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A Compendium of Armed Conflicts in Southeast Asia: In Search of Typology

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Abstract:

Wars, armed combat, and military occupations are as old as humanity with conflict arising over mates, food and subsequently territory and material resources and ultimately power, control, and domination. The weapons of conflict have also evolved in sophistication, efficacy, and destructiveness with little sign of abatement. There are presently scores of conflict hotspots (of varying degree) across the globe with others simmering under the surface. This paper details examples drawn from Southeast Asia as an exploratory study to develop a compendium and potential typology set of wars and armed conflicts across the region over time. The aim is to discern patterns of occurrence, and more importantly, primary driving forces and/or 'push' factors that precipitated conflict in the first place. Scrutiny and analysis of discernible patterns might reveal certain conditions and situational commonalities that alert us to the need of making concerted efforts to avoid similar occurrences in the future.

Keywords: typology; wars and armed conflicts; history of armed conflicts; Southeast Asia; factors and determinants

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War does not decide *who is right*, war decides *who is left*.
Anonymous

I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.
Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969)

Introduction

Conflict spans the history of humanity. Discourses on war and conflict are innumerable (see Hodges 2013; Smith 2003; Betts 2017). Likewise, scholarly works on specific wars are a lengthy list (see Riley-Smith and Throop. 2023; Frank 2020). Whatever the genesis and motivation that leads to armed clashes, whether between two antagonistic individuals or two warring sides involving hundreds of thousands, there is a spectrum of foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences that are often more dire than beneficial. The slaughter, the destruction of properties, and the toll of suffering can continue long after the dust has settled and the blood dried. History tells us time after time that the outcome and impact of a clash of arms is the 'the good, the bad, and the ugly'.

How we view and understand such conflicts are often dependent on whose perspective is predominant. The victor's account may boast of the superiority of arms, a righteous and/or holy victory, or a necessary expansion or reclaiming of territories including increasing manpower and natural resources to the motherland. Meanwhile, the story of the defeated is one of counting and mourning their dead, tending their maimed, weighing their material losses, and the damage to their communities, pride, and dignity. For the vanquished the outcome can be a calamity, a disaster, in some instances even the near obliteration of their people or an entire community (ethnic cleansing). Moreover, in the past, it was not uncommon for thousands to be

subjugated and carried away as slaves by the victor. In modern times, the defeated have often been forced to take the burden of blame and pay exorbitant reparations as compensation and atonement. Then, there are the 'innocents', the common men, women, and children who, in most incidences, scarcely knew what the fighting was about; nonetheless, they were swept up by events and suffered the ravages and horrors of war. Conversely, an armed conflict can usher in new beginnings and different trajectories. The French Revolution (1789) for all its bloodletting, swept away the *Ancien Régime* and brought forth a new mindset encapsulated in '*Liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité*' ('liberty, equality, brotherhood'). The American War of Independence (1775-1783) unshackled thirteen colonies in North America from the yolk of imperial Great Britain. Within Southeast Asia, the Indochina wars (1945-1954, 1955-1975) eventually liberated Viet Nam from first French colonialism, and then American interventionism.

Despite the differing *ex-post facto* perspectives on specific conflicts, we can discern certain commonalities. As Sun Tzu (544–496 BCE), the Chinese general, strategist and philosopher, declared in his *The Art of War*:

> The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected (chapter I, paragraphs 1-2) (quoted in Sun Tzu 2003: iii).

Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), the Prussian military army officer, in his treatise, *On War* offers this definition of war.

> War is nothing but a duel on an extensive scale. … we shall do so best by supposing to ourselves two wrestlers. Each strives by physical force to compel the other to submit to his will: each endeavours to throw his adversary, and thus render him incapable of further resistance.
>
> *War therefore is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will* (Von Clausewitz 1997: 5, emphasis in original).

"Violence, that is to say, physical force," according to Clausewitz, "is therefore the *means*; the compulsory submission of the enemy to our will is the ultimate *object*" of war (Von Clausewitz 1997: 5-6, emphasis in original). Furthermore, "war is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, the carrying out of the same by other means" (Von Clausewitz 1997: 22). 'Iron Chancellor' Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898), Germany's unifier and the foremost proponent of *realpolitik* (realistic politics) emphasized war's nation-building function: "It is not by speeches and resolutions that the great questions of the time are decided … but *by iron and blood*" (quoted in Barash and Webel 2002: 58, emphasis added). As such, war, defined in the popular sense, is an armed conflict,

intentional and declared, between political entities involving hostilities of considerable time and scale, and widespread involving an entire territory and/or many territories or region.

However, war's baneful effects, especially the loss of human life, have elicited harsh condemnation and criticism through the ages. The Greek biographer and essayist Plutarch (c. 46-c. 120 C.E.) who wrote of statesmen and soldiers decried that "the poor go to war, to fight and die for the delights, riches, and superfluities of others [the rich]" (Plutarch 1921 10: 167). Likewise, the Marxian perspective expressed cogently by Eugene Debs (1855-1926) in 1917, lamented that, "the master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles" (quoted in Zinn 2005: 27). Somewhat differently, it could be argued that there are no winners in war, only losers and the biggest loser of all is our humanity. As the old Malay adage expresses succinctly:

Menang jadi arang kalah jadi abu

(lit. the winner becomes charcoal, loser becomes ashes)

This brings us to the focus and aims of my paper. Armed conflicts and wars have been commonplace in the region of what is currently termed Southeast Asia. From internal rebellions, peasant uprisings, colonial wars, revolutions to world wars, struggles for independence, ideological conflicts flaring into armed clashes, insurgencies and so-called undeclared wars. The question that arises is why the belligerence and aggressive behaviour resulting in armed conflict? Are wars and conflicts unavoidable or even inevitable? If 'prevention is better than cure' is it realistically applicable in the case of wars, big or small? Utilizing examples from Southeast Asia over the centuries, this exploratory study attempts to develop a typology set of past wars and conflicts across the region. An endeavour that, as far as I am aware, has to date remained uncharted.

The intent is to discern occurrence patterns and identify key driving forces and/or push factors that led to the outbreak of armed hostilities linked to them. A closer examination and analysis of such patterns might, to a certain extent, reveal prominent actors, shared situational characteristics and underlying conditions. This may have import for contemporary hotspots by alerting us, if circumstances allow and/or are opportune, to possible steps for averting and preventing full-blown escalations and clash of arms.

Historical Compendium of Wars and Conflicts in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia, in common with other regions of the world, has had its fair share of conflicts, from short-lived clashes to protracted armed struggles. Besides internal conflict within the region, incursions, and invasions from without were not uncommon. Kingdoms and empires

rose and fell, and spheres of influence and political demarcations were redrawn over the centuries; those who were once aggressors might find themselves on the other end as the pendulum of time changed the fortunes of monarchies, regimes, and modern elected governments respectively.

The following sections give a wide ranging and more detailed picture of wars and conflicts across the region from 100 BCE to 2020s CE. Each conflict is presented with a narrative of developments (events, battles, etc.) including probable determinants and/or driving forces and impacts thereafter.

Pre-Western Period / Prior to Western Intrusion

Pre-European Southeast Asia possessed a long tradition of conflicts where invasions, conquests, colonization, rebellions, and revolts were commonplace. Kingdoms and empires rose and fell on the historical tide, and similarly like the tide that redefined the shoreline, this redrew the geopolitical landscape.

In 179 BCE, Au Lac nation fell to Nam Viet, who in turn succumbed to the Chinese Han empire. By 111 BCE the Han securely controlled Au Lac and Nam Viet. Chinese rule (111 BCE-936 CE) over the Viets stretched over one thousand years, viz. Han dynasty, the Sui (590-618 CE), and the Tang (618-906 CE) (see Goto 1975; Taylor 1983). Anti-Chinese rebellions were aplenty, but none succeeded. Finally, in 936 CE the Viets defeated the Chinese at Bach Dang River and ended Chinese colonial rule. Independent Viet Nam adopts the name Dai Viet (Great Viet) (939-1407 CE) (Shiro 1998). The Ly dynasty (1009-1225) and the Tran dynasty (1225-1400) managed to repel numerous Chinese attempts at re-conquest, viz. the Chinese Sung dynasty (960-1279) launched assaults in the eleventh century and the Yuan (Mongol) (1271-1368) in the mid-thirteenth century.

The imperialist design of dynastic China is apparent in expanding its frontiers southwards into present-day Vietnam. The Vietnamese then undertook a long and protracted struggle for independence against the imperialist mainlanders.

The ninth century CE witnessed the emergence of the Khmer Angkor empire (9th-15th centuries) that dominated mainland Southeast Asia from Myanmar (Burma) in the west to Viet Nam to the east and Laos to the north (see Dagens 1995; Coedes 1963). In the fourteenth century Chao Fa Ngum expanded the Khmer empire in conquering Wieng Chan (ancient name of Vientiane) and Xieng Khuang kingdoms, the Korat Plateau (northeast present-day Thailand), and Meuang Saw (ancient name of Luang Prabang or Phabang).

Meanwhile, the Ho dynasty (1400-1413) that replaced the Tran bowed to the Chinese Ming dynasty (1368-1644) that dominated Viet Nam for two decades (1408-1428). In 1428 the Viets once again triumphed over the Chinese at Lam Son and drove them out of Viet Nam. The Le dynasty (1428-1527, 1533-1789) held a tight rein over Viet Nam (see Whitmore 1969: 1-10).

In the eleventh century, Myanmar saw the emergence and dominance of the Burmans under King Anawrahta (1014-1077) who united the disparate ethnic groups, viz. Mons, Shans, Pyus under the Hindu-oriented Bagan (Pagan) kingdom (Aung-thwin 1985). The Mongol invasions from the mid-thirteenth century sacked the Bagan kingdom. Thereafter, the country was in disarray for the next two and a half centuries (Bennett 1971: 3-53). Intrusion from without resurrected the ethnic fragmentation and the concomitant inter-ethnic struggle amongst them. Finally, stability returned to Myanmar in the mid-fourteenth century with the establishment of the Shan-dominated First Ava (Inwa) dynasty (1364-1527) (Aung-thwin 1996: 881-901).

Meanwhile the protracted Myanmar-Siam Wars for control over the trade across the Isthmus of Kra, the northern Malay Peninsula, and the Gulf of Siam stretched over three centuries, circa 1500s to 1810s (Koenig 1990; Chutintaranond 1995). Burman resurgence in the mid-sixteenth century witnessed the establishment of the Toungoo dynasty (1531-1752). A series of imperialistic expansions through ambitious Kings Tabinshweihti (1531-1550) and Bayinnaung (1551-1581), the former uniting northern Myanmar (Upper Burma) and southern Myanmar (Lower Burma) with Pegu as his base, and the latter's empire stretched from Manipur in the west to Laos in the east and from Ayuthaya to the Siamese-Cambodian border (see Lieberman 1984). Both rulers were empire-builders. Imperialism with expansionist designs inevitably led to armed clashes with neighbours, the three-century Myanmar-Siam Wars, whereby economic profits (trade) and territory (Isthmus of Kra, the northern Malay Peninsula, and the Gulf of Siam) were the prizes to be gained.

Toungoo power waned in the mid-eighteenth century resulting in the Mons, Shans, Chins, Kachins, and Karens setting up their own kingdoms. Myanmar returned to its traditional ethnically fragmented situation. The Mons in 1752 seized Ava and dominated southern Myanmar. At the same time, a Burman champion Alaung-hpaya (1752-1760), in a series of campaigns reunited Myanmar under the Konbaung dynasty (1752-1885) (Koenig 1990). Again, a resurgence of inter-ethnic struggles engulfed Mynamar.

Unshackling themselves from Khmer Angkor dominance as well as Mon influence, the T'ai set up Sukhotai in 1238. The Sukhotai period (1238-1378) was considered as the "Dawn

of Happiness", the T'ai golden age (Taylor 1992: 137-182). The triumph of the T'ai brought freedom, independence, and flourishing of its cultural attainments.

King Ramathibodi (1351-1369) established the Kingdom of Ayuthaya (1351-1767) (Charnvit Kasetsiri 1976). Between 1500 and 1809 the Burmans launched numerous invasions into Ayuthayan Siam. In 1576 Ayuthaya was sacked by the Burman army. The Myanmar-Siam Wars reached its peak between 1767 and 1809. The Burmans were often the aggressor and repeatedly on the offensive. The imperialistic ambitions of the Burmans witnessed their repeated incursions whilst the T'ais sought to defend their independence from foreign domination.

Nonetheless, T'ai King Naresuan (Phra Naret) (1590-1605) defeated the Burman Crown prince at Nong Sa Rai near Suphan Buri (Wutthichai Munsin 1990). This historic duel on elephants brought a temporary moratorium to the Myanmar-Siam Wars.

The death knell came in 1767 when the Burmans again destroyed Ayuthaya, seriously crippling central T'ai power (James 2000: 75-108). They occupied the city for seven months before they were expelled by Phya Taksin (later King Taksin, 1767-1782). When the Burmans had initially attacked Ayuthaya, Phya Taksin escaped to Chantaburi to reorganize T'ai forces.

Subsequently, the Thonburi period (1767-1772) was marked by King Taksin embarking on a series of campaigns to reunify the various T'ai kingdoms that had seceded in the aftermath of Ayuthaya's fall into Burman hands. The seat of power was relocated to Thon Buri that was nearer to the coast, firstly to facilitate foreign trade including the procurement of arms, and secondly, as a defense and escape route should the Burmans return to pillage through the Three Pagoda Pass. The wars of reunification eventually forged a united T'ai territory.

General Chakri (Rama I, 1782-1809) established the Chakri dynasty (1782-present) with the capital relocating to Bangkok in 1800. Rama II (1809-1824) reasserted Siamese sovereignty over neighboring territories including the peninsular Malay states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu. The Thai-Vietnamese War (1833-1847) erupted following the invasion of Rama III of Siam into Cambodia that drove out the Annamese and placed a pro-Bangkok prince on the Khmer throne (Wyatt 1984).

Around 670 CE in archipelagic Southeast Asia, there emerged the Buddhist Śrivijaya located in the vicinity of contemporary Palembang and the Musi River (Manguin 1993: 23-46; Christie 1990: 39-60). In the ninth century CE the Sailendras established a Buddhist dynasty, the Kingdom of Mataram on Central Java (Hall 1992: 183-275; Moertono 2009 [1968]). Trade rivalry led to Śrivijaya defeating Mataram in 1006. Co-religionist sensibilities notwithstanding, economic factors (trade rivalry) dominated conflict between Śrivijaya and Mataram.

Later, the Cholas from South India invaded and occupied Śrivijaya from 1025 to 1045. An example of imperialism from without, a Cholan triumph over Śrivijaya led to two-decades of foreign domination. Meanwhile in Java, Airlangga (1019-1049) dominated the greater part of East Java including Mataram. According to Edi Sedyawati, "the management of interstate trade relations and the issue of 'political marriages,'....were central preoccupations of Airlangga's reign" (Sedyawati 2004: I, 134; also see, Schutte 1994). He partitioned Mataram into Janggala and Kadiri (Kediri).

The offensive operations of Singhasari (1222-1293) were the first attempt at establishing a Java-wide empire (Miksic 1996: 68-69; Sedyawati 2004: III, 1208-1209). Kertanagara (1268-1292) of Singhasari defeated Śrivijaya in 1290. Three years later saw the Mongol seaborne invasion of Singhasari.

Javanese attempts at empire-building culminated with the establishment of Majapahit (1293-c. 1520s), acknowledged to be the greatest, largest, and last of the Indianized states (Pigeaud 1960-1963; Reid 2000: 56-84; also, Ronson 1995). Under the imperialistic vision and mission of Gajah Mada, (1331-1364), the grand vizier, control of *Nusantara* – all lands beyond Java, namely the entire archipelago of what is present-day Indonesia as well as the Malay Peninsula (*Tanah Melayu*) – came under the orbit of Majapahit (Sumadio 1993: II, 257-280).

Javanese ascendancy beginning with Airlangga's Mataram, then Kertanagara's Singhasari, and finally Majapahit, were led from the battlefield. Wars served as the instrument of imperialistic ambition and design.

Meanwhile, pursued by his enemies, Parameswara, a Śrivijayan prince fled across the Straits of Melaka from Sumatra to Temasik (Singapore). Then in about 1400 he established a trading kingdom of Melaka on the Malay Peninsula.

> Situated on the convergence of the sea lanes from India and China, the Melaka harbour was sheltered and free of mangrove swamps, with approaches sufficiently deep to allow large vessels safe passage. … With an abundant supply of fresh water and timber, Melaka was ideally placed for international trade (Andaya and Andaya 2001: 42).

The Malay Muslim Sultanate of Melaka under Bendahara Tun Perak (d. c. 1498) expanded its control over the peninsular Malay states, and across the Straits dominating for close to a century south and central Sumatra (Muhammad Yusoff Hashim 1992). Economic pursuits (control of trade) fueled Melakan imperialism and colonialism over central Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, and the Straits of Melaka.

Western Imperialism and Colonialism

In 1521 during his circumnavigation expedition, Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521) landed in the Philippines and claimed the islands for the King of Spain. In a battle in late April, Magellan was killed at the hands of Chief Lapu-Lapu of Mactan marking the first violent conflict between Europeans and native Filipinos. In 1565 Captain General Miguel Lopez de Legazpi (1500-1572), the architect of Spanish Philippines, established the first permanent settlement christened San Miguel on Cebu (Francia 2013; Phelan 2012 [1959]; Corpuz 1997). Manila was captured by the Spanish in 1570. The juggernaut that was Spanish imperialism and colonial conquest saw native Filipinos submit to the foreign conquistadores.

Despite their colonization of the main island of Luzon, the Spanish however faced stiff opposition from the Moro Muslim for the control of Mindanao, and the Sulu Archipelago (Salah Jubair 1999; Nasser A. Marohomsalic 2001; Keifer 1969). In 1596 the Moro defeated the Spanish; this triumph encouraged Moro raids on the Spanish-controlled Visayan Islands. In the late 1630s, the Moro suffered losses to the Spanish; the latter, however, for the lack of manpower was unable to occupy any of the Moro-held southern territories. Moro resistance and defense of their independence vis-à-vis the Spanish could be easily viewed as a Catholic-Muslim struggle, however for the Moro, their freedom and independence were the key priorities in opposing the Spanish or any other foreign power.

Meanwhile, over on mainland Southeast Asia, the Tây-sợn Rebellion (1771-1788) overthrew the feudal states of Trinh and Nguyễn and the declining Le dynasty replacing them with the Tây Sợn dynasty (1788-1802) in control of Viet Nam. The Tâysợn movement "foreshadowed developments that were later to change Vietnamese political life radically [by invoking] the memories of the ancient sage emperors whom Mencius … had praised … by such invocations, and the declaration of the equality of the rich and the poor, [Tây-sợn movement] announced the beginning of the end of the old order in Vietnam" (Nguyěn 2004: III, 1310). The Tây-sợn overthrow of the Trinh and the Nguyễn and the Le dynasty marked the end of the *ancien regime*.

Nguyễn Anh (1802-1820) of the Nguyễn family with assistance from French mercenaries toppled the Tây Sợn regime, reunited Viet Nam under the Nguyễn dynasty (1802-1945). Emperor Gia Long (Nguyễn Anh) officially gave his country the name "Viet Nam" (Smith 1974: 153-169; Cooke 1995: 741-764). Nguyễn Anh resurrected the feudal dynasty of the Nguyễn with French assistance, a hazardous precedent whereby his successors were to suffer foreign intervention and humiliation.

French ambitions in southwest China, notably the province of Yunnan believed to be the "back door" to tap China's rich resources, took them on a collision course with the fiercely independent Nguyễn rulers (Osborne 1997; Osborne 1997: 51-107). In a series of military offensives, the French forcefully occupied Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos creating French Indochina in the closing years of the nineteenth century (Brocheux and Hémery 2009 [1995]; Brötel 1971). In 1858 the French took Da Nang, and the following year, Saigon (Gia Dinh, Ho Chi Minh City). In 1863 the French forced Cambodian King Norodom (1836-1904) to accept protectorate status for his country. By the Treaty of Saigon (1874), three southern provinces were ceded to France thus creating the French colony of Cochin China. In 1884 the French established a protectorate over Annam (central Viet Nam) and Tonkin (northern Viet Nam) via the Treaty of Hue (Brocheux and Hémery 2009 [1995]; Lockhart 1993; also, see Chapius 2000). Nguyễn Emperor Ham Nghi (1885-1886) resisted in 1885 but failed; he was deposed and exiled to French Algeria. Economic ambitions in faraway Yunnan (southwest China) via the Mekong pushed French imperialism into the colonization of Indochina, subsequently acquiring colonies and protectorates.

Anti-colonial rebellions and uprisings were commonplace across French Indochina and particularly rife in Viet Nam (Truong 1967; Dutton 2006). For instance, in 1908 alone, revolts in Annam and uprisings flared in and around Hanoi (Thang-Long); 1916 saw Annam and Cochin China engulfed in widespread rebellion; 1930 witnessed significant anti-French armed opposition in Tonkin and Annam (see Popkin 1979; Scott 1977). The Vietnamese, who had thrown off the Chinese colonial yolk were not going to tolerate another foreign domination (French colonialism), hence the proliferation of anti-colonial uprisings.

While the French focused on the Mekong River as a passage to Yunnan, the British on the other hand explored the viability of the Irrawaddy River to southwestern China. British imperialistic and economic interests drove them to have a series of showdowns with the proud and equally imperialistic Konbaung rulers. The Anglo-Burmese Wars (1824-1826, 1852, and 1885) forcefully brought Konbaung Myanmar to its knees as well as its dissolution with King Thibaw Min (1878-1885), the last ruler exiled to British India (Blackburn 1979). Opposition to British colonial rule in Myanmar took various forms: a "no-footwear-in-pagoda" campaign targeting Westerners (1916-1917); the Saya San Rebellion (1930-1931), a peasant uprising with millenarian ambitions of restoring the traditional kingship system (Maung Maung 1980; U Thant Myint 2001; Aung-Thwin 2010).

Like the French, British Burma was borne of British imperial economic ambitions. Similarly, the Burmese in common with the Vietnamese, launched a series of revolts to

unshackle themselves from foreign colonial rule.

Siam was spared the invasion of Western imperialistic military forces. But military pressure was applied to force Bangkok to concede to Western imperialistic demands; prudently the Chakri rulers met the demands at the negotiating table rather than the battlefield. In 1893, for instance, the Paknam Incident saw a French fleet sailed up the Menam Chao Phraya whence the French envoy demanded that King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) ceded Laos, a Siamese tributary state, and other territories on the left (east) bank of the Mekong; the Siamese monarch with little choice acceded to the demands. Then in 1907, the French demanded that Siam returned Battambang and Siem Reap to the French protectorate of Cambodia (Tuck 1995). Chulalongkorn again reluctantly acquiesced. In 1909 the British pressured Bangkok to transfer the Siamese Malay states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Terengganu which were subsequently converted to protectorates of Great Britain.

Accommodating and appeasing Britain on one hand, and France on the other, ensured that Siam maintained its sovereignty and independence but at the expense of compromising its territorial integrity, viz. Battambang and Siem Reap (French), and Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Terengganu (British). Non-submission on the part of Bangkok would have been disastrous for the Chakri.

But by the mid-twentieth century nationalistic and assertive Prime Minister Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram (1897-1964) effected a name change replacing ‘Siam’ with ‘Thailand’ (‘Land of the Free’) to emphasize the country’s freedom and independence (Suwannathat-Pian 1996). In this vein a Franco-Thai War (1940-1941) broke out when the French refused to restore to Bangkok the territories of Battambang, Siem Reap, Champassak, and Lanchang. Imperial Japan’s intervention led to a settlement in Thailand’s favor.

The prosperity of the city-port of Melaka as the centre of East-West commerce attracted the attention of the Portuguese in the early decade of the sixteenth century. Melaka featured as one of the bastion-ports of the Portuguese maritime empire that stretched from Lisbon (Europe), Aden (Red Sea) and Ormuz (Persian Gulf) together to control the Arabian Sea, Calicut and Goa (Indian Ocean), Melaka (Southeast Asia), to Macao (China and East Asia) (Diffie and Winius 1977; Russell-Wood 1998). Afonso de Albuquerque (c. 1462-1515) stormed and seized Melaka in 1511. Portuguese Melaka sent expeditions to the Moluccas (Maluku), the famed “Spice Islands” to corner the spice market, the then most lucrative trade for the then European market. The Spanish entrenched in the Philippines since the mid-sixteenth century posed an imperialistic and economic rival with armed opposition to the Portuguese for the (present-day) Eastern Indonesian islands. Economic pursuits spurred the

creation of the Portuguese seaborne empire where Melaka was but one of the strategic outposts that stretched from Lisbon to Nagasaki.

The first half of the seventeenth century saw a three-way struggle over the control of the Straits of Melaka between Portuguese Melaka, the Malays of Johor-Riau, and Aceh. Aceh appeared to be the aggressor especially during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (with the presumptuous moniker, "Mahkota Alam", "Crown of the World") (1607-1636) (Lombard 1967; also, see Andaya 1993). Economic hegemony over the Straits of Melaka was the prize at stake for the three-way armed struggle between the Portuguese in Melaka, Aceh, and the Malays in Johor-Riau.

But the triumphal party in the triangular wars were the Dutch United East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, VOC) (1602) (Gaastra 2002; Emmer and Gommans 2020; Meilink-Roelofs 1962). In 1605 the Dutch captured Ambon, one of the major islands of the Moluccas. From his base in Central Java, Sultan Agung (1613-1645) expanded Mataram's power over most of the island bringing this Muslim imperialistic power in direct collision course with the Dutch (De Graaf and Pigeaud 1976). Consequently, a Dutch-Mataram protracted struggle (1610-1630) for political and economic ascendancy over Java arose. Meanwhile the English East India Company (EEIC) (1600) established a trading outpost at Banten (Bantam) on western tip of Java (Bassett 1990).

The Dutch expelled the Muslim ruler of Sunda Kelapa in 1619 and renamed it Batavia (present-day Jakarta) that became the chief base of Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587-1629), the architect of the Netherlands (Dutch) East Indies. In 1629 the Dutch at Batavia foiled Sultan Agung's offensive against the city-port. In 1641 with assistance from Johor-Riau, the Dutch seized Melaka from the Portuguese. The silting of the river mouth had compromised Melaka's one-time preeminence as a city-port.

On Java, the Dutch seized the opportunity to support its erstwhile rival Mataram. When Prince Trunajaya of Madura revolted against Amangkurat I (1646-1677) in 1674, the Dutch came to the latter's aid. The Dutch crushed the Trunajaya revolt (1674-1681) and in turn received territorial concessions from Mataram's Amangkurat II (Adipati Anom) (1677-1703). The opportunistic Dutch then lent support to Pangeran Puger in his overthrow of Amangkurat III (1703-1704); the demise of the latter ended Mataram's sovereignty over Java. The victorious Puger became Paku Buwana I (1704-1719) and conceded more territories to the Dutch (Lombard 1990; Miksic 2004: II, 863-866; Ricklefs 2001).

As a result of a series of Javanese Wars of Succession (1677-1707, 1719-1722, and 1749-1755), Mataram was greatly weakened. The Dutch played decisive roles in the disputes,

allying itself with one party against another. Owing to superior firepower, the Dutch ended up on the victorious side and were able to extract more concessions and privileges thereby strengthening its hegemony over Java. Then in 1740 a Sino-Javanese rebellion in Batavia was crushed by the Dutch where tens of thousands of Chinese and natives were killed (Blusse 1986).

Through a series of political maneuverings and strategic military alliances, the Dutch headquartered in Batavia, subsequently dominated Java at the expense of native potentates. Economic considerations spurred Dutch colonialism over the East Indies that subsequently became the Netherlands (Dutch) East Indies.

The Ambon Massacre (1623) hastened the British withdrawal from the East Indies to focus on the Indian sub-continent. Anglo-French rivalry in India and in the Indian Ocean, and problematic Anglo-Dutch relations subsequently led to the occupation by the British of the island of Penang, off the northwest coast of the Malay Peninsula in August 1786 (Ooi 2019).

The British Straits Settlements (1826), an administrative set-up linking the three city-ports of Penang, Melaka, and Singapore each strategically situated on the eastern shores of the Straits of Melaka primarily focused on the lucrative "China trade" in luxuries (tea, silk, and porcelain/chinaware) (Turnbull 1972). Traditional enmity and competition for tin-bearing lands led to open armed, violent clashes between rival Chinese *kongsi* in the western peninsular Malay states in the 1850s through the 1870s. Meanwhile clashes between rival claimants to the throne in Perak, piracy along the coast, and conflicts among Malay chieftains aggravated the chaotic and tense situation. The Pangkor Engagement (1874) restored law and order in the western Malay states and introduced the British colonial system of indirect rule (Gullick 1992). The latter was subsequently introduced to all the peninsular Malay states transforming them into British protectorates, and together with the British Crown colonies of Penang, Melaka, and Singapore comprised what became known as British Malaya.

Eastwards across the South China Sea in northern Borneo, three territories came under British protected status in 1888, viz. Sarawak under the English Brooke family of 'White Rajahs', the Malay Muslim sultanate of Brunei, and North Borneo administered by the British North Borneo Chartered Company (BNBCC).

While the possession of the Irrawaddy facilitated the creation of British Burma, the control and dominance of the Straits of Melaka, a pivotal passageway to carry out trade with China, to a great extent led to the formation of the Straits Settlements and subsequently British Malaya. Economic motivation (tin ore in particular), and secondarily, perceived imperial rivalry, drove the British to imperial expansion initially on the western parts of the Malay

Peninsula. British Borneo, on the other hand, came into being not primarily for economic purposes but more through perceived imperial rivalry (French or Dutch).

In British Malaya and British Borneo numerous anti-colonial uprisings erupted particularly in the nineteenth century; the more notable examples were the Iban revolt (1853-1861) of Rentap against the Brooke White Rajah, the To' Janggut revolt (1915) in Kelantan, the Pahang Rebellion (1891-1895) led by the charismatic Dato' (Abdul Rahman) Bahaman, and the Mat Salleh Rebellion (1894-1905) in British North Borneo (Ooi 2005: 187-205; Cheah 2006; Tarling 1985: 46-68). To view such armed insurrections during this period as proto-nationalistic struggles might be a case of putting the cart before the horse. Dissatisfaction on the part of native chiefs who had lost status, prestige, and source of income (taxes) as well as incomprehension of the British colonial presence pushed them to take up arms against the foreigners.

Likewise, in the Netherlands East Indies there were a series of anti-Dutch revolts. One of the most significant of these uprisings was the Padri Wars (1821-1837) (Dobbin 1983). The Padri Movement, a revivalist Islamic group based in west Sumatra endeavored to return Muslims to the true teachings of the faith. The wholesale massacre of the Minangkabau royal family by members of the Padri Movement brought in the Dutch in defending the former; consequently, it led to a Padri-Dutch struggle for west and central Sumatra.

At the same time in Java strained relations between Pangeran Diponegoro (c. 1785-1855), a prince of the royal house of Yogjakarta, and the Dutch over the issue of Islamic leadership erupted in an all-out war – the Java War (1825-1830) – that almost drove the Dutch government into bankruptcy. There was also a millenarian element at play in that Diponegoro was regarded as the *Ratu Adil* (Righteous Prince), who, in Javanese folklore, was the long-awaited messianic ruler who righted all wrongs; Dutch colonialism being viewed as a great wrong to the Javanese peasantry (Carey 1981).

The Padri Wars and the Java War to some extent could be regarded as religious conflicts, the former in particular. The latter, however, was a political showdown between a native prince and the Dutch but possessed millenarian aspects especially amongst native fighters and the Javanese masses.

Across the Java Sea to west Borneo in the 1850s, the Dutch launched an offensive against the Chinese gold-mining *kongsi* communities. Since the 1750s, Hakka Chinese gold workers had managed to establish largely independent, self-governing polities described as *imperium in imperio* (Heidhues 2003; Yuan 2000; Ooi 2020a: 94-110). The Dutch succeeded in breaking the stranglehold of the *kongsi*. Many Chinese fled across the border to Upper

Sarawak where they continued their gold mining activities. Others readjusted and turned to farming and petty trading. In 1857 Hakka Chinese gold miners from Bau launched an assault on Rajah James Brooke's base at Kuching. Iban hordes led by the Rajah's nephew, Charles Johnson (later Brooke) (1829-1917), drove the Chinese upriver taking hundreds of heads (Chew 1990; Lockard 1978: 85-98). Economic factors (gold) were clear motivators in both West Borneo and Sarawak.

Elsewhere, Dutch attempts to colonize Aceh met with fierce resistance. The Aceh Wars (1873-1903) were costly to the Dutch in terms of finance and lives (Reid 1969; Teeuwen and Doorn 2006; Ibrahim Alfian 1992). Freedom and independence were the motivating push factors for the Achenese in opposing the Dutch. In Bali, the Dutch launched an offensive against the remaining independent regions of Badung and Klungkung in 1906 and 1908 respectively. The Balinese committed *puputan*, mass suicide in the thousands on both occasions; ritual death was preferred to foreign domination (Vickers 1989; also, see Van der Kraan 1995).

The Dutch colonial administration harshly suppressed an uprising by the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) in 1926-1927 where thousands were killed, imprisoned, or went underground or fled abroad (McVey 1996: 96-117). It was a tragic bloodbath, a harbinger of worse massacres to follow. In this instance, the PKI revolt against the colonial Dutch government was an ideological struggle.

After the establishment of Spanish colonial rule (often characterized as harsh and oppressive), anti-Spanish revolts were commonplace throughout the Philippines (Sturtevant 1976; Ileto 1979). Until the later part of the nineteenth century, the uprisings were localized, small-scale, short-lived, and spurred by local grievances such as opposition to tyrannical Spanish landlords, high taxes, injustices, and were swiftly suppressed by the colonial authorities. Overall, these rural-based revolts were largely inconsequential. In the mid-nineteenth century, a major revolt (1840-1841) with religious overtones was the co-fraternity of San José headed by Apolinario de la Cruz (c. 1814-1841) (Sweet 1970: 94-119). It attracted many peasant followers from Tayabas, Laguna, and Batangas that caused the ire of the Spanish Dominican friars. In consequence, Spanish colonial troops slaughtered native followers including de la Cruz in 1841 at Tayabas.

The Cavite Mutiny (1872) saw Filipino soldiers rebel against their Spanish officers. The Spanish colonial administration placed the blame on the Filipino clergy as instigators of the mutiny and sentenced to death three Filipino priests - José Burgos, Jacinto Zamora, and Mariano Gómez. Their martyrdom fired revolutionary activities against Spanish colonial rule.

Until the Cavite Mutiny, past anti-Spanish uprisings more often were sparked by local peasant grievances of seeking social justice. But the death of the three Filipino friars ignited revolutionary consciousness on the masses. It was a tipping point.

By the late 1870s the fiercely independent Moro Muslims of the southern Philippines were decisively defeated by the Spanish. Military defeat however did not fully pacify the Moro who remained defiant both politically and religiously defying conversion and remained Muslim (Vitug and Gloria 2000). As mentioned, to the Moro, defending their freedom and independence spurred their armed opposition against the Spanish, or other foreign powers.

In 1892 Andres Bonifacio (1863-1897) established the revolutionary, clandestine organization Katipunan. Bonifacio and the Katipunan spearheaded the Philippine Revolution (1896-1898) (Schumacher 1991; Reyes-Churchill 1997).

Manila, 21st (Aug. '96). – The Governor General to the Colonial Minister:

> Vast organization of secret societies discovered with anti-national tendencies. Twenty-two persons detained, among them the Gran Oriente (of Philippine freemasonry) of the Philippines, and others of importance. … Immediate action taken and special judge will be designated for greater activity in the proceedings. …
>
> --- BLANCO
>
> Such was the telegram sent by Gen. Blanco and read by Sr. Castellano in the Spanish Camara, announcing the discovery of the revolutionary movement headed by the Katipunan, the bastard child of Filipino freemasonry.
>
> Freemasonry in the Philippines was but a pretext: under this pretext the enemies of Spain, in days of Spanish rule, and the enemies of the U.S. in these day [of] American rule, put themselves into close: secret communion, to carry out plans [for] revolt (St. Clair 2019: 7-8).

The revolutionaries managed to secure several pockets of territories while the Spanish maintained Manila. The outbreak of the Spanish-American War (1898) witnessed a pact between Filipino revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo (1868-1964) and American Commodore George Dewey (1837-1917). While Dewey launched a naval assault on Manila Bay, Filipino revolutionary forces led the ground offensive against the Spanish. The latter was defeated. Aguinaldo without entering Manila declared the independence of the Philippines on 12 June 1898. Aguinaldo became president-elect and Apolinario Mabini (1864-1903) drafted a constitution.

But American President William McKinley (1897-1901) rejected Aguinaldo's actions and declared the latter, a former ally, an outlaw. The Spanish-American Treaty of Paris

(December 1898) resulted in the cession of the Philippines (and other Spanish colonial possessions including Cuba) to the United States; a protracted Philippine-American War (1899-1913), however, ensued that consumed tens of thousands of Filipino lives (Jones 2012; Silbey 2007).

Having been betrayed by their American allies, Aguinaldo and his fellow revolutionaries faced a new colonial master, the U.S. The declaration of independence on 12 June 1898 had to await until 4 July 1946 for its realization, nearly five decades later.

The Pacific War (1941-1945)

On 7th December 1941 while Japanese Zeroes bombed Pearl Harbor in the Hawai'ian Islands in the Pacific Ocean, amphibious assaults were underway in Hong Kong and the northeastern part of the Malay Peninsula, namely Singora, Patani, and Kota Bahru. Like proverbial dominoes, one after another, the major capital cities in Southeast Asia fell to Japanese Imperial Forces and their blitzkrieg-style invasions: Manila (2 January 1942), Singapore (15 February), Batavia (5 March), and Rangoon (Yangon) (8 March).

In contrast, both French Indochina and independent Thailand escaped invasion by Japanese Imperial Forces. Agreements concluded between Tokyo and the French Vichy government led to the unopposed occupation of North Indochina on 23 September 1940, and South Indochina, 29 July 1941. Consequent of the Pact of Alliance between Bangkok and Tokyo penned on 11 December 1941, Thailand sanctioned the presence of Japanese military forces on its home soil.

Towards the end of May 1942 until mid-August 1945 all of Southeast Asia was part of the Japanese empire. Stern, harsh, and oppressive military rule was imposed on all the occupied territories (McCoy 1980). The various wartime Japanese military administrations were responsible for a series of massacres, death marches, and untold atrocities on both civilian populations and prisoners of war (POWs) (Ward 1992; Ooi 2010; Knox 1981; McCormack and Nelson 1993). The infamous *sook ching*, 'cleansing' or 'purification' operations (1942) in Singapore and George Town took a high toll on thousands of lives among the Chinese community regarded and then targeted as the 'enemy' due to the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) raging on the Chinese mainland. The Long Nawang Killings (1942) in central Borneo saw the cold-blooded slaughter of scores of European civilians by Japanese marines. Unknown numbers of clandestine massacres in the hundreds were carried out (1943-1945) in west and south Borneo. The Bataan Death March (April 1942) and the Sandakan Death March (1945) consumed thousands of lives of Allied POWs. Likewise, thousands of Europeans, and

even more Asians, died in the construction of the 'Death Railway' that linked Thailand to Myanmar.

In hindsight, it could be said that Imperial Japan was the last of the imperialist powers hitherto dominated by the Western nations. Having wielded its military strength in two triumphal conflicts – First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) – Imperial Japan was confident for a showdown with any other power that threaten its well-being. Therefore, when the Anglo-American powers exerted pressure on Tokyo with oil embargo to force its withdrawal from the Chinese mainland (Second Sino-Japanese War [1937-1945]), Imperial Japan launched its stealth attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in the Hawai'ian Islands. Meanwhile, an Imperial Japanese Navy task force was heading southwards to invade and occupy Western colonial-controlled Southeast Asia resource-rich with oil wells, rubber plantations, and tin mines. Conquest and occupation of Southeast Asia achieved a two-prong objective, namely in the short-term with resources (oil in particular) enabled the continuance of completing the dominance of the Republic China, and in the long-term expanded the Imperial Japanese Empire with the colonization of Southeast Asia. Geo-strategically, the Pacific War was a conflict among imperialist powers.

There were numerous armed opposition forces to the various Japanese military administration that utilized guerrilla warfare to harass, sabotage and disrupt enemy infrastructure facilities (transport and communication, supplies, arms and military equipment, etc.). The communist-led Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) in Malaya and the *Hukbalahap* (*Hukbo Ng Bayan Laban Sa Hapon*) (People's Anti-Japanese Army) in the Philippine, and the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) in Myanmar were conspicuous examples of indigenous anti-Japanese armed organizations (Cheah 1983; Greenberg 1987; Taylor 1987).

The various anti-Japanese revolts in occupied Southeast Asia resembled armed struggles against a colonial power, the overall objective was the unshackling of the colonial yolk in the name of nationalist independence. To some extent, conflicts with Imperial Japan then have the semblance of nationalist struggles, for example, the AFPFL in Myanmar.

Postwar Conflicts

Between the end of the Pacific War and the close of the twentieth century, Southeast Asia had many wars, protracted conflict zones, and clandestine armed struggles. Violent conflicts occurred in both mainland territories and the archipelago some were brief clashes while others long-drawn affairs stretching over decades. Although some of the conflicts were a consequence

of the global Cold War, many, however, were in fact domestic struggles that had scant connection with the world-wide clash between Washington and Moscow.

The decade-long Viet Minh-French struggle – the First Indochina War (1945-1954) – over Viet Nam concluded with the defeat and withdrawal of France following the Battle of Dien Bien Phu (May 1954) (Fall 2005; Gardner 1988). The Geneva Conference (1954) divided the country into a communist North Vietnam and a democratic South Vietnam. A decade later, the Gulf of Tonkin Incident (August 1964) ushered the beginning of the Second Indochina War (1964-1975) with major American involvement in Viet Nam (Tertrais 1998: 51-58; Prados 2009). Between 1964 and 1973, U.S. bombers targeted not only the North Vietnamese regime but also the communist Pathet Lao in neighboring Laos. In April 1970 the U.S. launched the invasion of Cambodia (Shawcross 1979; Chandler 1991). In May the pro-American Cambodian Defense Minister Lon Nol (1913-1984) launched a *coup d'etat*. Shortly thereafter the Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot (1925-1998) toppled the U.S.-backed Lon Nol regime.

The Paris Peace Agreement (1973) confirmed the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Viet Nam. The Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) without U.S. support collapsed in the battle for Saigon. In April 1975, the capital city of South Vietnam fell to the North Vietnamese Army. On 30 April Viet Nam was reunited as the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Meanwhile the Pathet Lao established the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) in December. Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) launched a reign of terror where the Khmer Rouge undertook a pogrom of mass extermination of political figures of the previous regime, intellectuals, workers, peasants, and even children – those perceived to be a threat or potential threat. As many as 2 million deaths or one in five Cambodians perished in the 'Killing Fields.' It was a tragic and unprecedented episode in the annals of the region and without real comparison from past wars and conflicts.

The Indochina War (1945-1954, 1955-1975) for all intents and purposes was an armed struggle to gain freedom and independence from colonialism. It was a nationalist struggle. However, against the backdrop of Cold War logic, Washington, in particular, perceived the conflict in Vietnam as a proxy war between themselves, Moscow and Beijing encapsulated by the so-called Domino Theory and preventing communist world domination. Instead of a local nationalist struggle for independence, Indochina and Vietnam in particular became a proxy battlefield for an ideological showdown. Act I was at a stalemate at Panmunjom on the Korean peninsula; Act II was played out on the Indochina peninsula.

By 1979, after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, further conflict broke out when 100,000 strong Vietnamese invasion force entered Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge forces were no match for the seasoned Vietnamese; Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge fled into Thailand. The Vietnamese helped establish the Heng Samrin (1934-) regime officially known as the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (Gottesman 2002; Evans and Rowley 1990). Hanoi undeniably had political and strategic designs over Cambodia with the creation of a 'puppet' PRK. Throughout the 1980s, Cambodia was mired in civil conflict between antagonist groups and coalitions: Vietnamese and Soviet Union (USSR) supported PRK, Chinese-supported Khmer Rouge; King Norodom Sihanouk (1922-2012) who relied on the U.S. and Western democracies. An interesting alliance was forged in July 1982 between the Khmer Rouge and forces loyal to Sihanouk resulting in the establishment of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK).

Consequent of Vietnamese imperialist intentions towards Cambodia, the Cold War warriors took sides in a proxy struggle (1979-1991): Moscow supporting Vietnam and PRK on the one hand, while the KR-Sihanouk (uneasy) alliance of CGDK witnessed Beijing supporting the KR, and Washington and the European powers backing the royalist forces of Sihanouk.

Elsewhere, since the 1950s Myanmar has struggled with ethnic insurgency and separatist movements that have posed potential flash points of disintegration to the central authorities (Smith 2007; Falla 1991). Over the years there have been various organizations and armed groups each with their respective political agenda, viz. the Burma Communist Party (BCP), Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), and among the Karen ethnic minorities there were at least three factions, namely the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO), and Karen National Union.

Muslim minorities in Southern/Peninsular Thailand's provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun and Songkhla in particular, have long sought secession or autonomy from the central government in Bangkok (Forbes 1989: 167-182; Wan Kadir Che Man 1990; Suwannathat-Pian 2002: 1-27). These 'deep south' Thai-Malay Muslim provinces confront assimilation and integration difficulties. Unlike Muslims in other parts of Thailand such as in the central and northern regions who were mainly immigrants, those in the southern provinces were indigenous inhabitants. Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat were formerly part of the Malay Muslim Kingdom of Patani. The tough stance and insensitive approach adopted by the government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (2001-2006) in dealing with sectarian issues in the 'deep south' sparked off a resurgence of violence in early 2004 including

bombings, arson, and the killing of both civilians and military personnel (Ooi 2007). Attacks by Muslim separatist groups continued despite emergency military rule over the troubled areas, notably Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani. Ultimately it appears that the armed conflicts in Myanmar and Thailand's 'deep south' resemble separatist aims of attaining political independence and dissociating from the central governments.

The Malayan People's Anti-British Army (MPABA), the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) initiated an armed struggle for power in Malaya and Singapore. In February 1949 MPABA was renamed the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA). Known as the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), the MCP/MRLA waged a guerrilla war against the British colonial government, and after 1957, the independent Malayan government (Stubbs 1989; Coates 1992; Short 2000). Although the Emergency pitted a communist organization against an anti-communist government, it also had a semblance of a Sino-Malay racial struggle: a Chinese-dominated MCP/MRLA against the Malay-dominated Malayan armed forces including the police. Troops from Commonwealth countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Fiji were brought in, likewise Orang Asli in the peninsula and Iban trekkers from Sarawak were engaged in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations and to wage guerrilla war in the tropical Malayan rainforest (Leary 1995). An eight-year lull in hostilities allowed the MCP to-regroup and reorganize its remnant guerrilla forces on the Thai-Malaysian border before it launched another protracted armed struggle known as the Second Malayan Emergency (1968-1989).

The MCP's intention of setting up a communist republic of Malaya/Malaysia had been consistent throughout its more than four-decade struggle against first, colonial rule and then independent-Kuala Lumpur. Prima facie, the Chinese-dominated MCP fighting against the Malay-dominated Malaya/Malaysia federal government could be (mis)read simply as a Sino-Malay racial struggle; the racial card did not stick as the Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Gerakan, both Chinese-majority political parties had been long-term coalition partners in the Barisan Nasional (National Front) federal government. Both insurgencies failed to gain purchase due in large part to the successes of government economic development programmes benefitting the *rakyat* (masses).

Shortly after the Japanese unconditional surrender, Sukarno (1901-1970) proclaimed the independence of Indonesia on 17 August 1945. Sukarno assumed the presidency and Mohammad Hatta (1902-1980), the vice presidency of the newly-declared Republic of Indonesia. The Indonesian Revolution (1945-1949) began when the Dutch returned and attempted to re-establish the colonial administration and refused to recognize Indonesia's independence (Taufik Abdullah 1997; Yong 1982; Reid 1974; Carnegie 2019). Republican

forces openly clashed with Dutch colonial forces. A series of agreements – Linggadjati (1947), Renville (1948) – interspersed with Dutch Police Actions (July 1947 and December 1948) characterized the armed revolution that brought great losses in lives and properties. The intervention of the United Nations that brought pressure on the Netherlands led to the latter acknowledging an independent and sovereign Republic of Indonesia in December 1949.

The Indonesian Revolution was undeniably a nationalist struggle for independence, but the 1962 revolt in Brunei remained unclear, whether a nationalist struggle, anti-colonial, anti-monarchy, or other intentions.

In December 1962 the *Partai Rakyat Brunei* (PRB) (Brunei People's Party) led by Sheikh Azahari bin Sheikh Mahmud (1928-2002) launched the short-lived Brunei Rebellion (Van der Bijl 2012; Abdul Harun Majid 2007; Hussainmiya 2020). PRB opposed Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj's (1903-1990) idea of a wider federation called 'Malaysia' which sought to bring together Malaya, Singapore, the British Borneo colonies of Sarawak and North Borneo as well as the British protectorate of the Malay Muslim Sultanate of Brunei. Instead, Azahari wanted *Negarabagian Kesatuan Kalimantan Utara* (NKKU) (Unitary State of North Kalimantan) comprising Brunei, Sarawak and North Borneo with Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III (1914-1986) as the head of state. However, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III invoked the treaty obligations of Britain, who then sent Ghurkha troops from Singapore that swiftly suppressed the *Tentera Nasional Kalimantan Utara* (TNKU) (National Army of North Kalimantan), the military arm of PRB.

Malaysia was established in September 1963 comprising the aforesaid territories minus Brunei. Indonesian President Sukarno perceived Malaysia as a neo-colonial designed political construct of Britain for them to maintain influence in the region; it was the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI) (Indonesia Communist Party) that initially mooted the neo-colonial concept. *Konfrontasi* ('Crush Malaysia') campaign (1963-1966) was launched that initially saw the support from both PKI and the *Tentera Nasional Indonesia* (TNI) (National Armed Forces of Indonesia) (Poulgrain 1998; Subritzky 2000; Jones 2002). *Konfrontasi* was a low-intensity conflict where the thickly-forested Sarawak-Kalimantan border was the battlefield. Sukarno's downfall following the Gestapu Affair (1965) and the installation of Suharto as president marked the beginning of the end to *Konfrontasi* that officially ended in 1966.

Sukarno's *Konfrontasi* could be viewed as an exemplary case of a standoff between a newly-independent nation (Indonesia) and an old colonial power (British Empire) with the former indicating to the latter that nations like itself were no longer tolerant of any form or vestiges of colonialism. The creation of Malaysia was undoubtedly a British attempt to ensure

that its former colonies do not fall prey to Moscow or Beijing, and more importantly, that former British Malaya and British Borneo continue to contribute to British capitalism, notably rubber and tin from the former and oil from the latter.

After having failed to in its 'united front' tactic for seizing power in Sarawak through the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), a legitimate political party, the Sarawak Communist Organization (SCO) from late 1963 turned to armed revolution as the next stage in its struggle (Ooi 2004; Porritt 2004). Members of the SCO fled across the border into Kalimantan, and together with remnants of the TNKU undertook military training from TNI. The SCO formed the *Pasukan Gerilya Rakyat Sarawak* (PGRS). In October 1965 another military unit was added, namely *Pasukan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara* (PARAKU) (North Kalimantan People's Force). The SCO was re-designated as the North Kalimantan Communist Party (NKCP) as a means to attract members of the PKI. This assortment of communist elements (Sarawak Chinese, Indonesians) and Bruneians conducted a protracted guerrilla war against the Malaysian-Sarawak government. Before Sukarno's downfall, they were supported by the TNI; thereafter the TNI worked in concert with the Malaysian-Sarawak security forces to crush the guerrillas (Ooi 2020b: 200-236). Ideology was the underlying factor for the protracted Sarawak Communist Insurgency (1962-1990).

Sino-Malay riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and other urban centres three days following the 10 May 1969 Malaysian general election. This 'May 13, 1969' incident led to the suspension of parliament and then Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak (1922-1976) who headed the National Operations Council administered the government and country by decree (Tunku Abdul Rahman 1969; Comber 1983).

'May 13, 1969' was an ethnic struggle for dominance between the two major ethnic communities, viz. indigenous Malay and mainly immigrant Chinese. Fears over the unequal share of the political and economic pie was the crux of the inter-ethnic rivalry with the Chinese, who had the lion's share of the economic pie, vying for political dominance.

Further afield, Portugal withdrew from East Timor in 1974 having held this eastern portion of the island as a colonial possession since 1641. In June 1975 Lisbon announced a three-year transition period prior to full independence including free elections scheduled for October 1976. Two major political groupings emerged viz. the left-wing Fretilin (*Frente Revolucionaria Do Timor-Leste Independente*) (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor), and the pro-integration with Indonesia, Timor Democratic Union (UDT). In November 1975 Fretilin seized power and proclaimed the independence of East Timor as the Democratic Republic of East Timor. Jakarta, which supported UDT instructed the TNI to launch operations

in early December to crush the Fretilin regime. Dili, the capital, was occupied as well as most parts of the country. The UDT together with other pro-Indonesia groups formed a provisional government that in July 1976 legislated integration with Indonesia. East Timor became Timor Timur as Indonesia's twenty-seventh province (Monk 2001; Carey 1997: 3-21). Fretilin fled to the highlands to pursue a guerrilla war against the Indonesian-installed administration. Not only was Indonesia's rule questionable in legal terms but also there were claims of atrocities committed by members of TNI on the Timorese civilian population to suppress opposition and deny support for Fretilin (Cribb 2001: 82-98).

Fretilin's struggle was a nationalist-driven armed revolution for independence. In the aftermath of Suharto downfall, the reformasi period witnessed a volte face in Jakarta stance towards East Timor. Jakarta allowed free elections in 1999, the majority in East Timor (78 percent) voted for independence implying a secession from Indonesia (Nicol 2002; Taylor 1999). This provoked pro-Indonesia militias to go on a rampage of destruction and killing which led to an intervention by the United Nations and the introduction of an Australian-led peacekeeping force. After three years under the United Nations Interim Administration for East Timor (UNTAET), East Timor officially regained its independence (declared in 1975) from Indonesian occupation on 20 May 2002, as *Republika Demokratika Timor Lorosa'e* (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste).

Meanwhile, in Central Sulawesi Muslims and Christians clashed in the immediate aftermath of Suharto's downfall in 1998. This inter-religious strife finally ended in December 2001 when the opposing parties agreed to a ten-point settlement (Cummings 2000). Similarly, Christian-Muslim clashes in Maluku erupted in 1999.

> Violence [North Maluku] was born out of the attempt by Makians in the political elite in Ternate to resolve a long-standing grievance among members of their ethnic group by providing the Makian Community in Malifut their own autonomous sub-district. … After sustained opposition and increasing belligerence on the part of the members of both communities, Makians from Malifut, led by these students outside Malifut, attacked and destroyed two Kao villagers (Wilson 2008: 178-179).

The communal clashes abated with a peace agreement in February 2002.

Following a series of discriminations and assassination of its leaders, the *Hukbalahap* adopted a new name *Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan* (HMB) (People's Liberation Army) in June 1947 and launched an armed struggle – the Huk Rebellion (1946-1954) – against the government of the Philippines (Kerkvliet 2002). Wartime Huk leader Luis Taruc (1913-2005) led the peasant dominated HMB. Land tenure issues and other socioeconomic grievances were the major struggle of the HMB (King and Carnegie 2018). However, the violence and atrocities

of the HMB on the one hand and the concerted reform programs initiated and implemented by Secretary of National Defense Ramon Magsaysay (1910-1957) on the other brought an end to this struggle. When Taruc surrendered in 1954 it formally ended the Huk's armed conflict (Taruc 1967).

A decade and a half later there remained much of the grievances over land reform and land redistribution, oppressive rents, land tenure issues, tyrannical landlords, and overall rural economic underdevelopment that spurred the New People's Army (NPA) to launch a people's war against the Manila government in 1969 (Mediansky 1986: 1-17; Jones 1989). The NPA was the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Military attempts to crush the NPA had little success as it enjoyed peasant support.

Social justice and overcoming economic hardship were the twin objectives of the Huk and NPA armed struggles against Manila. The disenfranchised Filipino peasantry sought a better livelihood, and both the Huk and NPA appeared to be striving for their cause.

Meanwhile in the southern Philippines the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Muslim separatist group established in 1969 sought cession and independence from the central government. The Moro Muslim struggle to unshackle from non-Muslim, foreign control could be traced to the sixteenth century when the Spanish first arrived in the islands. Led by Nur Misuari (1940-) the MNLF was particularly active in its armed struggle for self-determination in the 1970s. The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) financially and morally supported the MNLF (Tan 1993). Through OIC influence, the MNLF not only held talks with the Manila government but also modified its struggle from cession and independence to autonomy status within the Philippines' national sovereignty and territorial integrity (Muslim 1994). In 1996 the Philippines government signed a peace accord with the MNLF officially ending a separatist war that has lasted for more than a quarter of a century with losses of some 120,000 lives.

Besides the MNLF, there were other militant Muslim groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that took up the armed struggle for independence. Then there was the Abu Sayyaf, a splinter faction of the MNLF reputed to be a terrorist organization that was involved in a spate of kidnappings for ransom, for example, the kidnapping in 2000 of foreign vacationers on Malaysia's Sipadan Island, off Sabah (Fuller 2000; Carnegie 2015). Notwithstanding the creation in 1996 of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Mindanao remained a war zone.

> Almost 25 years have passed since the signing of the original peace agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine Government, an agreement that provided for Muslim autonomy. Yet, despite its enshrinement in the Philippine constitution and the guarantees of consecutive national governments, genuine Muslim autonomy has yet to be realized and, consequently, a stable peace in Muslim Mindanao has yet to be obtained (McKenna 2021).

In November 2001, for instance, Nur Misuari, the ex-governor of ARMM and leader of MNLF launched a revolt that broke the peace accord with Manila. The revolt further destabilized the southern provinces as well as injecting impetus to the separatist struggle.

A similar separatist movement sought to create a province of Aceh independent of Indonesia. Referred to as the Aceh Rebellion, it was a protracted armed struggle (1976-2005) between Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, Free Aceh Movement) and the Jakarta government. The latter launched a military offensive in 2003 but appeared not to bore any consequential result. Nature's wrath in the form of a deadly tsunami caused by an underwater earthquake in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean in 2004 signaled the death knell of the GAM struggle. The tsunami claimed at least 130,000 deaths, and some 500,000 displaced (Meisl et al 2006: 777-802). Following the horrific tragedy, compromise was achievable, and a peace agreement ended the three-decade long secessionist uprising (Aspinall 2009; Amin 2020).

Both the Moro and Achenese aspired to secession, or at least significant autonomy from the central government respectively. Religion (Islam) undeniably had a role, more impactful in Aceh and in southern Thailand than in the southern Philippines where in the latter, politics was pivotal.

Developing a Typology Set

Having presented an overview of wars and armed conflicts across Southeast Asia through the centuries to the present provides an opportunity to formulate a provisional typology set. As mentioned, this is to discern occurrence patterns and the driving forces and/or push factors prior to the first shot. A closer scrutiny and analysis of which may reveal certain commonalities in situations and conditions relative to contemporary hotspots, and hopefully, if circumstances are opportune, it can alert us to possible steps for averting and preventing a full-blown escalation and clash of arms.

Table 1 below details 10 'push' factors with illustrative historical examples from Southeast Asia.

Table 1

Classification based on 'push' factors	Selected representative examples
IMPERIALIST AMBITIONS (political, strategic) in expanding boundaries through conquest and occupation (colonization); more often, a foreign power would launch an invasion on a targeted territory.	Han China invasion and occupation of Nam Viet (111 BCE-936 CE); Javanese establishment of Majapahit (1293-c. 1520s) over Java
ETHNIC PREDOMINANCE, often of a majority group over minority communities.	Burman established Bagan (Pagan) kingdom (9th-13th century), Toungoo dynasty (1531-1752), and Konbaung dynasty (1752-1885); Shan-dominated First Ava (Inwa) dynasty (1364-1527); T'ai set up Sukhotai (1238-1378), Ayuthaya (1351-1767), and Chakri (1782-present)
Contest for ECONOMIC RESOURCES, viz. trade and commerce; resources (mineral, agricultural, etc.); strategic routes for access and control.	Thalassocracies of Śrivijaya (7th-12th century), and Melaka (c. 1400-1511); Portuguese seaborne empire (1415-1825); creation of Spanish Philippines (1565-1898), Netherlands (Dutch) East Indies (1800–1806, 1816–1949), British Burma (1824-1948), British Malaya (1824-1941, 1945-1957), British Borneo (1841-1941, 1945-1963, 1963-1984), French Indochina (1887-1954)
DYNASTIC CYCLE; overthrowing one and replaced with a new dynasty.	Tây Sơn dynasty (1788-1802); Nguyễn dynasty (1802-1945)
Armed struggle for POLITICAL FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE; revolutionary wars of independence against colonial regimes, foreign rule.	First Indochina War (1945-1954), and Second Indochina War or Vietnam War (1955-1975); Philippine Revolution (1896-1898); Indonesian Revolution (1945-1949); Fretilin of East Timore (1976-1999); Hukbalahap (Hukbo Ng Bayan Laban Sa Hapon) (People's Anti-Japanese Army), the Philippines; Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), Myanmar
RELIGIOUS WARS of one religion against another; sectarian strife.	Muslim-Christian clash in Central Sulawesi (1998-2001); Java War (1825-1830)
SECESSIONIST objectives for breakaway as an independent, sovereign territory owing to ethnic and/or religious reasons.	Moro in southern Philippines; Malay Muslim in southern Thailand; Aceh in northern Sumatra
DISENFRANCHISED TRADITIONAL ELITES deprived of prestige, status and/or means of wealth launched revolts against Western colonial regimes.	Iban revolt (1853-1861) of Rentap in Brooke Sarawak, the Pahang Rebellion (1891-1895) of Dato' (Abdul Rahman) Bahaman, Mat Salleh Rebellion (1894-1905) in British North Borneo, To' Janggut revolt (1915) in Kelantan
IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLES between conflicting political ideologies; communism against Western capitalist colonial regimes.	Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), Second Malayan Emergency (1968-1989), and Sarawak Communist Insurgency (1962-1990); Huk Rebellion (1946-1954); New People's Army (NPA) (1969-present)
PROXY WARS OF THE COLD WAR era; Cold War warriors – U.S., USSR, People's Republic of China (PRC) – lending support in local armed conflicts – more often supplying military materials including armaments.	Cambodia (1979-1991), between Moscow-backed Vietnam-PRK, and KR-Sihanouk alliance of CGDK, whereby Beijing supported KR while Washington and the European powers backed Sihanouk.

As indicated in Table 1, there are 10 'push' factors or drivers. Undeniably, there is an overlapping of the factors where more than one, two, or even more drivers force conditions and situations to develop into open warfare among the related parties. Take for instance the Western powers intruding into the region beginning with Spain and Portugal and subsequently followed by the Netherlands, Britain, U.S., and France, all possessed IMPERIALIST AMBITIONS, and these 'ambitions' themselves were spurred by the pursuit of ECONOMIC RESOURCES. The struggle for pursuing POLITICAL FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE played vital roles in driving nationalist groups to open hostilities, whether against Western colonial regimes or the military occupation of Imperial Japan. What the latter did, except in terms of duration, was no different from the actions of the Western imperial powers in the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century. Imperial Japan, for all intents and purposes, was the last of the imperialist powers.

In the meantime, it struck as no surprise that the changing of the DYNASTIC CYCLE as a 'push' factor is evidenced only in Vietnam, and not elsewhere in the region. Vietnam was the most Sinicized, mirroring China in many fundamental aspects – political, sociocultural, economic, religious, etc. – including the dynastic system of governance and civil administration with a mandarinate class of scholar-bureaucrats.

Comparatively RELIGIOUS WARS did not play a bigger role. Armed conflicts spurred by DISENFRANCHISED TRADITIONAL ELITES could launch small-scale and short-lived uprisings. As expected, IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLES and PROXY WARS OF THE COLD WAR appeared as post-war phenomena although the seeds of hostilities were planted several decades in the past during the 1920s and 1930s.

Caption: Triumphal parade of Viet Minh troops through the streets of Hanoi on 9 October 1954 following the French defeat and withdrawal.

Source: WikiCommons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1stIndochinaWar005.jpg (Accessed 26 July 2023).

Table 2 below details the frequency of occurrence of wars and armed conflicts in Southeast Asia over three distinct periods.

Table 2

	PRE-COLONIAL TIMES	**COLONIAL PERIOD**	**POSTINDEPENDENCE ERA**
Classification based on 'push' factors			
IMPERIALIST AMBITIONS	* * * * *	* * * * *	* *
POLITICAL FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE	*	* * * * * * * * *	* * *
ETHNIC PREDOMINANCE	* *		* * *
ECONOMIC factors	* * *	* * * * * * *	
SECESSIONIST objectives	* *		* * * *
DYNASTIC cycle	*		
DISENFRANCHISED TRADITIONAL ELITES		*	
RELIGIOUS WARS		* *	* *
IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLES			* * * * * * * * *
PROXY WARS OF THE COLD WAR			* *

* Represents one conflict: representative examples of conflicts drawn from Table 1 (above).
The Pacific War (1941-1945) is grouped within the 'Colonial' period as it was a struggle between imperialist powers.

Table 2 springs few surprises. Whilst IMPERIALIST AMBITIONS and ECONOMIC RESOURCES acted as the heavyweights of 'push' factors in the COLONIAL PERIOD, IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLES and POLITICAL FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE appear prominent in the POSTINDEPENDENCE ERA. At the same time, in the POSTINDEPENDENCE ERA witnessed a surge in ETHNIC PREDOMINANCE. Almost all 'push' factors are featured in PRE-COLONIAL TIMES besides showing a balance in occurrence without any particular factor being conspicuous.

Concluding Remarks

This paper's diachronic overview of the region's conflicts delivers a microcosm of human history where commonalities of bloodshed appear as the norm rather than the exception. War and conflict do seem a part of the human story. While we can reluctantly accept this reality, we should never stop trying to create a world without strife. Identifying and gaining a greater understanding of past armed struggles may assist in that endeavour.

The tentative typology set developed here focused on primary 'push' factors, and the coincidence of these driving forces in accordance with periodization. It revealed certain patterns and trends from imperialist ambitions and pursuit of resources that weighed heavy in the colonial period to ideological, political and secessionist struggles for independence and ethnic predominance being key features of the post-colonial period.

Establishing such a typology set is a profitable exercise for identifying and understanding developments that subsequently led to wars and armed conflicts in Southeast Asia. It allows us to consider what preemptive measures could prove beneficial in the future if similar conditions and situations were to occur. The negotiating table is far more preferrable to the battlefield and early warning signs can focus the minds of key actors towards preventing escalation. Negotiations between the parties, in public or private, through formal and informal channels or both in parallel, need greater emphasis to prevent tense situations deteriorating further. However, the ability to take preventative measures is easier said than done. Having said that, active and concerted efforts in the direction of prevention are wholly necessary to stymie the alternative and its dire consequences.

In closing, consider the words of the Mahatma:

> What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or in the holy name of liberty or democracy?
>
> Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

Or the thought-provoking wisdom of Krishnamurti:

> The problem that we should discuss, which is ever-present, is that of the individual and his relationship with another, which is society. If we can understand this complex problem then, perhaps we shall be able to avoid the many causes that ultimately lead to war. War is a symptom, however brutal and diseased, and to deal with the outer manifestation without regard to the deeper causes of it, is futile and purposeless. In fundamentally changing the causes, perhaps we can bring about a peace that is not destroyed by outer circumstances.
>
> Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986)

And, lest we forget,

> Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime.
>
> Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

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