Nationalist Movements in Southeast Asia

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Outline of the lecture

- The sources of national consciousness in Southeast Asia
- The independence of the Philippines
- Nationalist movements in Indonesia
- Myanmar’s struggle for independence
- Thailand’s constitutional revolution
- Nationalist movements in Vietnam
- Late development in Malaya, Cambodia and Laos
- Nationalism in Southeast Asia reconsidered
The sources of national consciousness

- The experiences with early nationhood
  - Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, (the Philippines)

- The experiences of Western colonialism
  - Colonial economic exploitation
  - Colonial administration

- Education and training in the West

- ‘Self-determination’: 14 points by Woodrow Wilson

- Related events in neighboring Asian countries
  - The Boxer Rebellion and nationalist movements in China
  - Japan’s military victory against Russia
  - The Indian National Congress
The independence of the Philippines

- Changes in the Spanish colonial policies
  - The cultivation of cash crops was encouraged
  - Educational Code of 1863 on compulsory and free primary education

- José Rizal and his legacy
  - A Western educated poet, novelist, journalist and activist
  - Demanding freedom of press and representation of the Filipinos
  - *Liga Filipina* established in 1892
  - Executed on December 30 1896
  - Rizal’s novels and poems created a national consciousness
The independence of the Philippines

- The intervention of the US
  - Reasons: the US entered a major conflict with Spain in the Caribbean; to protect US economic interests in the Far East
  - US assistance to the nationalist movements led by Aguinaldo
  - Yet, the US-Spain Treaty (1898) ceded the Philippines to the US

- The US policies towards the Philippines
  - Fighting the Filipino resistance (1899-1902)
  - Political reforms and a legislative assembly in 1907
  - Filipino ‘independence missions’ to Washington (1919-1934)
  - The Great Depression and the Tydings-McDuffie Act (1934)

- The Japanese occupation (1941/2-1944): invasion

- The independence of the Philippines on 4 July 1946
Nationalist movements in Indonesia

- Domestic grievance in the early 20th century
  - Education gave rise to a new class of professionals who were discriminated under the Dutch rules
  - The Dutch and Chinese grip on the economy increased the economic distress of indigenous community

- The Sarekat Islam
  - Founded in 1912, it offered a common link binding the divergent Indonesian communities together
  - Promoting a commercial spirit and the ‘true religion of Islam’
  - Anti-Chinese, anti-capitalism

- The PKI and the 1926 revolution
  - The Partai Kommunis Indonesia (PKI) formed in 1920
  - The PKI uprising and proclaimed a republic in 1926
  - Crushed by the Dutch government
Nationalist movements in Indonesia

- **The PNI movement**
  - Perserikatan Nasional Indonesia (PNI) established in 1927 by Sukarno
  - PNI was outlawed and its leaders were jailed in 1930

- **Japanese occupation and the Sukarno government**
  - Japanese occupation (1942-1945): liberation?
  - Sukarno agreed to form a government and provide assistance
  - *Pancasila*: nationalism, internationalism, the principle of consent, social justice, and the belief in God

- **The Indonesian revolution 1945-49**
  - With the help of Allied troops, the Dutch tried to reclaimed East Indie
  - Sovereignty was finally transferred to Indonesia on 27 December 1949
Myanmar’s struggle for independence

- Colonial exploitation of the country
  - Large tracts of land under rice cultivation for export
  - Indian money-lenders and labors
  - Traditional headmen were replaced with salaried bureaucrats

- Early nationalist organizations
  - Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA) formed in 1906
  - General Council of Buddhist Association (GCBA)
  - Thakin party (1929): Burmese-Buddhist cultural traditions
  - Sinyetha party (1936): tax reduction, protecting farmers from moneylenders

- Government of India Act of 1935: Myanmar separated from India

- Japanese occupation (1942-1945)
  - Cooperative government formed, including the Burma National Army
  - Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL) controlled Myanmar after the Japanese withdrawal in 1945

- Full independence from Britain on 4 January 1948
Thailand’s constitutional revolution

- Thailand as an ‘equal partner’ in Southeast Asia
  - Declared war on Germany during the WWI
  - The only Southeast Asian member of the league of Nations
  - Till 1930, all unequal treaties with Western powers were abolished

- The Revolution of 1932
  - Background: Gold standard despite economic difficulties
  - Bloodless coup on 24 June 1932
  - The end to absolute monarchy: loyal veto maybe reversed

- Thai nationalism in the 1930s
  - Anti-Chinese movement
  - Against British timber firms
  - Renamed from Siam to Thailand in 1939

- The Japanese occupation (1941-45)
Nationalist movements in Vietnam

- Early resistance against French rule
  - Phan Boi Chau: revolutionary monarchism
  - Phan Chau Trinh: Western-style republican constitution

- Nationalist movements
  - VNQDD (Vietnamese Nationality Party) founded in 1927
  - Indochina Communist Party (ICP) formed by Ho Chi Minh in 1930
  - VNQDD and ICP staged unsuccessful uprisings in 1930-31

- The WWII and its aftermath
  - Ho Chi Minh was released, and received support from the US
  - Viet Minh (‘League for the Independence of Vietnam’) launched campaigns against the Japanese-dominated Vichy government in Vietnam → Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)
  - However, the Allies decided to allow China occupy the north and Britain (France) the south
Nationalist movements in Vietnam

The WWII and its aftermath (continued)
- Ho Chi Minh’s strategic manoeuvres
  - Announced the dissolution of the ICP
  - Offered VNQDD seats in the upcoming election
  - Signed agreement with the French to allow them replace the Chinese in exchange for French recognition of DRV

The First Indochina War (1946-54)
- The French and DRV broke up
- In 1949, France announced the birth of Republic of Vietnam as an associate state
- The Soviet Union and China recognised DRV as a response
- The Geneva conference of 1954: divided Vietnam along the 17th parallel into two zones
Late developments in Malaya, Cambodia and Laos

- **Malaya**
  - A Malaya Union was proposed in 1945; However, massive protest led to United Malay National Organization (UMNO)
  - The insurgency led by Malayan Communist Party (MCP); the formation of Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) in 1949
  - MCI (Malay, Chinese, Indian) party won the election in 1955
  - Power handed back to Malaysia in August 1957

- **Cambodia**
  - Free Khmer movement: Japanese support; exile government
  - The King (Norodom Sihanouk)’s ‘crusade for independence’ in 1953

- **The Laos**
  - The Lao Issaak (Free Lao) movement: against the King’s refusal to nullify the Laos’ protectorate status
  - The Laotian Communist party formed in 1952
  - Complete independence in 1954 as a result of the Geneva conference
Nationalism in Southeast Asia reconsidered

- The legacy of colonialism
- The roles of religion during the independence movement: Islam, Buddhism
- The influences of Japanese occupation
- Nationalism and pan-Asianism
- Nationalism and Communism