays on the teaching of IR in Southeast Asia also discusses the potential ways by which attention to teaching may uncover the socializing role of

Received 28 August 2008; Accepted 7 October 2008

pedagogy. An inquiry into the discipline as it is taught in the region throws light on how particular national legitimating myths are reproduced, the transmission of collective historical memories, the dominance of certain schools of international thought, and the role of civil society in Southeast Asian knowledge production.

The study of Southeast Asian international relations (IR) has undergone a number of changes since its emergence as a field during the Cold War. Theoretical preoccupations have shifted over time, as have the empirical questions that have attracted most attention. Questions of identity formation, ideational sources of political power, and prospects for regional community building have come to dominate a large part of scholarly output, marking an evolution from earlier 'problem solving' research that examined the national security of individual states and balance of power considerations. In the policy world, the diplomatic turn toward introspection regarding the future of Southeast Asian regionalism, writ large in the ASEAN Charter project, serves as another inspiration to look back in curiosity at the ideational paths that have led Southeast Asian power elites to contemplate a hint of European Union-style international institutionalism.

The existing IR literature about Southeast Asia has begun to address the question of how and why policy discourses and preoccupations have changed. Two leading journals in the field, *The Pacific Review* and *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, have, since the late 1990s, published between them two special issues and several articles assessing the archaeology of IR research about the region. To date, the self-conscious scrutiny of IR as a discipline has involved academics in the English-speaking 'West' more than those located in Asia. This situation is increasingly at odds with developments in the region. Two decades ago, Stanley Hoffmann diagnosed IR as a particularly American social science (Hoffmann, 1977). Yet, as shown in this collection of essays, the IR discipline in Southeast Asia has seen rapid growth in institutional terms over the last decade: new departments and centres focusing on IR have been opened in a number of Southeast Asian countries, and courses on IR have proliferated. The number of students graduating with major or minor concentrations in IR, as well as in related areas of study, such as strategic and security studies, has grown markedly at both undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, a growing amount of the scholarship

on the IR of Southeast Asia is now being produced by individuals located in Southeast Asia. Despite this development of the discipline in the region, many core questions surrounding the processes of knowledge production in the area of Southeast Asian IR remain unaddressed. Scholars located in the region are now more productive, in terms of their internationally recognized publications, yet how much of this scholarship continues to be produced in the shadow of the West remains an open question. In contrast to the reflective enquiry into the conditions under which 'area studies' knowledge and scholarship on Southeast Asia has been produced (e.g. Sears, 2007), the IR field in Southeast Asia has produced no comparable set of studies.

Given that academic disciplines reproduce dominant ideas through the teaching process – one could even argue that the teaching imperative is hard-wired into the 'DNA' of any discipline – a focus on teaching is a timely complement to the development of debates based on scrutinizing trends in published scholarly output. The 'output' of most scholars surely includes a significant amount of teaching, but what they teach is comparatively neglected as an object of study. A focus on teaching, furthermore, can serve to identify what developments and mutations, if any, are observable as the discipline spreads in Asia.

This special issue offers the first scholarly examination of the discipline of IR *as taught* in leading Southeast Asian universities. In the five country-based articles that follow, academics who are actively engaged in the teaching of IR and related subjects in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, examine the way the subject is taught in universities in their country.[1] Here we set the stage by introducing some of the core questions and issues taken up in the country-based essays by giving explicit consideration to issues of discipline and scholarship, and their relationship to the powers of the day, be they political or economic. We also hope that our modest efforts in this issue will facilitate a common dialogue with western scholars on how the teaching of IR helps shape self-understandings of the discipline.

1 Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain a contribution on the teaching of IR in the Philippines. A survey of IR education in the Philippines would be timely and useful, since the Philippine approach toward IR constitutes an important piece of the intellectual mosaic of the region.

1 Teaching IR in Southeast Asia: questions and context

We have been inspired to undertake this examination of what is taught with a number of different goals in mind. Our first area of interest is to uncover the specific approaches to the discipline in different Southeast Asian countries. The five countries covered in this collection vary not only in terms of national educational infrastructure, culture, and politics, but also in terms of the institutional and personal links that have traditionally oriented their universities to different parts of the world. Furthermore, and particularly relevant to the discipline of IR, the five countries encompass markedly different lived experiences of the modern IR of Southeast Asia, covering the full range of experiences of decolonization, Cold War alignments and warfare, and involvement in intra-regional patterns of exchange, cooperation, and conflict. For all these reasons, we started with the expectation that what was taught under the banner of 'international relations' – particularly IR of Southeast Asia or the broader Asian region – would be likely to differ according to national context. Thus, the most basic question posed to all the authors was: '*how has the subject of International Relations been defined and approached at leading universities in your country?*' Of relevance here are issues such as where courses on IR are taught (in stand-alone IR departments, for example, or as part of broader politics or international studies programmes), whether modules on the IR of Asia (or Southeast Asia, or Asia-Pacific) are offered, the specific topics typically covered, and the kinds of theoretical approaches typically introduced.

An examination of what is taught leads to the question of why it is taught, and why it is taught in the way that it is. Contributors thus also consider a set of more reflective, and necessarily conjectural, questions revolving around the roles of national memory, academic culture, and politics in shaping the IR curriculum. The first of these concerns *the role of national historical memory, or the reproduction of a national legitimating narrative*. Countries in Southeast Asia followed different paths to independence, and espoused different approaches to goals of economic development, national unity, and stability. Contributors consider the ways that national narratives – constructions of history that are created and reproduced through textbooks, educational institutions, national

media and, in some cases, outright censorship – may have shaped the content and approach to IR in university courses. In some cases, there is a compulsory national education component to the curriculum, in other cases, influence can be more diffuse. It is possible that the IR curriculum both reflects and shapes these national historical narratives, and therefore we seek to identify which historical events are typically included in contemporary teaching, and which are glossed over, or excluded altogether. Just as important in this respect is to ask how events are interpreted, both explicitly and implicitly, through the selection of topics, readings, and theoretical approaches. National historical memories and narratives may also influence teaching by naturalizing (or taking as assumed) certain dynamics, empirical conditions, and causal relationships, which might in other contexts be explicitly placed on the table as contested and open to debate.

A second reflective theme considered in some papers is *the relationship between the content of the syllabus of IR courses in Southeast Asian universities and national foreign policy*. For example, are national foreign policy preferences or priorities effectively endorsed through the selection of course material? Or are particular normative definitions of problems and goals embedded in the topic selection, readings or other elements of the course design? In some cases, for example, certain geographic areas or bilateral relationships are given priority emphasis that very much accords with the importance of these countries in national policy terms. In some countries, particular events and issues may receive attention (or become marginalized) in ways that approximate the priority placed on them in national policy circles – but in other countries, teaching may explicitly contest national policy goals and actions.

A third issue addressed in many of the papers is *the extent to which certain schools of IR*, *such as Realism and Marxism*, *are privileged over others*, and *why this might be the case*. Theoretical concerns and approaches are likely to be influenced by the graduate training of university teachers, but may also be conditioned by the national context in which teaching takes place. To cite one example, Marxism may either be explicitly barred from the university curriculum (Indonesia), or officially enshrined within it (Vietnam), although practice in both countries may be at odds with educational policy. Surveys by Huxley (1996) and Chong (2007) show that Realism has been a domineering influence in the evolution of the published research on IR of Southeast Asianists located both

within and outside the region. This is due to the importation of post-World War Two preferences in Western intellectual centres, which treated the non-West as zones of endemic socio-political instability and insecure governments. The articles in this collection ask whether a similar preoccupation shapes the teaching of IR in the region. A related issue to emerge concerns the allegation of American hegemony in the production of mainstream IR knowledge. In the case of Southeast Asia, are regional academic institutions in some ways caught within asymmetrical power relationships within an American-centred 'empire of knowledge'?

Civil society voices and concerns constitute a fourth set of potential influences on the teaching of IR. While the modernizing Southeast Asian nation-state has tended to dominate both foreign policy and (to a lesser degree, in some countries) national education, civil society groups are active in all but the most repressive Southeast Asian states and are clearly articulating their voices in spite of their governments' monopolization of foreign policy prerogatives. A question taken up by a few contributors to this volume, therefore, is *the extent to which civil society voices and concerns have found their way into the IR curriculum*, either through the insertion of issue areas (environment, human rights, or gender, for example) or by seeking to reshape regional relations directly, through movements such as the ASEAN Peoples' Assembly. The degree to which these groups and concerns find their way into the curriculum is of interest both for the way it can be taken to reflect the understandings of what matters and what does not among educationalists in elite universities, and for the potential of exposure in educational settings to affect the mental maps of Southeast Asian students.

The contributors to this special issue focus most on the issue of what is taught, and why, in university-level IR courses. We make no definite claims about the consequences of the curriculum, but argue that the issues discussed here are worthy of attention for a number of reasons. The normative pedagogical question is, of course, of continuing relevance: to what extent do IR courses effectively meet the needs and aspirations of students, or are other needs and purposes prioritized in teaching? A comparative survey of how the same broad subject is taught in different countries in the same region is helpful in highlighting both the strengths and possible weaknesses of the curriculum.

Looking at the teaching of IR may also contribute, albeit indirectly, to research and knowledge-building concerning the practice of IR in

Southeast Asia. One possible pathway is suggested by scholars who have looked at the role of Southeast Asian think-tanks in regional cooperation and dialogue processes (e.g. Evans, 1994; Kerr, 1994; Caballero-Anthony, 2005).[2] They have argued that certain Southeast Asian research institutes have influenced the regional cooperation agenda through the dissemination and promotion of ideas and norms. Although we would not want to make crude causal claims about the significance of what is taught in the classroom, there is a real-world significance to tracing the varied paths and processes through which knowledge and perceptions of the international strategic environment are constructed. Graduates of IR courses not infrequently go on to build careers in the broad foreign policy community: as diplomats, journalists, commentators and others involved in shaping the discursive context, if not the actual practice, of IR. While they may discount the relevance of what was taught in the classroom, or disagree profoundly with it, it is nonetheless almost inevitable that the representation of reality in university IR classes forms part of the cognitive background that graduates carry with them.

A second potential link between the teaching of IR and foreign policy practice in the region stems from the relationship between scholarship and policy-making at the national level. While scholars rarely, if ever, decisively affect national policy, in many countries they face incentives to reflect certain national policy parameters and priorities. Most Southeast Asian institutions of higher learning receive some form of official patronage, and several institutions involved in the teaching of IR have developed close relations with parts of the official foreign policy establishment. Through executive training programmes and seminars, graduate courses aimed specifically at foreign policy officials, consultancy projects, and the region's numerous 'Track II' circuits, there are multiple links connecting officials in the foreign policy community and scholars and teachers of IR, although the degree of closeness varies from one country to another.

While the direction and dynamics of socialization and ideational influence in these overlapping career and knowledge-producing circuits are difficult to identify with any certainty, scholarly and policy circles within

2 A special issue of *The Pacific Review* contains some of the first studies of the think-tank foreign policy communities in selected Asian countries. See *The Pacific Review*, special issue on 'Ideas, Identity and Policy Coordination in the Asia-Pacific', edited by Richard Higgott, 7(4), 1994.

many Southeast Asian countries do share some marked commonalities in outlook. This is particularly the case in countries where these relationships are dense and close, and there are quite strong incentives for scholars to be 'policy relevant', or at least acceptable to policy makers. To the extent that university-level teaching of IR reflects priorities and theoretical schema (conscious or otherwise) current in academic circles, IR teaching can therefore also be expected to open a window onto perceptions, beliefs, and priorities of policy-makers in official circles.

2 Defining 'International Relations' through 'Southeast Asia'?

With the above connections in mind, we believe that when we investigate pedagogical patterns in Southeast Asia, we are in a sense examining a *struggle for the constitution of meaning*. International relations remains very much a discipline in search of a definable tradition of inquiry. This is as much the case in the western world as it is in Southeast Asia. As Torbjørn Knutsen put it, tracing the history of the subject of IR is tantamount to monitoring a body of thought 'which constantly undergoes mutations and transformations, . . . much like hunting chameleons' (Knutsen, 1997, p.6). Knutsen's work serves as an inspiration here since his aspiration to write *A History of International Relations Theory* explicitly understands the study of IR to be a struggle for constituting and reclaiming meanings from both past and present. Why then is the understanding of IR obscured? In many ways, when one adopts the perspective of the sociologies of social scientific and philosophical knowledges, 'the international' is a concept that extends from something that existed *a priori*. IR emerges from the shadows of philosophy ruminating about the good life. Political philosophy will go on to specifically address the ethics and ideals of both human nature and government. Geography and Economics will suggest that settlement and trading patterns are affected by physical landscapes, as well as elaborate the evolution of exchange rates and their differentials. History too harbours international thought within the interstices of scholarship focussing on social, economic, military, and political practices in various times and locations. One can go on to include primary religious tracts and secondary scholarship as progenitors of sorts for the discipline of IR.

Therefore, one may legitimately ask – what goes into the study of IR? A simple answer would be a blend of a little of everything in both humanities and social sciences. Time and space would count as considerations to account for 'local variations' as it were. Others might counter with arguments that the universality of humankind beckon investigation, hence philosophical studies of human nature and psychology would be involved. This leads us to consider modes of behaviour exhibited by personalities conducting IR. Here we need to address memory and perception as socialized processes and outcomes. The recurrence of international war would also bring with it an attendant series of questions for an IR agenda focussing broadly on the salvation of, or coexistence with, a tragic human condition.

Knutsen's study of that largely western IR thought that has apparently passed off as mainstream IR theory argues that there were three phases to putting a body of texts together. The first covered the Renaissance in philosophy and science, as well as the first wave of modern European expansion into the 'New World', Asia and Africa. Iberian lawyers and Italian historians and courtiers authored what is presently coined as the 'defining texts' on sovereignty, monarchy, statehood, the place of religion, and the rights of subject peoples. Unsurprisingly, these writers hailed from the leading empires of their time. The second phase of the evolution refined and synthesized many of the concepts thrown up by the 'long sixteenth century' as Knutsen labelled the first phase. By the 1600s, the characteristics of the nation-state as we know it were beginning to take shape. God and secularism seemed to be in contention over the foundations of sovereignty. This coincided with prolonged religious wars in Europe. Below the level of the European nobility, the common people were experiencing creeping revolutions in their modes of economic existence, the fungibility of material wealth and political power, and egged on by middle class thinkers, began to entertain nationalism and democracy as political futures. The nationalities of the thinkers grew even more eclectic–Englishmen like Thomas Hobbes and Jeremy Bentham; Frenchmen like de Callieres, Duc de Sully, and Abbe Sainte Pierre; and Dutchmen like Hugo Grotius all made their mark in inscribing 'international politics'. The list is even longer if one considers the contributions made by every middle power imperialist and national liberator throughout the 1800s. The third major phase identified by Knutsen started around 1900 and was heavily scarred by the First and Second

World Wars. Clearly, the ideals of the Enlightenment remained a source of inspiration for the redemption of westernized humanity as witnessed by the so-called 'Idealist thought' in the interwar years. This re-emerged in the final years of World War Two and blossomed into the neo-liberal writings of Mitrany, Keohane, Krasner, Nye, and Doyle. Realism, in contrast, seemed to have been around forever if one traces its lineage back to the Renaissance. This reflection on the so-called mainstream canon of IR thought should be more than a history lesson; it hints at the capricious interplay between time, space and power in the way humanity learns about its international conduct.

In many ways, the western experience paints the example of situating the teaching and study of IR within its historical context. Within that context, rivals for dominance of the historical moment contend not just to secure their place in politics but also to socialize their projected futures. In bringing together a collection of 'country-specific' papers – Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – that explain why 'IR' is being taught the way it is in the respective countries' institutions of higher learning, we are dealing in earnest with mental maps, historical reproduction, propaganda, and other cognitive schema involved with the modernizing project of the Southeast Asian nation-state.

This pedagogical trek sheds light on why and how history matters in current practice. By asking whether certain popular characterizations of the foreign policy practice of regional countries can in fact be linked to outlooks fostered and reflected in educational establishments, we hope to shed more nuanced light on these somewhat stereotypical characterizations, such as Indonesia's preoccupation with territorial integrity and strong federal control of foreign affairs; Singapore's pro-capitalist, culturalist, and 'rational-scientific' prognoses of developmental ills; Malaysia's 'love-hate' relationship with western powers; or even the post-Cold War 'swing' in Vietnam's foreign relations from defensive socialism toward an external-friendly national renovation project. It is also possible that these countries' varied and often contradictory postures toward ASEAN integration can be seen reflected in circuits of socialization and learning linking educational and policy spheres.

There are two senses in which we can ask whether the region 'matters' to the discipline of IR. The first concerns whether things are different in Southeast Asia. Some of the assumed state goals that drive mainstream (read English-language, American-influenced) IR theories are, plausibly,

universal throughout the modern nation-state system.[3] The goals of national survival, the protection of sovereignty, and the acquisition of the material means to protect that sovereignty, which stand at the heart of most Realist IR theorising, are certainly as current in Southeast Asia and other parts of the non-West as much as in the countries where most theories of modern IR originate. But, as Mohamed Ayoob and others have argued, the priorities regarding national survival, and the threats to integrity and sovereignty faced by most 'Third World' states, are typically very different from those in the developed world. In much of the developing world, the demands of nation-building, state-making, and overcoming often-violent conflicts at the domestic level may supersede the external nature of threats that mainstream IR takes for granted (Ayoob, 1998).

With the exception of Singapore, all other Southeast Asian countries are developing, or 'Third World', countries.[4] While significant parts of the region have enjoyed above average rates of economic development since the 1960s, other typically 'Third World' conditions identified by Ayoob have been, and in some cases continue to be, pressing concerns. Nation-building and national integrity, for example, have been challenged by a number of domestic groups seeking to overturn either the terms of independence-era political settlements or the status of national territorial boundaries, which for the most part were laid down as a result of the ambitions and actions of the region's previous colonial powers. As it has often been repeated, the security threats perceived by policy makers in the region have tended to emphasize domestic rather than external threats to security, with the definition and salience of external

3 As Hoffmann (1977) and others (e.g. Bull, 1969) noted earlier, IR has been dominated by American scholars and American academic conventions. While the field has certainly developed a greater degree of theoretical and methodological pluralism (Smith, 2000; Waever 1998; Crawford and Jarvis, 2001), an element of American scholarly 'hegemony' persists (Smith, 2002). IR as a discipline can be seen as divided between largely self-referential subfields: one which conforms with mainstream American scholarly conventions and theoretical preoccupations, and another where British-influenced approaches to theory and methods are more apparent.

4 While Singapore is – and has been for nearly two decades – unquestionably 'developed' in terms of enjoying rich world levels of per capita GDP, technology, infrastructure, and many human development indicators, national rhetoric repeatedly returns to themes more consonant with the concerns of developing countries, and the country's official stance in international negotiations – for example, on the issue of climate change – is to insist on its classification as a developing country.

threats often taking hold as a result of their perceived connections to (imagined or real) domestic threats (Sukma, 1999).

In these conditions, we might expect both the IR scholarship on the region and teaching of IR within it, to reflect regional experiences and priorities. To the extent that this occurs, the teaching of IR in Southeast Asia should be somewhat different from the IR that is taught in Europe or North America, at least in courses dealing with the region itself. In fact, this collection of papers shows that the national experiences and priorities of different countries in the region tend to have been grafted onto the frameworks and theoretical preoccupations of mainstream western IR. In many cases, the authors show that 'Introduction to International Relations' in a typical Southeast Asian university looks anything but distinctively Southeast Asian, instead tending to adopt a mixture of British and American texts and theoretical approaches. Even in courses on the IR of the region, theoretical frameworks – to the extent that they are consciously deployed – are those of western IR. Many of the Cold War-era western scholars who wrote on the IR and foreign policies of Southeast Asia – such as Michael Leifer, Donald Weatherbee (2005), and Sheldon Simon – are still in good standing in the IR curriculum in many Southeast Asian universities. However, as made clear in the essay on Singapore by Alan Chong and See Seng Tan, scholarship on the region, both from within and without, has moved a long way from an exclusively realist preoccupation with hard security, and recent scholarship in fact tends to favour constructivist and other pluralist approaches.

The second sense in which it is worth asking whether and how Southeast Asia matters broadly to IR concerns its constitution as a region. Regions, it is now commonplace to argue, are not natural but constituted by the needs and perceptions of both scholarship and governments. In the case of Southeast Asia, an influential article traced the genesis of the term 'Southeast Asia' (or its earlier, British version: South-East Asia) to colonial precedents, the World War II Allied Southeast Asia Command, and then, the American creation of Southeast Asia as a Cold War subject of area studies (Emmerson, 1984). Most of the essays in this collection testify to the ongoing legacy of Cold War American programmes to educate Southeast Asians in university courses in the United States, and produce, through research funding and field programmes, scholarly knowledge on the region. The influence of

this legacy continues to be noted, and challenged, in current scholarship (Sears, 2007).

The nature of Southeast Asia *as a region* emerges as a somewhat surprising aspect of both scholarship on the IR of the region and university courses on the IR of Southeast Asia. In both, regional cooperation in the form of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), together with its antecedents and its spin-offs, looms large. This focus on regional cooperation and processes of interaction is very much in line with the current influence of constructivist scholarship, as the subject matter particularly suits theories that ascribe core significance to interactive processes, self-understandings, and identity. A significant consequence of recounting the IR of Southeast Asia as a story of regional cooperation (e.g. Acharya, 2000) is that the large-scale conventional wars fought in the region become marginalized. The devastating Indochina wars are reduced to being a backdrop for the formation of ASEAN; both the US bombing of Cambodia and the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime that arose thereafter are effectively eclipsed by fixing attention, instead, to ASEAN's so-called finest hour in orchestrating the international isolation of the Vietnamese-installed Cambodian government and (rarely mentioned in these terms) supporting the Khmer Rouge-dominated opposition to this government.[5]

3 Common themes, variations, and preliminary conclusions

One of the purposes of this collection of articles is to highlight both commonalties in the approach to teaching IR in Southeast Asian universities and intra-regional variations. The countries covered in this survey differ in ways that are likely to affect the way the subject is taught. Their postwar international historical experiences vary, first, in the way these countries achieved their independence (only Thailand had existed, formally at least, as an independent country during the colonial period). At one end of the spectrum, Vietnam's armed struggle for independence lasted 30 years and carried a tragically high price in terms of human life lost. In contrast, Singapore and Malaysia assumed independence under

5 An excellent revisionist account that challenges the conventional view of ASEAN norms and how the organization related to Cambodia can be found in Jones (2007).

terms negotiated peacefully with Britain, the former colonial power, which continued to provide military aid to the new post-independence governments. Indonesia's national revolution – against the Dutch attempt to re-establish colonial control – lasted four years and included both an active military dimension against the Dutch and the simultaneous playing out (some would argue derailment) of an attempted social revolution (Anderson, 1972). It is interesting to note that despite this variation, virtually all of the country papers refer to the 'national struggle' for independence as an important historical memory or event, thus creating an impression of commonality across the region.

A second variation among these countries is the degree and immediacy of the external military threats they faced. Again, Vietnam stands out as having unquestionably been under the most severe external military pressure, in the form of the extended wars with both France and the United States. By the time open warfare involving American troops in Vietnam had escalated, the other Southeast Asian countries in this survey were all either explicit American allies, providing basing facilities and other support, or were implicitly aligned with the United States. Notably, however, while paying due respect to the nationalist struggle, contemporary Vietnamese teaching of the IR of Southeast Asia, as described in the article by Pham Quang Minh, places more emphasis on periods when Vietnam received support from other Southeast Asian countries. In his account, Vietnam's membership of ASEAN is foregrounded, along with the benefits of regional cooperation in ASEAN, while the antagonistic role that ASEAN members (and ASEAN as an organization) previously played does not figure prominently.

In the case of Indonesia, an overriding concern with national unity and territorial integrity has filtered perceptions of external threat. As analysed in Bob Hadiwinata's article on the teaching of IR in Indonesia, official fears about domestic threats to stability, in particular the government's obsession with the threat of communism that permeated almost all spheres of Indonesian society, meant that under the authoritarian government known as the 'New Order' (1966–98), Marxist texts were banned and, for some of this period, required university courses included lessons on 'military leadership' and national defence concepts. Major foreign policy initiatives, such as the establishment of ASEAN in 1967 as an anti-communist bulwark against a perceived threat of regional instability that might in turn have threatened national integrity, are

largely uncontested by Indonesian IR scholars. Similarly, despite the official doctrine that Indonesia's foreign policy is 'independent and active', the country's strongly pro-American foreign policy for most of the Cold War has been implicitly endorsed by the academic establishment. Since the end of the Cold War, 'non-traditional' threats have begun to attract attention in a few Indonesian IR departments, but the curriculum in most departments still reflects the dominant perspective of Realist-oriented writers. Perhaps curiously, neither Southeast Asia as a region nor the region's Cold War-era wars figure prominently in the overall IR curriculum.

In the case of Thailand, as recounted in the article on Thailand by Kitti Prasirtsuk, the country's perception of external military threats was explicitly reflected in academic teaching and scholarship during the Cold War. Thailand's experience as a 'front line' state in the second and third Indochina wars received a great deal of attention by Cold War-era Thai scholars and teachers of IR, a position reinforced by the dominant 'nationalist' narrative portrayed in school history textbooks. However, not only have some Thai scholars of IR attempted to redress this nationalist bias, the content of courses on regional IR now emphasize more contemporary issues, with a considerable focus on ASEAN, as well as a wide range of transnational, non-state actors, and processes.

In contrast, external military and existential threats assume a much greater prominence in courses on Singapore's foreign policy and regional IR. As the Singapore paper recounts, the Singaporean scholars who have taught IR at the National University of Singapore have been particularly concerned with the issue of Singapore's survival as a small state, and the perceived vulnerabilities believed to arise out of its size and location. As noted by the authors, an embedded Realist outlook can be inferred from the statements of first-generation political leaders of Singapore, a worldview that suited the ruling party's 'early nationalist narrative that Singapore was a small state permanently at the mercy of larger predators'. Somewhat paradoxically, while the perception of a threatening international environment is deeply lodged in the national historical narrative and repeatedly propounded by Singaporean leaders, the country's actual post-war experience of military engagement with a hostile power has only ever been minor and peripheral, amounting to low level

incursions during Indonesia's 'Confrontation' of Malaysia when Singapore was briefly part of Malaysia.

In many ways that parallel the state of Asian studies in the United States during the Cold War, Southeast Asian IR academics were forced by circumstances dictated by the sovereign powers ruling their national education systems to define their relationship with political power. Just as Bruce Cumings (1997) has pointed to the complicity between successive US administrations' Cold War priorities and funding for relevant areas of scholarly inquiry, all of the national academic stages surveyed here reveal a story of a muted struggle between autonomy in teaching and solidarity with the national project. Questions of ethical or normative identity surface in the interstices of each of these national surveys. One's academic livelihood depended on how far one could benignly associate with developmental goals defined by the sovereign powers. Indonesia and Vietnam exhibit this academic vulnerability to the utmost degree, whereas the Malaysian and Thai cases reveal spaces for negotiation toward a pluralist pedagogy. Singapore stands in the middle of this spectrum where the dialectical tussles in academia reveal both quite a high degree of 'uncoerced' natural convergence between government and academia-cum-civil society and the advent of some experimental theorising.

Having said that, most of the academics in the countries surveyed, with the possible exception of the Vietnamese case, still have to contend with interference from another power – the free market. This power is sometimes dubbed 'Americanization', which implies that academic pedagogy and output can only be measured according to the discipline of competitive demand and supply. Universities extract profit from academic labour; hence the concomitant need for course content that is consistent with imputed 'global popularity'. In this way, Bob Hadiwinata and K.S. Balakrishnan and, to some extent, Kitti Prasirtsuk, Alan Chong, and See Seng Tan argue that there might be no end to some degree of dependency upon western definitions of 'popular mainstream' theoretical flavours.

Movement toward more pluralism and independence in IR teaching and research in Southeast Asia should still be possible if the region's academics are willing to multitask, become intellectually supple, and interrogate all possible local meanings of modern statehood and IR. Perhaps ironically, the most insightful statement of the way forward for our

research project might be quoted from a propagandistic Vietnamese publication titled *Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy*: 'This [indigenous] school must have strong national and people's characteristics, inherit and develop our national glorious traditions and cultural identity, at the same time adopt [the] quintessence of world diplomacies and cultures' (Nien, 2004, p. 268).

Acknowledgements

In addition to the article contributors to this project, the authors wish to express their appreciation to Andi Wijayanto, Bilveer Singh, Johan Saravanamuttu, Kwa Chong Guan, Mely Caballero-Anthony, Pranee Thiparat, Vedi Hadiz, and Zakaria Haji Ahmad for providing comments on the papers presented at the associated workshop at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore on 3–4 March 2008. Nala Lee provided invaluable administrative assistance in relation to the workshop. We acknowledge funding for the workshop by the Cognition and Behaviour Research Cluster of the NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

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