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Nationalism and Globalization

East and West

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Nationalism and Globalization

East and West

Edited by **Leo Suryadinata**

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Contents

<i>Contributors</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>ix</i>
1 “Yugoslav” Nationalism at the End of the Twentieth Century <i>Trond Gilberg</i>	1
2 Nation-Building and Nation-Destroying: The Challenge of Globalization in Indonesia <i>Leo Suryadinata</i>	38
3 Globalization and Singapore’s Search for Nationhood <i>Jon S. T. Quah</i>	71
4 Globalization and Nationalism in the United States: A Historical Perspective <i>Joel Hodson</i>	102
5 Globalization and the Challenges to Malay Nationalism as the Essence of Malaysian Nationalism <i>Halim Salleh</i>	132

6	Nationalism and Globalization in Australia <i>Michael Wesley</i>	175
7	Nation, Nationalism and Globalization in France <i>Laurent Metzger</i>	200
8	National Identity and Adapting to Integration: Nationalism and Globalization in Japan <i>Takashi Inoguchi</i>	216
9	Globalization, Nationalism, and the Modernization of the United Kingdom of Great Britain <i>David Martin Jones</i>	234
10	Nationalities, Nationalism, and Globalization: The Case of China <i>Chang Pao-min</i>	258
11	Grasping the Nettle: Indian Nationalism and Globalization <i>Kripa Sridharan</i>	294
12	Nationalism and Globalization in the Russian Federation at the Millennium <i>Frank Cibulka</i>	319
13	Conclusion <i>Leo Suryadinata</i>	344
	<i>Index</i>	356

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≈ Preface ≈

After the end of the Cold War, nationalism re-emerged as a challenge to world order. Many countries have disintegrated as a result of ethnic and religious conflicts, which have been interpreted as a clash of different types of nationalism. The former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are two examples. The situation in the Balkans is often cited as an example of national disintegration. Some have cited nationalism and religion as two important factors that have disrupted the Balkans, but others have attributed it to globalization as the major culprit. What have been the factors contributing to conflict and national disunity? Is the situation in the Balkans unique? Why do some countries remain intact? Is it only a matter of time before other multi-ethnic countries will disintegrate?

It was the challenge of nationalism and globalization that led to the undertaking of this project. Apparently, the roles that these two forces play and the impact of globalization on the countries differ. A comparative study was initiated to find the answers to questions raised. This was not an easy task but we felt that the project was a worthwhile one.

The first hurdle was the definition of the terms themselves. There is no general agreement on the definitions of both nationalism and globalization as they are interpreted in accordance with the concept and theory used by each individual scholar. However, if there is no basic agreement on the key terms and concepts, a comparative study or any

generalizations will not be possible. For this project, it was suggested that the paper-writers adopt working definitions of the key words, or at least, to use some of the definitions in their study. The definitions have been taken from well-known writers but their selection reflects my understanding and perhaps bias on the subject matter. For instance, I view nationalism as a concept which is related to nation or nationhood, but I do not argue which one comes first. I also assume that nationalism is related to the concept of ethnies or ethnicity, but they are not identical. They are also different from the concepts of race, state, citizen or citizenship.

Key Terms Used

Below are the suggested definitions of the key terms used in the project:

- Ethnie or ethnic group is linked to assumed common descendant. Max Weber and many sociologists use it to refer to a group of people who share a common ancestry — real or imagined — and a common culture. However, the second component should be considered as secondary, because not all ethnic groups share an identical culture. I would like to suggest that ethnies is used primarily for a group of people who believe that they share a common ancestry;
- Nation is a socio-cultural and political concept. I would like to suggest that Rupert Emerson's definition of nation be adopted. It is defined in terms of a sense of belonging to a community of people who share the same heritage and would like to share the same future. It commands the "supreme loyalty" of the people who are prepared to die for it. A common language is an important component of a nation.
- There are at least two kinds of nation: ethnic-nation and social nation. The former is a nation based on one ethnic group; the latter is a nation based on multi-ethnic groups.
- Nationalism is hence defined as an expression of "national" feelings. It often takes the form of a movement to glorify the "nation" which is either in existence or in the making.
- Race is used to refer to physical characteristics, for instance, physical features and skin colour.
- State is a political entity where there are three major components — a sovereign government, a people, and a territory.
- Citizen or citizenship is linked to a state. It is a political and legal concept rather than a socio-cultural one. Therefore, citizenship should be differentiated from nationhood. Ideally, citizenship should

also be differentiated from nationality, but many continue to use them interchangeably as if the citizen is a member of a nation.

- Globalization is used to mean a process of globalizing but it is used here to refer to the following: “the intensification of worldwide relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa” (Anthony Giddens).

The Proposed Study

Scholars of nationalism often point to Western Europe, especially France, Germany and Italy, as the first countries where nationalism was born during the late eighteenth century. Since then, nationalism has spread all over the world. However, some scholars argue that quite a few Asian nations are older than those of the West. Others maintain that nations in East Asia are unique — the concept of Western nationalism cannot be compared with Asian experiences. How valid are these claims? Is it just a matter of different definitions or the existence of different historical experiences?

However, there is no doubt that both Western and Asian nations have faced the challenges of globalization in recent decades, and they have become more intense since the 1990s. The decline of communism and socialism as ideologies, the decreasing importance of national boundaries for capital, companies, and even labour, have had profound implications for national identity. Nevertheless, the impact of globalization on the states is not identical. It has been greater on some compared to others. What have been the effects? Did it lead to stronger nationalism or national disintegration? What happened to national identity? Is the concept of nation still relevant in the era of globalization?

To answer the questions raised above, we selected twelve countries — six from the West and six from Asia — for study. The selection of these countries was based on the availability of experts that we could mobilize, but the countries ultimately chosen represent a wide range of national experiences. In Europe, France is an example of the first Western modern nation, assumed to be homogeneous. The United Kingdom is a modern multi-ethnic nation. Yugoslavia is an example of nation-building that failed. Both the United States and Australia are immigrant states, one of which has arguably achieved “nationhood”, while the other is still searching for it.

In Asia, Japan is an example of a homogeneous nation. Both India and China are examples of multi-ethnic nations, but the former does not have a dominant ethnic group while the latter does. Indonesia is an

example of a nation based on a lingua franca. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic nation with an indigenous majority. Singapore is an immigrant country in search of nationhood.

Elements to be Included in each Case Study

We are aware that each country has unique features that cannot be subsumed in a general framework. Nevertheless, to make the studies comparable, each paper-writer was urged to include the following elements:

1. Origins of nation: the role of ethnicity, race and religion; a brief discussion on the nation and their major components.
2. Concepts of citizen, nation and ethnic; state-defined and community-defined ethnic and nation.
3. Presence and absence of “national indicators” or “national markers” (for example, national symbols, national language, national education, “national religion”, national institutions, etc).
4. Nation-building/nation preserving and ethnic groups: strategies and process. State policy to promote nation-building and preservation of the nation should be discussed. Although a historical account is needed, the emphasis should be more on recent/current periods.
5. Any separatist movement or major ethnic riots or ethnic war?
6. Challenges to nationhood, including globalization and immigration.
7. Is nationalism a force leading to integration or disintegration in the respective country? What are the problems and prospects of nationalism and globalization.

Of course, the above served only as a guideline. Some writers have developed their own themes, but they have addressed some, if not all, of the issues outlined in the above framework. The findings of the project are summarized in the conclusion.

Leo Suryadinata