Chapter Four
SECURITY SCENARIO IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: INTERNAL SECURITY ISSUES

The previous chapter has highlighted the role of external powers in influencing the strategic scenario of Southeast Asia. It has been felt that since the end of the Cold War, a vibrant Southeast Asia is emerging. The region had been making the best of the economic opportunities and had been flourishing into a prosperous economic zone. This has been accompanied by improvement of relations between the countries of this region. However beneath this bright picture lies the real one. There are a number of problems and contentious issues; some of them had some relation with the Cold War but most of them are related to the region. Robert O’Neill adds that while it is true that Southeast Asia would not be a trouble free zone without the Cold War, it cannot be denied that the Cold War had intensified the complexity of various issues and created new problems. It is important to look at the security issues endemic to this region – domestic politics and economic problems, traditional state-to-state relations including territorial claims and boundary disputes, and some non-conventional security concerns.

At present Southeast Asia exists in an environment where they do not have to divert their energy and resources to assist or counter external powers. With the withdrawal of the communist threat, internal problems have taken the front seat and old rivalries have a divisive impact on inter-state relationships. New challenges are complicating the security scenario. It must be kept in mind that although the internal security threats are often categorised in different ways, they need not be taken as water tight compartments incapable of being related to one another. On the contrary one factor influences the other. Internal security threats in Southeast Asia can be divided into two basic divisions – first, conflicts and tensions within the states and second the state intra-state conflicts. It is the scope of this chapter to look at the conflicts and tensions within the states. However it is important to take note of the fact that there are security complications that originate from individual states, challenging not only the stability and security of individual states, in some cases they may have spill-over effects that imperil the region. Such issues are largely of a non-traditional nature like

1 Robert O’ Neill, Security Challenges for Southeast Asia After the Cold War, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992, p.3.
environmental issues. These issues will be discussed in the next chapter along with issues of intra-state conflicts.

**Tensions and Conflicts within States:** The Southeast Asian States face the challenge of maintaining stability and order. Often multiple, complex situations affect the states so much so that they are labelled as weak states or even failed States. Socio-political challenges, particular to the States of this region may be further divided into:

a) *The crisis within the political systems of the countries.* It arises from the ongoing contradictions between the authoritarian state systems and the increasing demands for political liberalisation.

b) *The challenge to the social cohesion and stability and order* of these systems as they are continuously challenged by ethnic strife, separatist activities, terror conspiracies.

a) **Crisis within the political systems of Southeast Asian states:** Political liberalisation is the talk of the day in Southeast Asia. The widening circles of interlocking economic interests are evolving in the direction of greater complex interdependence. At the same time, high levels of economic and social progress seem to constitute the requisite values and norms that nurture and sustain democracies. Renowned scholar Huntington reflects the same perspective when he says that, “Democratization occurs most frequently and also most easily in countries that have reached the upper-middle levels of economic development.”

A persistent theoretical perspective conveys that economic growth and prosperity is the harbinger of political change and that the ultimate destination should not be anything short of representative democracy. In the context of this region, two pertinent issues need to be addressed. First, the region’s economic growth and rising incomes have not generated democratic forces. On the contrary they have produced semi-authoritarian systems that managed its resources and co-opted its challengers; in worse cases like Myanmar, the civil arrangement was replaced by the rule of the army. Second, Southeast Asia is an exception to not only the linkage between advancing economic health and political change, but is also proof of the fact that all political changes do not necessarily give

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birth to liberal democracies. In fact, the region is witness to the dichotomous relationship between the forces of continuity and the forces of change, between the forces of tradition and that of political liberalisation.

In order to further understand the peculiar nature of Southeast Asian political systems one must take note of the kind of historicity, the nature of the social and cultural components in the region and their role in determining the political orders of the respective states. The institutional and functional components of the political system represent the structural aspect of the political system; we know it as the government. The functions and the inter-relation between the various institutions and the nature of leadership in the different states give an idea of the nature of the governance of within the system. An in-depth study of the ongoing symbiotic relationship between the government and the governance gives a vivid picture of the nature of the political system prevalent in a particular Southeast Asian State. In addition to this observation, one must not lose sight of the fact that each of these political orders is embedded in the social and cultural matrix of the respective countries. Also it wouldn’t be wrong to say that their evolutionary trajectories have been determined by their historical experiences. Based on this interaction between governmental structures and governance, it is possible to earmark three kinds of political systems – first, the revolutionary and ideological, second, the maximal and authoritarian, and the third, pluralist and political consociations.

The first category includes those States with ideology driven revolutionary history coupled with Cold War experience. Geographically they are located in Indo-China and comprise the states of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Communist ideology has inspired revolution and impacted the evolution of their political systems. It has played a prominent role in transferring the society from disparate segregated units into one systemic whole bonded by tenets of communism. They can be called mono-organisational system as the Communist party monopolises political power. In the case of Vietnam, their long drawn struggle first against the US propped Ngo Dinh Diem and then against the US-China sponsored Khmer Rouge taught the country the importance of party discipline and the importance of the supreme leadership within the party. The Cambodian political system was characterised by the constant tussle between monarchical predominance and the non-royal political opponents primarily
Hun Sen the leader of the Cambodian Communist Party (CPP). At the same time Cambodia’s association with Cold War politics is not difficult to trace – first, Hun Sen’s role as Foreign Minister of the Vietnam sponsored government of Cambodia (1979-1990) and the haunting tales of the Khmer Rouge in the country. Cambodian political system believes in paternalisation of the supreme state power and this has been strongly maintained even to this day. There are a number of patrons of this political power Prince Norodom Ranaridh and Hun Sen and for a short period it seemed that Sam Rainsy could also become another patron.\(^3\) Two important observations would help make an idea of the Laotian political system. First, that the political system was conditioned by the clear division of the power structure between the royalty and the communists. Second, until the end of the twentieth century Laos was closely linked to international events of the Cold War. Laotian system has followed the communist model but in response to the present international situation, it has had to reform itself in the recently along the paths of liberalisation. The process is quite slow complex and full of contradictions. The Laotian state is also dominated by the communist party and they are not very comfortable with the idea of political liberalisation.

As a matter of fact, the States of Indo-China are examples of the fact that countries that change their political orientation in response to external pressures only face a number of difficulties in implementing the basic mechanisms of political liberalisation like participation, political expression, and most important attaining stability. It is true that events of the early 1990s forced these countries to change their political outlook and embark on a process of political liberalisation. While all these countries moved towards market economy there is still a lot of confusion on the exact modality to attain political liberalisation. There is a lack of the right kind of leadership who were interested in political reforms. Notwithstanding the effect of non-communist influences, conservative forces throughout the 1990s were pitted against reforms. The pre-eminence of one-party system in the countries of Indo-China make political transformation a state-centred activity. Two particular trends are prominent in this case – first, the growing importance of society and the diminishing aura of the party

as the sanctimonious manifestation of revolution. Second but a contrary trend is the
tendency to regularise the political process. There a tendency to regularise the process
of reform provided party is the centre piece of the reforms. Yet a number of factors
pose challenge to the process – economic backwardness, fears of deviation from the
socialist orientation, the rhetoric against peaceful evolution and the chronic problem
of corruption.

Therefore, contrary to the predictions on positive political reforms in Indo-China in
the post-Crisis period, the three communist regimes of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam
have only managed to evolve into reluctant and weak procedural democracies that pay
minimal attention to civil liberties and other democratic features. These characteristics
are somewhat similar to that of a ‘polyarchy’. There are problems as outcomes of
weak political reforms. First, conservative forces are an anathema to economists,
donors and investors, these countries fail to become attractive for FDIs or
entrepreneurship. It is not good news for these less developed economies. Second, the
reluctance of the leadership to play a responsible role is also the reason for societal
tensions. The countries of Indo-China have been witness to increasing internal
tensions and conflicts, such tensions often result from opposition to the political
establishments. Both rural and urban unrest are on the rise in Vietnam. In the case of
Laos, political violence, dissidence and opposition have two sources – opposition
from the tribes of the hills and the other comprises political opposition to the
government. Anti-government demonstrations have taken place in Vientiane that were
led by students and teachers, foreigners are also known to have joined such protests.
However, government has been continuously denying reports of such protests. In
Cambodia, high tension political drama between Hun Sen and Norodom Ranaridh
Sihanouk has added to the political chaos. The coup in November 2000 and the events

For an idea on polyarchy as a political system see, Robert Dahl, Polyarchy: Participation and
6 For example in urban and industrial areas of Vietnam labour unrest have been on the rise especially in
the second half of the 1990s. These strikes or labour movements do not have the support of State
affiliated trade unions. For more see, Anita Chan and Irene Norlund, “Vietnamese and Chinese Labour
Regimes: On the Road to Divergence”, in Anita Chan et.al. (eds.), Transforming Asian Socialism:
China and Vietnam Compared, Australia, St. Leonard’s, Allen Unwin, pp.204-228. Rural unrest has
been prominent in 1997 at Thai Binh and in Central Highlands in 2001.
following the coup challenged the political security of the existing government.

Apart from that, political violence has marred the hopes of democracy within the country; it was reflected in the violence that took place during the registration period in August 2001 for the first multi-party local elections. Some of the candidates who were planning to challenge Hun Sen and the ruling CPP were shot dead during the campaign. In 2004, in context of the merger of the Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopératif, (FUNCINPEC or the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia) and Sam Rainsy Party to form the alliance of Democratic Parties, a number of prominent opposition leaders were shot dead; allegations were pointed at the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP). In January 2004, the leaders of the Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia Chea Vichea, a prominent opponent of Hun Sen was also murdered.

States with maximum (maximal) government are called so because of the predominant nature of their leadership. Due to the nature of their governance and the nature of their political practices, they can accommodate political systems from a continuum ranging from authoritarian regimes to totalitarian ones. It is important here to take note of the fact that authoritarian regimes are complementary to semi-democratic and pseudo-democratic ones. Such countries in Southeast Asia are, Philippines, Brunei and Myanmar. The political systems of all these states depend on the nature of their leadership. In the case of the Philippines, Juan Liz has observed that the Filipino politicians are professionals who are willing to engage in corruption, flirt with semi-loyal or anti-loyal oppositions, ready to tolerate their tantrums and be

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8 In November 2000, dozens of armed men launched an attack on the official buildings in Phnom Penh. At least seven of the gunmen were killed in the raid, that the government officials initially attributed to unspecified terrorists. However, some of those involved, alleged that they were brought to Phnom Penh under false pretext and forced to carry weapons. The leader of the US based Cambodian Freedom Fighters Organisation, Chhum Yasith subsequently issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack on behalf of his organization and alleging that its principal intention was to disrupt the visit of Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong. Interestingly, forty seven people including two members of the Sam Rainsy Party were charged with terrorism in connection with the attack. In late June 2001, the trial of 32 of those who had participated in the coup, took place amid accusation that the government had played a part in fomenting the violence. In order to intimidate the political opponents, the accused received imprisonment ranging from three years to life imprisonment. Further in November 2001 24 out of 26 nationals were imprisoned for terms up to fifteen years following the mass trial that began in October 2001. In February 2002, another 20 individuals were tried in connection with the attempted coup and sentenced to various terms in prisons.

happy to be branded as the enemies of the state and of democracy". The country has seen a number of transitions, change in leaderships also. However, in the process of transitions, two important facts are worth noting. First, in the case of maximum government or governance, like the case of Philippines, liberalisation needs to be differentiated from democracy. Liberalisation is seen as a process of change that is initiated and implemented by the leaders of the regime. Therefore, the process of liberalisation is taken as a means to bring about some amount of flexibility and participatory openness in the system, but the ultimate purpose is to enhance the legitimacy of such maximum, authoritarian governments. Democratisation on the other hand is the process of complete change of the existing political system and includes all facets of liberalisation. Democratic movements are not necessarily the brain child of any single political interest group.

There are a number of factors that initiate and hasten the process of transition and help bring about democracy – economic, political cultural, institutional, and even international. In the case of the Philippines, the peculiarity of the situation is explained by Donald Share, “Legitimacy of authoritarian rule is most often undermined by a set of conditions that may also obstruct the consolidation of democratic rule.” The events leading to the People’s Power Revolution II in 2001 where Gloria Macapagal Arroyo replaced President Estrada only bears testimony to this observation. The destiny of the existing ruling governments depends on the interplay of the various interest groups who seek to derive benefit from the state. The kind of democracy that functioned in the Philippines after the People’s Power Revolution seemed to have the characteristics of elite and societal agreements, hierarchical military and an active bureaucracy. Moreover, the Filipino system is also conditioned by what Paul Hutchcroft calls “Booty Capitalism” where State resources are exploited by economic groups situated ‘outside’ the State system. Though the democratic transitions seemed to be carried out by social and political forces, but these business elites are the major actors. Ironically, the business oligarchy is the main force behind the political changes.

Another peculiarity of the Philippines is that political liberalisation under different Presidents is inadequate and there is need to democratise and re-democratise the system. It is reflected through the People’s Power Revolution I that brought to power Corazon Aquino in 1986 and through the People’s Power Revolution II that brought to power president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in 2001 in place of Joseph Estrada. Political transitions neither certify successful consolidation of democracy nor can it vouch for high quality governance. Low quality democracy or perhaps semi-democratic tendencies have been apparent in the Philippines and the Filipino leaders have acquired and exercised their power by bending the rule, crude campaign and violence. Corruption and Cronyism seemed to be an integral part of the Filipino leadership. In addition, one cannot discount the amount of political violence that has become a part of the Filipino democratic system. Political violence and election deaths have become a part of Filipino democracy. Moreover the violence in Mindanao also challenges the quality of democratic success in the Philippines. Since violence and regime changes are common to the Philippines, it is hard to credit it as a successful democratic state. Political instability is also one of its drawbacks.

The Thai system bears a resemblance with the Philippines so long as elites have a overbearing influence on the government and are nourished on a patron-client relationship. Yet the Thai system has its own characteristic as it is the only non-colony state in the region. The complexity of the system increases due to the plurality of elite groups that are involved in the politics of the region. In sum, the military, bureaucracy, business parties and civil society groups constitute the elite structure of the Thai politics, and more often than not, are competing with one another. Thai people have experienced various kinds of political regimes from absolute monarchy to military authoritarianism and from the 1970s, parliamentary democracy. This

13 The release of an Amnesty International report in August 2006 focused attention on an 'intensifying pattern' of political killings in the Philippines, particularly of left wing activists. According to Amnesty International, there were at least 244 such assassinations since President Gloria Arroyo took office in January 2001. Compared with 66 political killings in 2005, the tempo accelerated to at least 51 through the first half of 2006. The Philippines human rights group, Karapatan provides even more alarming statistics, claiming there have been over 700 politically motivated murders under Arroyo. Over 100 people were killed in election-related violence during the 2007 election. See "Philippines – September 2006: Shifting Patterns of Political Violence defy old stereotypes", Asian Analysis, ASEAN Focus Group, Canberra, Australian National University, available at, http://www.aseanfocus.com/asiananalysis/article.cfm?articleID=982.
democracy lacks successful consolidation and therefore is semi-democratic in nature; it has also seen brief military periods. The entire trajectory of Thai political history, since the coup-de-etat of 1932, has been marked by power struggle between political elites. Until the advent of parliamentary democracy in the 1970s, the power struggle concentrated between the military and the bureaucracy. The period between 1950s and 1970s may have been authoritarian but was marked by serious economic development. It was a political layout marked by desperate competitiveness between elites within the State and coercion being meted out to the society. The 1973 students' movement must be seen as an attempt to establish democracy in the context of the poor political liberties. The regimes of the 1970s and the 1980s can be seen as largely semi-democratic with authoritarian tendencies.

The Thai democratic polity of the 1990s emerged out of the struggle between the military on the one hand and a combined force of political elites and civil society on the other hand. Ever since the commendable triumph of participatory parliamentary democracy in September 1992, the struggle now persists between business elites and the civil society representatives, the intellectuals and the students. Money power became evident with the triumph of business tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra in 2001. However, democracy and stability has remained a far cry for Thailand as military has been controlling politics since the bloodless coup in 2006 after which Shinawatra has remained in exile.\textsuperscript{14} Politics in Thailand is growing ever more violent and unstable after the constitutional amendment in 2007 and the follow up election that gave People's Power Party the victory; Samak Sundaravej became the new Prime Minister. The opposition forces under People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) staged violent protests on allegation that the military backed constitutional reform is a pro-Thaksin one, and more important the present People's Power Party (PPP) and Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej are proxies of the Thai Rak Thai Party and Thaksin Shinawatra respectively. Regular violence has been plaguing Thailand for quite sometime now. They were not even ready to accept caretaker Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat from PPP as he was related to Shinawatra (his brother-in-law). Subsequently Wongsawat was ousted from power following the violent protests by the workers of the PAD (they are also known as yellow shirts because are dressed in yellow) wherein

\textsuperscript{14} In all there have been 18 military coups since the beginning of constitutional democracy in Thailand in 1932.
Bangkok airport was under siege and rendered totally dysfunctional. It revealed fresh set of struggle between two sets of elites – between the pro-government political leaders and consenting army on the one hand and political opposition and their supporters from the conservative sections of the military, state bureaucracy and royalist establishments. Thailand Constitutional Court ultimately disbanded Somchai Wongsawat for electoral fraud and barred him from office for five years paving the way for Thai lawmakers to elect opposition leader Abhsit Vejajiva as the succeeding Prime Minister of Thailand. Now in 2009 popular unrest and opposition by ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra’s red shirt supporters (as opposite to the yellow shirts) have again sent Thailand into disarray. Shinawatra’s call for a mass movement against Vejajiva (whom he alleges is not democratically elected) has resulted in violent protests including a riot into the venue of the East Asian Summit in Pattaya and life threatening attacks on Prime Minister Vejajiva’s twice on April 8, 2009 and on April 12, 2009 respectively. Perturbed by these activities the Prime Minister criticised the protests. The Bangkok Post had aired some of his views, “It is one thing to refuse to use force; it is another to allow protestors to run riot into the summit venue, blocking access to the hotel and putting foreign leaders to risk”. Shaken by the attack on him, the Prime Minister reacted by declaring a state of emergency. The state of emergency continues but there seems to be no scope of peace or reconciliation between the red shirts and the yellow shirts; while the red shirts draw their power from the rural side where there is popular support for Shinawatra, the yellow shirts represent the country’s established power circles – the royalists, the elite, the middle class and the military who feel threatened by Shinawatra,’s attempt to take over. He has been making nocturnal telecasts to encourage the protestors and has indicated that he will return at a befitting moment. Although the Fourth East Asian Summit had to be cancelled due to the protest and political unrest, what is interesting is that it has not harmed the daily business of life, unlike the November protests, it has neither (against Shinawatra) put foreigners into any difficulty. Perhaps it is because of this that the

18 "Must Thailand Sink Further", The Nation (Politics), April 12, 2009.
19 Ibid.
protests have not attracted strong reactions from other countries\textsuperscript{20} and the developments continue to remain an internal affair of Thailand. More significant is the fact that the cancellation of the East Asian Summit is also a big blow to the process of regional cooperation especially when there is a need to cooperate with each other in order to combat the global economic crisis.\textsuperscript{21} Besides, the protests are violent resulting in two deaths and wounding several protestors and anti-riot forces.\textsuperscript{22} If an early solution is found, the country will be thrown in further chaos.

Elite disunity is more prevalent in Thailand than anywhere else in Southeast Asia; it has two opposite implications. On the positive side, elite struggles have resulted in the birth of civil society much faster than any other part of Southeast Asia. On the negative side however, the failure to gain elite cohesion, none of the democracies that have emerged in Thailand have ultimately gained stability. It seems consolidation of democracy and stability of those political systems stand at opposite ends.

The traditional Islamic monarchy of Brunei is a unique state of Southeast Asia which is officially under the state of emergency since 1962.\textsuperscript{23} The political party system is hardly matured as the parties must get the approval of the Sultan. For instance a new party, Partai Kebengsaan Demokratik Brunei (PKDB) or the Brunei National Democratic Party was born in May 1985 and it received the Sultan’s approval to function. It was dissolved by the authorities in 1988 when the Party began to demand the resignation of the Sultan as the Head of the State. Its leaders Abdul Latif Hanif and Abdul Latif Chuchu were arrested and detained under the country’s Internal

\textsuperscript{20} Some of the governments like that of the China, France, New Zealand, Singapore, Britain, the United States, Australia and Japan warned their citizens to avoid Thailand and steer clear of protestors at the airport during the November 2008 protests. However there is not much evidence of strong reaction to the 2009 political turmoil.

\textsuperscript{21} “Asean’s Pattaya Fiasco”, Asia Sentinel, April 14, 2009.

\textsuperscript{22} Two persons have died and at least 113 are reported to be wounded including two dozen soldiers. For further details see, “Two dead as violent clashes rock the capital”, CNN News, Bangkok, April 13, 2009, available at, http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/04/13/thailand.protests/index.html.

\textsuperscript{23} In 1962 Brunei saw the outbreak of a revolt in parts of Sabah and Sarawak. The North Borneo Liberation Army was strongly opposed to the idea Brunei’s entry into the Federation of Malaysia. The North Borneo Liberation army was associated with Partai Rakyat Brunei (PRB) or the Brunei People’s Party. The revolt was defeated with the help of the British and the PRB was declared banned. A state of emergency was declared. The Sultan of Brunei, Sir Omar Ali Saifuddin decided against joining the Federation. However, Sabah and Sarawak joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. The Sultan continued to rule by decree, under the state of emergency. Brunei: Introductory Survey, Europa Yearbook op.cit.no.9, p.924.
Security Act. On the other hand, the Partai Perpaduan Kebangsaan Brunei (PPKB) or the Brunei National Solidarity Party born out of the division of the PKDB in February 1986 received the Sultan’s approval and continued to function successfully as the party emphasised co-operation with the government. The Brunei Legislative Council is not an elected body and members are appointed by the Sultan, most of them are loyal and very trustworthy to him. The Council has approved some amendments to the constitution, one of them being election of the members of the legislative council. The Sultan had also announced 2004, that fifteen of the twenty seats to the Parliament would be allotted to elected members. However till date no election has been announced. This raises doubts about the Government’s interest towards democracy.

Public demand for democracy is yet to gain momentum probably because the government is very vigilant of any kind of opposition to it. Dissemination of information is also monitored very strictly. In October 2001, a Local Newspaper Amendment Order established further control on Brunei’s newspapers particularly the English ones. The English daily *The News Express* was forced to shut down because, apparently, there was some non-compliance with the governmental financial conditions.

The country’s political system is devoid of healthy competition because of the strict vigil against political plurality. Members of the Cabinet are elected and dismissed by the Sultan. One of the infamous cases was the ouster of the finance minister and brother of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Prince Jefri Bolkiah on charges of misappropriation of funds. Jefri Bolkiah’s friends were also placed under legal scanner. Prince Jefri Bolkiah claimed that he was a victim of the conspiracy hatched by the conservative Islamic forces.

The role of Islam in Brunei is peculiar for at a point of time it acted as a conservative force trying to portray the Sultan as a devout Muslim, guardian of the conservative Islamic society of Brunei. Islam was used to deter any political activity that is likely

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24 They were both released in 1990. Abdul Latif Hanif died in May 1990. Abdul Latif Chuchu later became president of the General Assembly but had to quit because of his illness.

to lead to social deterioration and political disintegration. Democracy was thus looked as rather an un-necessary evil for Brunei’s Islamic, monarchical political system. In 1999, the State declared a total ban on non-Islamic activities like the consumption of alcohol, or the selling of religious artefacts in shops. The State was becoming more and more authoritarian under the garb of soft Islamisation.

At present, Islam is being used to invigorate some form of religious activism, which can be used to evaluate and even criticise government’s policies and actions. As Kuik and Welsh have found that, “The blurred lines between politics of daily life within Islam have allowed for open discussion of domestic politics, increasing attention to the issues such as corruption and good governance.” In addition Islam in Brunei has been finding newer fraternal ties with Islamic countries in the Middle East. Expansion of ties has led to networking with foreign Islamic organisations that give an amount of exposure to a range of discourses on Islam. Subsequently, Islamisation is feared to encourage political extremism which in turn is feared to encourage political opposition to the Sultan’s government. Religious extremism in Brunei has been supportive of trans-national, regional radical Islamic contacts. Some traces of this nexus have been evident with the discovery and arrest of number workers, both local and immigrants affiliated to the Malaysian deviationist Islamic movement Al-Ma’unah. Traces of another deviationist Malaysian group, Al-Arqam was found in Brunei in 1991 and their activities are believed to be continuing in Brunei. Brunei has responded with strict laws, the Internal Security Department uses Brunei’s Internal Security Act to detain and interrogate deviationist religious elements and even members of deviationist political forces. The State is also concerned with the rising rate of Christian conversions in Brunei. Arrests have been made by the government of those who have been involved in acts of proselytising to Christianity. The State is also very strict about non-Islamic activities like consumption of alcohol; the state has also been seizing artefacts belonging to other religions.

28 Europa Yearbook op.cit.no.9, p.425.
In the case of Myanmar (also called Burma), there is certainly a crisis of legitimacy of leadership, but it also focuses on the basic nature of State politics in this country. The British colonial period resulted in imposition of bureaucratic and legal institutions, but it did not apply the rule of law to Myanmar’s Frontier areas. The social and political consequences of the geographical and administrative system divide continued to shape political perceptions in and out of the country today. In the post-independence period, Myanmarese leadership moved only further and asserted the need for unity and integrity, thus, sidelinin ghe concerns of individualism. The failure of the post democratic leadership in Myanmar to establish Aung San’s dream State, not only laid the conditions for civil war between the ethnic groups and the government, between the government and the communists, but also paved the way for the army’s intervention in the chaotic state of politics. In the words of P. Callahan, “the Tatmadaw’s development of the governing capabilities that made the military rule possible came at the order of the civilian rulers when the army was deputed to many parts of Myanmar to fight the communists and Kuomintong members during internal crisis”. The invocation of the emergency coupled with the use of the army and legal devices were only reflective of the intolerant attitude of the U Nu government during the Civil War.

In such a context, the ever omnipresent Tatmadaw and its activities should not come as a surprise. It is only an outcome of the evolutionary political trajectory of Myanmar. There are three points that come to mind. First, Myanmar’s political culture does not believe in individual, democratic values, rather the thrust is on unity, collectivisation, non-sectarianism and most important political inter-relationships derived from age-old monarchical institutions. Second, the Myanmarese civilian government was no less authoritarian and undemocratic than the present military regime. Third, the pre and post independence political developments in Myanmar

31 One of the most notorious repressive tools was section 5 of the Public Order (Preservation Act) (PO[PA]) of 1947 used in a strengthened form to arrest possible rebels and detain them indefinitely without evidence of allegations of treachery or heinous crimes.
make it clear that the army had got involved in the politics in a far deeper manner than is desirable by any standards of democracy. It seemed imminent as the U Nu government began to disintegrate under domestic pressure, the army would get busy in supporting the state building process. At the same time it got busier in carving out for itself an irrevocable role in Myanmar’s politics for all times to come.

Myanmar’s military rule began in 1962 and continues till date. Two factors have helped sustain the rule of the army over politics. First, Myanmar’s political culture encouraged political passivity and conformism. Second the army regime religiously practices propaganda tactics, and fear tactics are equally useful in thwarting non-conformist voices. However, the nature of Myanmar’s politics has changed over time. Particularly since 1988, voices of dissidence by pro-democratic forces have become active. At this point, it is important to note that the issue of restoration of democratic rights and restoration of political rights of the ethnic groups were seen as two separate categories.33

Both these movements have resulted in instability of the political system. Their interactive courses keep them as separate political movements. Considering the fact that the army denied the results of the 1990 elections, the movement for restoration of democracy is directed against the illegitimate nature of the leadership. The movements of the ethnic communities were directed against the State and were based on demands for separate statehood. There have been some instances where some elected members to the Constituent Assembly fled to the Thai border and established a parallel government, the National Coalition Government of the Union of Myanmar (NCGUB) with the support from Democratic Alliance of Myanmar (DAB) which is a broadly based organisation uniting ethnic rebel forces with dissident students and monks.

The activities of these anti-military movements are reflective of the poor state of political liberty, transparency and the poorly balanced relation between State and

33 The distinction between these two categories has been made by Christina Fink. She points out that while the common character between the movements is that their common target is the military regime, they do not have the exact concerns and causes. Fink further adds that there has been substantial erosion of mutual sympathy for each other’s concern. See, Christina Fink, Living Silence, Myanmar under Military Rule, New Delhi, Zed Books, 2001, (particularly the first chapter).
society. Mass killings, murders and disappearances are a testimony to Myanmar’s repressive style of governance. Since the late 1980s, the government has been very ruthless with the pro-democracy activists. People have been evicted from settlements where pro democratic forces would receive or may receive support. The leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and of the democratic movement in Myanmar, Aung San Syu Ki is still under house arrest. She has been denied contacts with her supporters. Periodic spurts of anti-authoritarian movements have been taking place throughout the 1990s, the latest being in 2007, but those have been put down with equal rigour and determination. Anti-government demonstrations have been taken to another level where they have decided to establish a ‘People’s Parliament’ or Pyithu Hluttaw, as long as the national legislature cannot be convened.

Opposition to the military regime has been slow but consistent. Two or three factors are of importance. First, that the NLD is certainly the plausible alternative to the junta regime, however National League for Democracy (NLD) may need to reassess and reconsider its strategy. It was not too long ago that lack of political progress by the NLD in 1999 led to the formation of breakaway faction of the party by a prominent member of the party, Than Tun, he was subsequently expelled from the NLD. This may be the first signs of lack of confidence in the movement led by the NLD. Second, the Junta has also evolved its style of functioning; distinctly, some amount of liberalisation is visible. A large number of prisoners have seen the light of the day since 2000. However, liberalisation does not mean democratisation of the polity by Western Standards, not even by the standards of the NLD. The political organisation still claims that the army instructs political culling of pro-democracy activists and has no plans to release the Aung San from house arrest and is responsible for general political intolerance and instability. There have also been an attempt at political overthrow and the tussle within the military leadership; it has become more evident and quite violent. Third but not the least, the democratic movement in Myanmar is

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35 The struggle for power for the supreme leadership resulted in the removal from position and power of General Khin Nyunt. He was later placed under house arrest. The National Intelligence Bureau was abolished and several numbers of his family and intelligence officers were arrested. His associates and sympathizers were dismissed and then put under house arrest, as was in the case of Minister of Home Affairs Tin Hliang. There have been reports of death of some of Khin Nyunt associates in jail. The trail of other associates have commenced in a prison of Yangon. On the other hand there have been unconfirmed reports of clashes between supporters of Maung Aye, Than Shwe and Soe Win, there have been unexplained death of Maung Aye’s personal assistant Lieutenant Colnel Bo Win Tin.
yet to become one cohesive force. For instance, a large opposition in the form of movement led by NLD functions within the country; on the other hand, there are several opposition groups that operate along the Thai-Myanmar border. Such groups include the Democratic Alliance of Myanmar, the NCCGUB and the All Myanmar Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), a student organisation formed by Burmese students who left Myanmar after the 1988 uprising. Of recent the tatmadaw has identified these groups as terrorist organisations. These have far reaching implications for the movement for democracy. Especially the branding of these organisations as terrorist groups would give the army an excuse to eradicate the members of such groups. Under such circumstances, human rights are hardly of any consequence to the military regime. This may seem a drawback in the case of Myanmar’s democratic movement. Ethnic groups are certainly relevant in the political struggle because they create additional pressure for the military regime. However, the plurality and extent of opposition by various ethnic groups makes the whole challenge of ethnic separatism a formidable one.

Burma has been witness to armed insurgency since its independence. These insurgency movements have therefore been a constant challenge to political stability and tranquillity. Some of the groups are particularly challenging to the military administration. The Karens are one such ethnic entity that has been fighting the government for long. The Karens have a historical past in not recognising themselves with the Burmans. They had fought alongside the British, when the legendary Burmese leader General Aung set up his army to fight the British during independence struggle the Karens set up their own militia – Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO). They never participated in the Panglong Agreement arranged by Aung San where some ethnic groups were convinced to join independent Burma under the condition that they would be given full autonomy and even for some groups the right to secession after a decade of independence. Karens started their armed struggle against the government in 1949 in response to the disagreements with the government on various issues like autonomy, delimitation of the boundary, and abuses and murder by the Burmese army. The Karens have sustained the one of the longest insurgencies inspite of the fact that they faced a number of challenges. The group has faced the problem of infighting, for instance, in 1994, a long simmering tension between the Buddhist Karen troops and the Christian dominated KNU
leadership led to the mutiny of over 1000 Buddhist Karen Troops. The government took advantage of the division between the Christian Karens and the KNU breakaway Buddhist faction – the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). They used them to find way into their strongholds and launched a major offensive in 1995. Under pressure the KNU announced unilateral ceasefire but the government would not respond. The army was hoping to bring down other allies of the KNU – the National Democratic Front (NDF) comprised of a number of smaller ethnic groups and the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB). Interestingly the joint offensive on the KNU had a negative impact on some of the other groups like the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and Shan State National Army a splinter group from drug lord Khun Sa’s Mong Tribal Army, they surrendered their arms in 1995. Khun Sa and his MTA had surrendered in 1996-1997.

Following the military expedition on the Karens, there had been interactions between the government and the KNU. Discussion progressed between the two sides so long as former Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt was in power. After the removal of Khin Nyunt from power the whole military intelligence was removed; it had its impact on the talks between KNU and the government. Since 2005, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has taken a hard line posture attacking Karen villages. It annoyed the Karens and their old leader General Byo Mya; ceasefire and negotiations were a distant possibility so long as he was alive. He passed away in 2006 and further divisions within the KNU took place. The result was that in KNU pro ceasefire military leader Major General Htein Maung made a separate ceasefire with the SPDC in late 2006. However it is not accepted by many members of the KNU. Therefore KNU is still identified as a hostile insurgent hostile group.

Another serious insurgency challenge came from the Shan Community who began their rebellion in 1958. It was in reaction to U Nu’s reluctance to give the Shans the right to secession in the same year as postulated in the Panglong Agreement of 1948 that the young Shan students began organising themselves against the government.

37 Ibid, pp.22-23.
38 Ibid, p.23.
The Shan students were not only disappointed against the Burmese state, they were also against the Kuomintong (KMT) who were based in the Shan region and were perhaps supported secretly by the US. What began as a modest show of force by the ragtag army of about a thousand men in 1958 (when they captured Tanyang in Northern Shan state) soon spread across the entire Shan state in the form of spontaneous uprising in 1960. Apart from the Shan uprising the Shan state had been constant prey to invasions by the Kuomintong members; military incursions from other ethnic groups like the KNU and the mutineers of the First Kachin Rifles have also used Shan territory making it a very chaotic state. Even prior to the 1958 rebellion the state had been subject to martial law because of internal dissent and chaos. The Shans had organised themselves into armies but there were too many small armed groups. Shelby Tucker who had been to the Shan states accounts for the long list of fighting groups housed in almost every part of the Shan state. However the prominent Shan forces have been Shan State Independence Army (SSIA) but at present the main forces are the Shan State Army (SSA) that continues to be a non ceasefire group. Over the period of time the Shans have also split into several splinter groups and some of them have entered into cease-fire agreements with the army administration.

The Rohingya population is ethnic muslim population mostly concentrated in the three northern townships: Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung. While some Rohingya historians write that the modern Rohingya people are the result of migrations that started in the 7th century, the Buddhist Rakhine people and the Burmese military government claim that such migrations started in the 18th century. The Rohingya people have continued to suffer from human rights violations under the Burmese junta since 1978. The Rohingyas' freedom of movement is severely restricted and the vast majority of them have effectively been denied Myanmar citizenship. In fact, in 1978 over estimated number of 200,000 Rohingyas fled to

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41 For an idea on the splinter Shan groups, see, the list provided in Martin Smith, “Ethnic Conflicts in Burma: From Separatism to Federalism”, in Andrew T.H. Tan (ed), A Handbook of Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2007, pp.294-324.
Bangladesh, following the ‘Nagamin’ (‘Dragon King’) operation of the Myanmar army. Officially this campaign aimed at "scrutinising each individual living in the state, designating citizens and foreigners in accordance with the law and taking actions against foreigners who have filtered into the country illegally". This military campaign directly targeted civilians, and resulted in widespread killings, rape and destruction of mosques and further religious persecution. During 1991-92 a new wave of state repression led to a refugee exodus where an estimated number of a quarter of a million Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh. There were reports of widespread forced labour, as well as summary executions, torture, and rape. Rohingyas were forced to work without pay by the Myanmar army on infrastructure and economic projects, often under harsh conditions. Many other human rights violations occurred in the context of forced labour of Rohingya civilians by the security forces. Several Rohingya armed groups have been established during the last decades. The main insurgent groups are the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) both of which merged in the 1960s to form the Rohingyas National Alliance (RNA). Muslim groups like the All-Burma Muslim Union (ABMU) and the ARIF joined forces with the DAB, an alliance of opposition parties and ethnic groups in Myanmar. In February 1997, seventeen ethnic rebel factions including Rohingya Muslim groups meet in Karen-controlled territory under the banner of the newly-revived National Democratic Front (NDF). The NDF fought against the military in the 1970s and 1980s and signed a cease-fire agreement with the government in 1992. In 1995 two RSO factions and the ARIF merged into the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) and abandoning the previous RNA.

Rohingyas suffer in several ways at the hands of the Myanmar army. The NaSaKa are the security forces most frequently cited by the Rohingyas as committing human rights violations against them. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) rejected the existence of a separate ethnic group called "Rohingya". The vast majority of Rohingyas are not believed to possess Myanmar citizenship. Moreover they are not recognised as one of the 135 'national races’ by the Myanmar government:

43 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
"In actual fact, although there are (135) national races living in Myanmar today, the so-called Rohingya people is not one of them. Historically, there has never been a ‘Rohingya’ race in Myanmar. The very name Rohingya is a creation of a group of insurgents in the Rakhine State. Since the First Anglo-Myanmar War in 1824, people of Muslim Faith from the adjacent country illegally entered Myanmar Ngain-Ngan, particularly Rakhine State. Being illegal immigrants they do not hold immigration papers like other nationals of the country."\[46\]

Therefore they are denied the rights and privileges that is deserving of a citizen. In addition they are subjected to an inhuman treatment - limitations on their movement, confiscation of land and property, extortion and arbitrary taxation, special fees for registration of birth and deaths, permission for marriage are some of the discretions that are common in case of Rohingyas. Thousands of Rohingyas are likely to move into neighbouring Bangladesh. It would lead to refugee crisis in Bangladesh as Rohingyas are likely to face adverse situations there too. Bangladesh has repatriated refugees to Myanmar but several Rohingyas have fled refugee camps into Bangladesh in order to avoid returning to Myanmar; they fear persecution in the hands of the Myanmar administration. The refugee problem continues so does the suffering of the Rohingyas. The insurgency is likely to continue so long Rohingya community suffers humiliation in the hands of the Myanmar government. There are also a number of other armed groups which remain active in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border areas. These include the National Unity Party of Arakan (NUPA) and the Arakan Army, both of which are mostly based among the Buddhist Rakhine population. However not discounting that all the insurgency groups are fighting for Rohingya rights, dignity, identity and homeland, differences are there. For instance, in 1998, RSO left ARNO. It is generally understood that the RSO fights to liberate Arakan from Buddhist rule and to establish an Islamic state, while Arakan Rohingyas National Organisation aims to set up an independent Arakan state, which may not necessarily be Islamic. Muslim movements have their own weaknesses; there is mistrust and suspicion between Myanmar’s Muslim communities. Rohingya and non-Rohingya

Muslims put forward different interpretations of Jihad, and the Rohingya Muslims have attempted actively to exclude other Muslim groups. There is little sympathy or financial assistance for the Rohingya from other Muslims living in Myanmar. Government on their part have been trying to bring the groups within the process of national reconciliation, but there has been much of reciprocation from the Rohingya side. Except for small splinter groups like the Arakanese Army, a breakaway faction from NUPA, major Rohingyas groups like the RSO continue to struggle for an independent state.

Myanmar had faced the challenge of political insurgency from the communists. The Communist Party of Burma has been providing leadership to the political insurgency and in course of time ethnic insurgency. Martin Smith has underlined that it is not easy to dissociate the two, "In over 40 years of armed conflict, the ethnic and political insurgencies have crossed at so many points that it has become impossible to deal with any of the insurgent movements in complete isolation."\(^{47}\) Ethnic movements have also adopted the Maoist strategy of a united front. The strategy has changed since late eighties as the Maoist effect began to fade and students began to empathise with the ethnic cause and vice versa. The ethnic struggles have also been influenced by the larger struggle for democracy. Consequently, such struggles have become complicated as political organisations have got involved with the ethnic groups. The Communist Party of Burma is believed to be no longer an active, but it maybe difficult for the government to be convinced that there are just no remnants of the communist movement. Therefore whether it is the apprehension of ideological insurgency, or the movement for democracy, or the struggle for identity and homelands, or all of them, the *tatmadaw* will continue to face challenges. The political security and stability of Myanmar remains a far cry.

The Burmese administration is trying to bring within its folds the members of various ethnic groups through the process of national reconciliation. By taking the path of national reconciliation, the government expressed its eagerness in overhauling the state of relations it shared with opposition forces, "We shall recommit ourselves to allowing all our citizens to participate freely in the life of our political process while

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\(^{47}\) Martin Smith, op.cit.no.30, p.31.
giving precedence to national unity, peace and the stability of the country as well as the region."\textsuperscript{48} It will be interesting to see how Myanmar's manages to accommodate its ethnic communities through its reconciliation programme. Therefore the National reconciliation programme has two aspects – reconciliation between army and the pro-democratic forces and reconciliation between government and the ethnic forces. The seven stage programme that seeks to lay the roadmap for reconciliation is supplemented by the national Convention that plans to prepare a constitution for the country. The draft of the constitution that strengthens the political power of the military was apparently passed through a referendum held by the Myanmar army government immediately after the super-cyclone Nargis ravaged the country. The referendum was done in a hurry without any form of international monitoring making this referendum not representative of all kinds of views prevalent in Myanmar. The draft had anyway disallowed Buddhist monks and opposition forces (those who left Myanmar and settled at the Thai border) from casting their votes. Besides all the ethnic forces are yet to declare ceasefire, the majority communities are the Karens, Shans, Rohingyas and a section of the Karennis. Therefore this can thus hardly be called a referendum. Besides, the draft only sought to strengthen the power of the military within the government; this would not be desirable by any standards of democracy.

The last category of States are those where the political evolution of the countries have been largely conditioned by the plural composition of the social fabric. Notwithstanding this, the trajectory of the political leadership of these States, they seem to bear an innate authoritarian tendency or at least, a soft-authoritarian character. The countries belonging to this cluster are accepted as democracy but would at best be called functional or operational democracies. Analysing the nature of their leadership, they can also be branded as pseudo-democracies. As mentioned before, the countries of this kind include Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Indonesia as a country could have been included in the previous category. The country has been subjected to military intervention and control more than once. However the fact that inspite of army's predominance on the Indonesian political system the system bears some

semblance of a civil administration, parties exist, they participate in elections, elections have been taking place in Indonesia. This is not the case in Myanmar.

Malaysia is a State with the political State befitting of a multi-racial society. The politics of the country is based on the ethnic layout of the system and subsequently, political parties and their leaders derive mileage and prominence from politicisation of ethnic interests of the different racial communities. Basically, the Malaysian political system is the interplay of two significant political realities – first, unabated prominence of ethnic politics, and the political representation of ethnic interests. Second, the imposing influence of leadership, personified in the leader of the most prominent ethnic group. Therefore, Malaysia is democratic in the sense of representation of ethnic factional interests in the politics of the country. Yet it does not lose its authoritarian character based on the nature of the leadership that controls the State machinery and the politics of the country. The legacy of the Malay leadership is well entrenched in its cultural and traditional roots of the past where many elements of the indigenous as well as Hindu and Islamic traditions were prominent. Yet the modern leadership has its roots in the colonial past and so has the legacy of modern Malaysian politics of ethnic prioritisation. Envisioned in another way, the character of the Malay leadership as it has evolved in the post-independence period is a function of the dichotomous relation of nationalisms that helped nation-building in Malaysia. Malaysian nation-building is a product of the competitive cohabitation of genealogical ethnic nation and civic territorial nation. This uncomfortable contestation along with the communist threat during the nascent period of nation building provided enough rationale for an expanding State with extensive police authority and a wide range of repressive measures. It was complemented by a strong assertive and authoritarian leadership.

The compromise that was struck between the major Malay ethnic representative groups was only an expression of the unbalanced relation between the two

expressions of nationalism – genealogical-ethnic and civic-territorial. Contemporary Malay political leadership is a manifestation of the lineage of assertive leadership as well as the personification of the role of the guardian of the most dominant ethnic group in the politics of representation. Both these roles demand that the supreme leadership remain unchallenged. Such a condition is undesirable for the democratic health of the country.

Inspite of the best efforts to achieve nation-building through adat-kehusan (politely absorbing the adversaries), Malay political system has been marked by instability and community strife. Challenges have been following one after the other in the form of ethnic riots 1969-1970, guerrilla movements 1976-1978, political violence of Kelantan of 1977, communal tensions of 1978, Islamic fundamentalism and of late political violence following the demands for democracy 1998-1999.

In the late 1960s the Malaysian Westminster Democratic model was replaced by the Consociational Democratic model. This model was complemented by a strong administrative State. Leadership of this powerful administrative state was consolidated under Mahathir Mohammed. His regime was characterised by a blend of modernisation and patriarchal authoritarianism. Under Mahathir, the Malaysian democratic model challenged the western one; he insisted, that the Malaysian system “is not a slavish copy of the kind of liberal democracy that has developed in the recent years... [which] worships individual personal freedom as fetish.” Political stability and security had been of utmost concern to him and therefore individual liberty was of no consequence. His term saw the indiscriminate use of the notorious Internal Security Act particularly to pin down the opposing forces including the dissident ones. Mahathir’s less liberal democratic model was articulated by his candid comments on the Act:

This government has gone to numerous elections where the ISA was an issue and the people voted for this government with a big majority then the majority supports the ISA, simply because the majority wants a stable and orderly society.

51 Genealogical ethnic nationalism would implies components of Malay culture, while territorial nationalism is based on common political rights like citizenship. However, such rights are equally important for non-Malay communities. Such rights are to ensure the protection of these communities.


Unfortunately Mahathir’s iron rule was the source of severe political reaction and opposition particularly after the financial crisis. It is an irony that the same law Mahathir trusted to ensure political stability became one of the reasons for his downfall and the accompanying unstability of the system. His conviction in a less liberal democratic model was sooner interpreted as authoritarianism, state excesses under the directive of the dominant United Malay National Organisation (UMNO with Mahathir as the leader) led Barisan Nasional resulted in the emergence of pro-democracy advocates. In fact, Mahathir’s tussle with his deputy Prime Minister, Ibrahim Anwar soon generated into a movement for democratisation of Malay politics. Anwar’s dismissal from politics, his trial and his imprisonment added fuel to the growing urge for democracy. This movement that reached a height in 1998 was also marked by considerable political violence between the pro establishment and anti-establishment forces.54 Interestingly, Mahathir’s regime faced challenges within the government. For instance, in July 2003, the police located an unregistered paramilitary movement, Pasukan Khas Peresutuan Malaysia or the Federal Special Forces of Malaysia that was spearheaded by a self-styled lieutenant Nor Azmi Ahmad Ghazali (a former technician with the Department of Draining and Irrigation). Its membership, numbers around 8000, comprises civil servants and former army personnel.55

Perhaps, the most formidable of the challenges to the Mahathir government was political Islam. The Partai Islam se Malaysia (PAS) joined the democratric forces and is a member of Barisan Alternatif, which was the opposing forum to Barisan Nasional the ruling coalition. Indeed, PAS in the successive elections proved to be a

54 Anwar was dismissed from UMNO on September 3, 1988. Events leading to the dismissal of Anwar were reflective of Mahathir’s autocratic nature. Public support for Anwar was reflected through daily demonstrations carrying Anwar’s portraits and demanding ‘reformation or reformasi’ of the system. In response, on September 20, 1998, the government arrested Anwar and his supporters under the ISA. His arrest provoked further demonstrations accompanied by violence. Anwar’s wife and her supporters carried forward the democratic movement while he was on trial. The government had banned all political rallies and demonstrations, but they continued in defiance to the orders. Inspite of the government’s orders, rallies crystallized to become forums demanding political liberalization. Europa 2005, op.cit.no.13, pp. 2820-2821. Also see, Robert Cribb, “History, Malaysia”, (based on an article by Ian Brown), The Regional Surveys of the World, The Far East and Australia, 2006, pp.644-651.

55 This group is has been said to carry some kind of ‘authorised cards’ from the Prime Minister’s Office to arrest political figures including ministers. The existence of such groups and their activities indicative that a certain amount of disaffection within the state apparatus exists as much as the degree of corruption within Mahathir’s government.
formidable challenge to the UMNO. Even as Mahathir declared Malaysia an Islamic state in 2001, radical Islam added another dimension to the challenge from political Islam. Not only the rise of political Islam, of late, there have been violent protests organised by Indians against the alleged State discrimination. The Hindu Radical Action Force (HINDRAF) led movement has been stressing out of the Malay state, but the administration has not been hesitant in responding harshly to the demonstrations. The ethnic Indians stand united in their position against the Malay authorities and their disaffection simmers, it is a potent source of challenge to the peace and stability of Malaysian politics.

The Malaysian Prime Minister Muhammad Abdullah Badawi faced several challenges. First, he has to undo the prolonged influence of Mahathirism still prevalent all over the Malay political system. Second, he has to learn to balance the rising tide of radical Islam with a far more moderate version, something he himself believes in. The future of Malaysia’s political system is dependant on the delicate balance of inter-community relationship. This has now become complicated by Islamic radicalism. Much of Malaysia’s political future, stability and security depend on the present Prime Minister’s ability to couple political liberalisation within the framework of an Islamic State.

Yet again Malaysian Prime Minister Badawi had shown his intolerance for opposition by dissolving the Parliament a year before schedule in February 2008. The reasons for such action were interpreted in various ways. Apart from the ailing Malaysian economy more threatening reasons are not far to seek. First, the growing pressure of the state crack down on the Bersih rally not, HINDRAF protests, and the

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56 The 2007 Bersih Rally was a rally held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on November 10, 2007. The title of the rally is derived from the name of the organizers, BERSIH (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections). The word "bersih" means clean in Malay. Event organizers intended to have a peaceful, non-violent rally, advising participants in the days and weeks beforehand how to keep the rally peaceful. However the rally was marred by government sanctioned police violence.

57 HINDRAF or Hindu Rights Action Force as a coalition of 30 Hindu Non-Governmental organizations committed to the preservation of Hindu community rights and heritage in a multiracial Malaysia. The group has led agitations against what they see as an "unofficial policy of temple demolition" and concerns about the steady encroachment of sharia-based law. In late 2007, several prominent members of the HINDRAF were arrested, some on charges of sedition; following an enormous rally organised by HINDRAF in November, the charges were dismissed by the courts. Five people have since been detained without trial under the Internal Security Act. See, “HINDRAF” available at, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HINDRAF. Also see, “Malaysia’s Anwar condemns use of security law”, Reuters, December 14, 2007.
release of Lingam video\textsuperscript{58} scandal all taking place in 2007 put the Malaysian Prime Minister in a tough corner. Second, there were signs growing opposition from within the UMNO led by his Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak. Third, popular support was gradually turning in favour of popular opposition leaders like the charismatic leader of People’s Justice Party (Parti KeADILan Rakyat), Ketua Umum and the leader of Democratic Action Party, Anwar Ibrahim and the leader of Partai Islam se Malaysia, Abdul Hadi Awang. Shaken by the growing unpopularity Badawi called for snap elections that were held in March 2008. Although the parliamentary election was won by BN, but it produced one of the worst results in the coalition’s history. Opposition parties had won 82 seats (out of 222 seats in parliament) or 36.9% of parliamentary seats, while BN only managing to secure the remaining 140 seats or 63.1%.\textsuperscript{59} It marked also the first time since the 1969 election that the coalition did not win a two-thirds majority in the Malaysian Parliament required to pass amendments to the Malaysian Constitution. The failure to amass the required majority also led to internal crises and the party has debated immensely on the need to change leadership. It has paved the way for a new leadership of UMNO, Najib Tun Razak the former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. He is expected to succeed Abdullah Badawi as the new Prime Minister of the country.\textsuperscript{60} As the new Prime Minister of Malaysia he will face the uphill task of uniting his party and regaining the popular confidence. It seems an uphill task with strong opposition against the ruling coalitions.\textsuperscript{61}

Singapore’s democratic composition makes it a pluralistic society, although they are also known as ‘semi-pluralistic’ political systems.\textsuperscript{62} The Government of Singapore has been tightly controlled by the major party in the country – People’s Action Party

\textsuperscript{58} In 2007, Anwar Ibrahim released a video hat was recorded in 2002, showing senior lawyer VK Lingam in a phone conversation, purportedly with current Chief Justice Ahmad Fairuz Sheikh Abdul Halim, allegedly fixing the appointment of ‘friendly’ senior judges. The video clipping can be viewed at, http://anwaribrahimblog.com/2007/09/19/video-korupsi-tun-ahrnad-fairuz-dan-vk-lingam/.


\textsuperscript{60} For a concise idea of the change in UMNO leadership and the Prime Minister of Malaysia, see, P.S. Suryanarayana, “Change of Guards”, Frontline, April 24, 2009, pp.49-51.

\textsuperscript{61} Already Anwar Ibrahim has alleged that the elections are illegal since Ibrahim was not eligible to stand for office.

\textsuperscript{62} For instance, Jean Blondel calls Malaysia and Singapore as ‘semi-pluralistic’ political systems in East and Southeast Asia, in Ian Marsh (ed), Democratisation, Governance East and Southeast Asia A Comparative Study, New York, Routledge, 2006.
(PAP) so much that the PAP sees often itself as the State. Therefore, any opposition to the ruling party i.e. the PAP is seen as a threat to the State system itself. Much of the characteristics of the political system in Singapore can be analysed and explained in the light of Confucian values. These values constitute the capital of Singaporean political culture much of which have been applied by the heads of the State to culturally justify forms of political and social control within the state. Often neo-Confucian ideas have helped political leaders, bureaucrats and analysts to explain the marvels of Singapore's economy.

In politics, Confucianism provides nourishment to an authoritarian system. Political leadership is the manifestation of the kind of political outlook authoritarianism encouraged in Singapore. The First Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's control over the political system is also because of the fact that PAP has always sought to curtail any opposition. Such an outlook was based the party's *raison de etat* — in order to ensure communal harmony. M. Chew observes, "the struggle for power with the proto-communist Barisan Socialis in the early 1960, together with Singapore's ejection from the incoherent Malaysian Federation in 1965, left the PAP firmly to mass popular participatory, 'democratic politics in both principle and fact'." As a result the party as well as the leadership ensure one-party hegemony by promoting of political pragmatism and continuously by depicting the opposition as a destructive and negative force for Singapore politics. The PAP has been applying ideological means — communism combined at times with communalism to ensure comprehensive control over the system.

One party dominant system and predominant leadership are almost coterminous particularly because Singaporean politics is controlled by technocratic management. Often Singapore is known as the administrative state. This outlook has resulted in the erosion of distinction between the government and the party. A dominating leadership culture consistently curtails space for critical comment and any kind of

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64 Martin Jones explains how communism and communalism have been applied by the first generation leadership to ensure not only successful nation-building, but also build a strong assertive state in Singapore. David Martin Jones, Ibid.

65 Ibid, p. 48,
political opposition. Extensive studies reveal that since the party's ascendance to power in 1959, it has used state law and apparatus like the Singapore Internal Security Act to stifle and repress the political opposition to the state.\textsuperscript{66}

Singaporean politics encourages the least of political risks making it one of the most stable political systems within the region. This does not mean that democratic transition is happening effortlessly. On the contrary, Singapore is a country where restrictions on political competition have been the strongest. It is a country where political stability and democracy are antithetical to each other. The leadership spends considerable energy in ensuring that political activism remains within control; alternative political expressions are not appreciated. Over its long tenure, the party leadership has employed "severe legal and political measures to combat the emergence and growth of a credible opposition political organisation."\textsuperscript{67} For instance, the 1963 constitution had been modified so as to ensure efficient political management by the government. In 1991 the PAP, while amending the unicameral parliament introduced a directly elected President whose primary responsibility is to maintain Singapore's fiscal probity in event of PAP's failure to win elections.

There are prominent examples of the state's actions that have systematically tried to weaken all viable forces of democracy. The government abolished jury trial in 1968 and restricted the discretionary powers of the judges in 1973. Such policy discretions are proofs of the state's attempt to control the judicial system. Coupled with this, the

\textsuperscript{66} Singapore uses a combination of the Internal Security Act (ISA) and the legal system to repress its immediate political opponents. The ISA allows the state to detain individuals up to two years without a trial. On the other hand law suits can be brought against any person for their speech at the Parliament because there is no legal protection for speeches in the Parliament. In that case defendants have to defend their own speeches at the Court of Law. Legal punishments for political opponents have taken place quite often. Parliamentarian and former Solicitor General of Singapore, Francis Seow was barred from participating in the Parliamentary debates. He was also imprisoned for almost two and a half months in the late1980s under the ISA. Mr. Seow left Singapore and now lives in exile in the United States, where he became a Fellow based in the Department of Asian Studies at Harvard University.

The twin swords of defamation and bankruptcy law effectively allow the PAP to silence and eliminate members of the opposition. Such was the case for Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam, lawyer, former Senior District Judge and Member of Parliament for the Workers' Party. J.B. Jeyaretnam was twice disqualified from serving as a Member of Parliament through the use of court proceedings. Only in 2007 has he been discharged from bankruptcy and regained his qualifications. As a result of the defamation actions and bankruptcy, Mr. Jeyaretnam was prevented from contesting both the 2001 and 2006 general elections. See, For more on the state of political freedom of political opponents in Singapore see, "Rule of Law in Singapore: Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession in Singapore", Lawyers' Rights Watch Report on Rule of Law in Singapore, Singapore, October 18, 2007.

unorthodox use of the Internal Security Act since the late 1980s has led to the political bankruptcy of the opposition. The state’s attitude towards its political opponents finds its roots in the 1960s where tough measures were initiated against its socialist and communist opponents and that later prompted the state to depoliticise Singaporean political opposition. One the one hand, the powerful trio of the PAP – present Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew and Senior Minister, the ex-prime minister Goh Chok Tong yielded absolute power. On the other hand, the opposition leaders like J.B. Jeyaretnam, leader of the Workers’ Party, Singapore People’s Party leader Chian See Tong and Chee Soon Juan, leader of the Social Democratic Party were driven towards bankruptcy facing defamation suits slammed against them by the powerful PAP trio. Bankruptcy eroded their chances to contest in elections as opposition members. Such actions against the prominent opposition leaders is supplemented by a liberal application of the Internal Security Act (ISA) against alternative political expressions. The ISA is responsible for the imprisonment of one thousand Singaporeans and they have been languishing in jail without a trial.\(^{68}\)

The government is extremely vigilant of the kind of debate that takes place regarding government institutions and the quality of governance. An extensive system of licenses and restrictions related to political expressions in the form of civil society activism, public rallies, internet web blogs, is reflective of the government’s attempt to control the activities of the opposition.

Singapore provides an interesting case of political insecurity in the sense that as an apparent ‘stable low-risk political system’ it is not free of internal conflicts and social dissensions. However, Singapore’s predominant PAP has been able to contain the pressure of change by transforming old state and party structures and building newer bases of power. The institutionalisation of the paternalistic state ideology at the cost of rights of representation further cements the gap between the party and state, state and society. Newer forms of political control\(^{69}\) have not helped PAP improve its

\(^{68}\) Strait Times, August 7, 1992, cited in David Martin Jones, op.cit.no.48, p.51.

\(^{69}\) For instance in the run up to the general elections in Singapore in May 2006, Senior Minister for Information, Communications and Arts, Balaji Sadavisan announced a ban on “explicitly political” opposition parties, especially Singapore Democrats Party from reaching out to the electorate by using video recordings of opposition rallies and placing them in their websites. At the same time, foreign
PAP projects such contests as evidence of the fact that Singaporean politics is liberalising. However liberalising does not encourage political pluralism; and systematic exclusion of the challenging forces still continues in Singapore.

At best Singapore has been crafting a corporatist style of administration. Such a style of governance was initiated in the earlier in the 1960s but has been seriously pursued by the government since the 1980s. Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong had heralded a more consultative approach towards overall governance encouraging participation of the masses in the country’s polity. John Clammer thinks that the ideology of shared values bears testimony to the fact that the PAP is ready to accept only those changes that suit their own terms and conditions.\(^ \text{70} \) Opposition also claims that through the years of co-option and management, the PAP has succeeded in roping potentially contentious political forces of Singapore like the unions, grassroots organisations and ethnic associations and the civil society as such.

Opposition forces continue to play their role in criticising the government on the issue of human rights and political rights. Human Rights activists continue their struggle to raise voices on the appalling state of human rights in their own land. Some are in jail, in this context, the popular human right activist and prominent opposition leader of the Singapore Democrat Party (SDP) Chee Soon Juan comments that, the government can jail me, but they cannot jail democracy.”\(^ \text{71} \) The government on the contrary has been critical of individual autonomy and emphasises on community before self, consensus and harmony rather than contestation.\(^ \text{72} \)

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raging debates on the irrational application of the ISA, use of capital punishment and the government’s rule of two years of mandatory services in the army. *Freedom in the World Report* 2006 ranked Singapore 5 out of 7 for political freedom and 4 out of 7 in case of civil liberties (1 is considered most free on a scale of 7); there are comments on its party free status. Singapore’s attempt to achieve political stability at the cost of political democracy is certainly questionable.

The political system of the archipelagic state of Indonesia made it provides a very strong Asia Pacific state pitted against the tenets of liberal democracy. Indonesia is a multi-ethnic society, an ‘imagined community’ limited only to the educated countrymen evolved during the colonial times. For the larger sections of society imagined community was incomprehensible resulting in a complex web of different poles of power. It made nation building through negotiation in the post-independence period a very difficult affair. The challenges of nation-building and the lack of experience of democratic governance led to the imitation of a strong state. The active involvement of the Indonesian Army during the crucial years of the struggle for independence added more to the complex political evolution of Indonesian state.

Remarkably, almost every political succession has been marked by the severe pressure on the stability and sustainability of the system making political succession, an extremely crucial one. The chaos that followed in the post independence period made it a strong case that the state should deal with the any political, ethnic and social incongruities with an iron hand. This was made possible with the overarching influence of the army in the politics of Indonesia in the post independence period. The period that started with the declaration of the martial law followed by Guided Democracy under the leadership of General Sukarno was also the period when the politicisation of the Indonesian army started. This in turn went a long way in strengthening the ruling regime. Since then, the leadership of Indonesia has been nurturing an authoritarian culture. Authoritarianism became a consistent characteristic.

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74 ‘Imagined Community’ is a concept carved by Benedict Anderson. It states that a nation is a community socially constituted which is to say imagined by the people who perceive themselves as a part of the group. an imagined community is different from actual community because it is not base on a face-to-face interaction between its members. Instead members hold in their minds a mental image of affinity. Read Von Benedict Richard O’ Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York, Verso, 1991.
of the Indonesian political system. Both the legendary Presidents Sukarno and Suharto had their respective political reasons, practised the art of using the state apparatus and resources to maintain political predominance over the system they lead. Asian Values promotes a strong regime and imposing state authority than what is desired by any standards of Western democracy. In this context, there is not much difference in the way Harold Crouch conceives of a strong regime than that of Michael Leifer. Harold Crouch has shown how the strong government emerged in Indonesia in response to the various challenges and conditions that are found in the Indonesian society, but has been mostly active in marginalising the opposing forces. Michael Leifer on the other hand commenting on the state apparatus notes that,

(a)lthough Indonesia’s bureaucratic structures and practices have become more complex and skilled as the country functions increasingly in terms of form than substance. In justifying its severe limitations on public participation, the government has argued that untrammelled politics is a contentious process that would lead in Indonesia’s case to disorder and disunity rather than the stability required to sustain international business confidence.

In this context, political security in Indonesia can be divided into time phases – pre-democratic and post-democratic. Since independence until the economic crisis Indonesia can be described as a hybrid regime characterised by the presence of a strong ubiquitous state and very limited scope of political participation. The post-independent leadership has always looked down upon the Western style democracy. The failure of consecutive coalition governments between 1950 and 1957 caused Sukarno to loose all respects for liberal democracy and he replaced Indonesia’s democratic system with ‘Guided Democracy’. ‘Guided Democracy’ is a unique leader-centric democratic layout that enhanced Sukarno’s power in decision making through the fifty plus one mechanism. The challenges to Sukarno’s Guided Democracy originated both from within the system and outside it. It provided scope for Sukarno to apply assertive policies. Internally, the constant threat from the army made him dependant on political parties mainly the Partai Kommunis Indonesia (PKI). Moreover, with the intensification of the struggle between the army and the

PKI increased Sukarno’s insecurity and he sought to counter it by mobilising popular support. At the same time, ongoing tensions and conflicts within the system was seen as a necessary condition to build up a strong state. This necessary condition coupled with the tussle between the PKI and the Indonesian Army lead to a chaotic situation making way for a change in the leadership.

General Suharto succeeded Sukarno but by no democratic means rather by a direct military take over. General Suharto’s emergence as the new political leader also satisfied another condition for the emergence of a strong state. Migdal thinks that a strong leadership is also essential for the viability of such a strong state. Suharto’s ascendancy to power saw the strengthening of the state apparatus. The bureaucratic functions had been taken over by the army. Under Suharto’s New Order the dual function (dwi fungsi) enjoyed fuller expression, members of the Indonesian military staffed economic enterprises and took charge of ministerial and diplomatic officers. William Case observed that most unique feature of Indonesia’s New Order is that the source of political power and political leadership lay within the state apparatus itself, and the political power and bureaucratic authority were appointed and integrated by the officials of the state.\(^77\) No doubt that Suharto’s military-dominated new political system the New Order was even stronger than its predecessor.

Suharto’s obsession with political insecurity was manifested in the Indonesian army harping on the idea of national stability. Since the launching of the New Order, efforts were made to construct an image of instability where the source of threats constituted of political opponents, various alleged anti-state forces. Since 1978, this instability syndrome was formally accepted within the army through the initiative of the National Defence Institute and a programme of political indoctrination – Tarpadnas, that made state officials aware of the kind of political threats.\(^78\) The active role of the army made possible through dwi fungsi served as that crucial support needed to counter political opponents. Crouch thus comments, “The emergency of the military as the dominant force in Indonesian politics under


President Suharto's New Order created a regime which was able to neutralise all opposition and reverse fundamental policies of the so called Old-Order.  

Apart from the army's predominance, Suharto engaged in a double pronged political management strategy. On the one hand, he had managed a patrimonial inclusion of elites and managed to broaden his support base. The other strategy was more effective that involved the artful division of and marginalisation of political challengers (both within and outside his government). Michael Leifer brings out the effects this second strategy:

Indonesia's political opposition parties have been manipulated and harassed, while their distinctive identities have been blurred virtually beyond recognition by mergers and ideological dilutions. General elections to the parliament have been managed to the exclusive advantage of Golkar, ostensibly as association of functional groups within society founded during the Sukarno era. Golkar serves as the political arm of the government and has been employed as electoral vehicle acting in its interest. Working in alliance with appointed members from the armed forces Golkar has dominated the parliament and the People's Consultative Assembly.

At this point it is necessary to take note of the fact that Golkar served as the political wing of the army. It did so by winning all the elections i.e. – 1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992 and 1997.

Violence has been high during Suharto's regime. State violence during this period has been directed towards the ethnic separatists, the radical Islamic elements and political opponents. The tormenting role of the Indonesian army made the Indonesian state more of a police state. Under the leadership of Suharto, two of the most intensive slaughters took place, first during the 1965 army siege, and second is the systematic slaughter of the native population in East Timor since 1975. Between December 1965 and February 1966 some 40,000 PKI members were killed. One cannot forget the role of the Komkaptib headed first by Suharto and later by Sumitro Sudono. The agency was responsible for restoration of order and security. It was a group within the military and did not need to follow procedures. During the 1960s and 1970s the Komkaptib, worked to eliminate and threaten mainly communists but

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79 Harold Couchop.cit.no.60 p.99.
80 Michael Leifer, op.cit.no.61, pp. 570-571.
later targeted any political dissident. In the 1980s, Suharto unleashed his forces to consolidate his grip on the Indonesian society. In 1983-84, the army and police death squads killed at least 5000 ‘criminal suspects’ and left most of the bodies lying in the streets. Suharto described such inhuman actions as ‘shock therapy’. Muslim groups have been on the hit list. Besides the Indonesian authorities have used the notorious method of ‘Petrus’ to maintain law and order and contain criminal activities involved killing of people whom the state blacklisted. The Petrus list i.e. list of those identified to be eliminated were kept secret and so too the criteria of identification of those victims which made Petrus a very suspicious state activity.

Inspite of all the hard handed attempts to control political opposition in any form, the New Order failed to counter the socio-political pressures that emanated from the economic crisis throwing the country into pandemonium. The series of events that followed the onset of the economic crisis had severe implications for regional peace and stability. There have been various attempts to explain the relation between the economic turmoil and the political movements that marked the end of the Suharto era. Harold Crouch explained that in Indonesia the case of economic policy the state was not really subject to strong pressures from economic groups, but it was Suharto reliance on patronage to maintain internal cohesion that obstructed political reform, something that was strongly reflected through Suharto’s reaction to the Asian financial crisis. Baladas Ghoshal would explain that Indonesia was fraught with stress and uncertainties since the early nineties and the state elites were plotting to bring Suharto down. According to him, Suharto was already facing opposition from the students in his electoral bid in 1992. They were being assisted by the army in certain cases. It only got further accompanied by disorder and chaos after the crisis; thus the crisis acted as a catalyst to the process. The breakdown of Suharto’s

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83 Ibid.
84 Petrus campaign involved the killings of ‘criminals’ identified by the state. It began in 1983 in the Central Javanese city of Jogjakarta and lasted until 1985.
86 Harold Couch, op.cit.no.60, p.100.
authoritarian regime resulted in a fresh spurt of violence – assertion by religious and ethnic identities along with pressure from religious separatists.

The post-Suharto period is fraught with no lesser tension than what was prevalent before. Authoritarian institutions have been taken over by institutions that were not strong enough to establish security and order. Lack of a strong civil society culture during Suharto’s years made it very difficult for them to make good use of democratic space created after his resignation. On the contrary a major allegation has been the old elite’s ability to carve out their cushy position in the new system. It has been observed instead of one Suharto’s there are now many rent seeking “mini-Suhartos”. In fact some pertinent developments mark the turn of events in the post Suharto period. First, Golkar persists even after Suharto. Second, the continuing links between the army and the civilian candidates for presidency is apparent; the present president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono bears an army background. Third, in the post-Suharto phase, the state and the government at most levels were looked after by the same set of functionaries and business people who were dominant in the New Order. Fourth, politics was based on coalition formation that was based on pragmatic calculations than ideological tenets. Strange political permutation and combinations were visible – Koalisi Kebangsaan (Nationhood Coalition) that brought the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) and Golkar together as the latter would see a future in associating with the former. Aspinall observed that for the Golkar, ‘[a]n alliance with the PDIP thus offered not only a means to control the government effectively from behind the scenes, it was also a stepping stone back to a more permanent and dominant political role.” Fifth, money politics and fraud continued to be a major concern. However it played a major role within party politics. One of the outcomes was conflicts within local party structures as would-be candidates

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89 The Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan PDIP or the Indonesian Democratic Party is an Indonesian Political Party headed by the Megawati Sukarnoputri. It split from the Indonesian Democratic Party PDI in 1996 and emerged as a popular party. After the initial popularity of the party and Megawati Sukarnoputri, the popularity of both began to fall down. PDIP could not remain the single largest majority party. Yet the party continues to function under the Chairmansip of Megawati but there have been further splits in the party.
91 Ibid. p. 141.
struggled to acquire a comfortable position. Sixth, civilian control over the military and reforms within the army is an uphill task. Relations between the civilian presidents and the army have not been easy until President Yudhoyono. There has been a general reluctance on the part of the army to limit itself to its professional role as much as in cooperating in investigations relating to human rights cases during the New Order. Civilian-Military relations in post-Suharto Indonesia will continue to control the fate of future politics and the political stability of that country. At present, detaching the military from the political system has been made somewhat possible but at a price. These included protection from human rights prosecution and relatively free hand in determining security in places as in Aceh. The military reforms have been initialised with an eye to establish army’s position as non-political arm of the government. The idea is to delimit the army’s role in the upcoming 2009 elections. However the laws regarding the 2009 elections are not very clear. The government stood divided on the issue of military’s voting powers. The process of elections is to mature in Indonesia. In the recently held local /regional elections, PILKADA, several problems challenged the transparency of the election process. Such problems included ambiguity of electoral laws, problems of reduction of timeframe for pre-poll preparation, weak administration and bureaucracy, improper registration of voters, callous enforcement of laws and inability to control conflicts in conflict prone areas.

All these observations add to the fact that instability will continue to challenge Indonesia. The presidents succeeding Suharto faced popular opposition, students’ unrest. Student unrest was prominent against Habibie and Wahid. Another important challenge to stability of the Indonesian system came from social forces. The breakdown of Suharto’s authoritarian control and the weakness of the post-Suharto governments gave rise to assertive religious and ethnic forces that complicated the already existing regional separatist tendencies. This aspect shall be dealt separately.

b) Challenges to the Social Cohesion, Stability and Order of the Systems: Dissensions are an expression of questioning legitimacy of the authority of the

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92 Ibid, p.145.
93 Ibid. p.138.
government. In the case of Southeast Asia, dissensions arise from ethnic demands and religious assertions; ideological movements mostly communism has been of lesser consequence at present, nonetheless they deserve mention. In certain cases ethnic components overlap with religious ones. Consequently, a majority of the states are challenged by one or more dissenting forces. States that are particularly challenged by ethnic and religious dissensions are Thailand, the Philippines, Myanmar Indonesia, and Laos. In order to understand the nature of the threat arising from such dissenting forces, the situations in these countries deserve detailed discussion.

The ethno religious dissension directed against the Thai government is actually a case of Malay Muslim minority fighting against a Thai Buddhist majority. The community residing in Southern Thailand has been fighting against forced assimilation — assimilating various minority cultures into mainstream Buddhist ‘Thainess’. The movements against the imposition of the mono religiousity and mono ethnicity came into being in the 1940s. Groups that emerged during that period include Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya (Union of Malay for Greater Patani), the Barisan National Pembebasan Pattani. Intensity of the movement has been fluctuating, but of late, militancy has been on the rise particularly in the four southern provinces of Songhkla, Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani.

Such violence has some significant effects. First, there are fears of a spill over of effect to the neighbouring regions, particularly towards the southern business hub, Hat Yai. Second, the continuous necessity of maintaining peace increases the dependence on the army. For instance, during the periods of martial law in those provinces, the army had a complete sway over administrative affairs of the region. Third, sporadic but continuing spate of violence disturbs the economic and social welfare of the region. The education system for one has broken down as schools have been shut down and teachers and school officials are desperate to leave the violent area. Fourth, but not the least, difference between the activities of the ethno-religious groups in southern Thailand and the narco-crimes seems to be eroding fast. As Crossiant observed, “Crime in the South lacks the kind of informal controls and restraints that are exercised by individual godfathers in other provinces, thus facilitating recruitment from crucial gangs for insurgent groups and simultaneously
deepening the intelligence services problem of discerning the specific problem of discovering the specific limits between crime and insurgency."\(^95\)

Of late, Islamic fundamentalism has also infested the region. As a consequence, since the last two decades a strong Muslim identity has been emerging, complicating the ethnic issue. Sudden flow of funds from the Middle East has helped the establishment of religious schools (*ponolis*) in South Thailand. The mushrooming of private Islamic schools run by religious teachers (*ustaz*) trained in Pakistan and the Middle East are beyond the surveillance of the Thai Ministry of Education.\(^96\) At the same time, a number of young radical Thai Muslims who have completed their education in religious schools and universities in the Middle East and Pakistan have added another dimension to the ethnic movement of Southern Thailand – *Ummamism*. Therefore, the ethnic demands of the Malay Muslims – making the situation in Southern Thailand one of ethno-religious movement against the state. Subsequently, the line between insurgency and terrorism on the other hand is fast eroding. Since 2004, violence in these southern provinces has escalated. Thai Mujahideen groups, like the *Mujahideen Pattani*, in association with other Islamic fundamentalist groups, like the *Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia*, and trans-regional terrorist groups like *Jemaah Islamiyah*, have been making grand plans to take over these provinces particularly Narathiwat.\(^97\) These developments point to the impending dangers arising from radical Islamic influences on the southern provinces of Thailand along with the rising fears of terrorism. In addition the involvement of Malay minority in the insurgency has been resulting in periodic Thai-Malay tensions.

Violence challenges any possible solution of the problems of Southern Thailand. The trickling down of violence and counter violence to the lower levels makes solution a far cry. Especially, the actions taken by the government to quell the violence has further alienated the Muslims of the region. The methods applied by the security forces on the ground are both inhumane and culture-insensitive annoying even the moderate of Islamists in Southern Thailand. The soft attitude of the Thai

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government towards the US has only further increased the apprehension of Muslims (especially moderates) that sooner than later Muslims of southern Thailand would become targets of US anti-terror war. Politics to resist terrorism and narco-activities in southern Thailand may not be effective as there is an apprehension that state action will lead to the gross violation of human rights and civil rights by security forces. Under such complex circumstances, ethno-religious movements will continue to challenge the credibility of the state as well as the internal security of the Thai state.

The Philippines is one of those states which faces the twin challenges from communist groups as well as from the ethno religious secessionism. Communist groups include the Communist Party of the Philippines and the ethno-religious groups are the Abu Sayyaf outfit and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

The Communist Party of the Philippines has a military arm, the New People’s Army (NPA), which is active in several provinces of the Philippines. The profile of this outfit is a surprise in the region in the sense that whereas since the 1990s, Communism has been on the wane, the NPA’s membership has doubled around the mid 1990s and stands approximately at 12000. The NPA follows the Maoist tactics. What comes as an element of surprise is its ability to survive overtime. Its presence for over the decades is due to its ability to exploit the general unstable nature of Filipino political system, issues of underdevelopment, poverty, regional inequalities along with its personal ability to apply tactical violence intimidation methods. The group has been targeting business centres and governmental facilities. Their activities are dependent on finances that are extracted revolutionary taxes – extortions from rich businessmen, including gold mining operators. The government has simultaneously been trying to engage the NPA in talks through the third party mediation (Norway), but it is yet to reap benefits. Nonetheless, the NPA is listed within the Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs). Incidentally US involvement in the Philippines over the times has also provided grounds for the communists to sustain their hold in Philippines over the times as Communists oppose any form of US intervention.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines has been fighting for over two decades. They constitute the breakaway faction from the Moro National Liberation Front that has been representing the poorest and the least educated Roman Catholic Groups. It is rather interesting to note that an ethnic cause has been taken over by both the Roman Catholics and fundamentalist Islamic groups. Therefore the ethnic problems in the Philippines have acquired a religious fervour.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has hogged most of the limelight by playing a predominant role in the struggle at Mindanao. It has a handsome recruitment but what makes it very powerful is its relations with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the regional affiliate of Al Qaeda. In fact, the MILF has cooperated with the JI in terrorist activities in the Philippines like the bombing operation in Manila in December 2000. No wonder MILF is now feared as a component of the terrorist network in Southeast Asia. The involvements of trans-national terrorist networks have two undesirable effects. First, it helps local separatist movements to sustain itself as funds and other necessary support is made easily available by the Al Qaeda. Second, since the movement in the Mindanao region is no longer a plain case of regional secessionism, a solution to the Moro demands will remain a far cry from reality. Another group active in the Philippines is known as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is known for its demands for a separate Islamic homeland in southern Philippines. Sooner its activities were caught under the US security radar because of two reasons. First, links related to the attack on the US were traced back to this group. Second, the group’s terror tactics include kidnapping of westerners for ransoms and executions. Incessant disruptive activities have paved the way for external intervention.

The important question here is what is the future of these movements? What kind of implications do they have on Philippines’ internal security environment? The

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100 Fathur Rahaman Al-Ghozi is said to be the key Jemaah Islamiyah liason between his organization and the MILF. He was the direct student of Abu Bakr Bashir, the founder of JI and its Emir. He was known for his skills in manufacturing explosives and has also participated actively in terrorist activities in the Philippines and other parts of Southeast Asia. He was killed in 2003. Besides, the MILF is also a member of the trans-national alliance Rabitalul Mujahideen sponsored by the JI involving the MILF and Thai jihadi outfits. JI has based its training camps in Mindanao using MILF bases.

101 In Palawan Island, in 2001, ASG group kidnapped 20 persons including three US citizens. Two of them were killed while one could be freed from their clutches after 376 days of captivity.
movements survive on external monetary support. The search for monetary support has made these local groups susceptible to international terrorist networks. In no time terrorism has predominated secessionism. On the other hand, insurgency and secessionism related terror has rendered the state incapable of providing adequate internal security. The role of the US forces in the Philippines only reiterates this apprehension. With the kind of experience regarding US’s previous involvement in the Philippines, its present role in fighting terrorism may fuel popular disaffection.102 The logic behind such prediction is that Philippines’ internal security will be further threatened by external intervention whether it is in the form of regional and transnational sponsors of ethno-religious secessionism or in the form of military support to the Filipino government from powerful external powers. Peace and stability are a distant call thus generating popular dissent and would add to the causes of instability.

Myanmar is a country challenged by ethnic dissensions.103 A land of various ethnic groups, almost each of these groups has varied demands ranging from autonomy to complete secession. This has triggered anti-State activities imperilling the internal security of Myanmar since its birth. The chaotic situation in the post-independence period paved the way for army intervention in the politics of the country. The relation between some of these ethnic groups and the junta are still antagonistic. The threat of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) is no longer there, but the effects of their activities are still prominent. The party had assisted ethnic groups in organising their resistance and supplied them with arms and ammunitions. Following the 1989 mutiny Myanmar saw the rise of ethnic mutineers well trained in guerrilla tactics and sooner CPB fighters were replaced by the regional armies in the once CPB dominated Kachin state and Shan state.104 The most well equipped and trained ethnic army belonged to the Wa community – United State Army.

102 In fact in recent as February 2008 thousands of people have protested against US soldiers involved in humanitarian mission in the Muslim areas of the Southern Philippines. About 6000 soldiers took part in annual training exercises but they only concentrated on humanitarian mission in the South of the archipelago. Moro people demanded the calling off of the joint exercises because Manila did not consult senior Muslim leaders of the region. A group of anti-US activists also urged the scraping of the 1998 Treaty allowing the US to send troops for military exercises in the Philippines. The military campaign in the Southern Philippine region has caused civilian deaths and sometimes led to forced evacuation of the local communities. This has caused strong resentment amongst the masses. See, "Protests Greet U.S. War Games in the Philippines", Reuters, Monday, February 18, 2008.

103 Ethnic dissensions are not the only challenge to Myanmar. It faces severe other non-traditional challenges such drugs, arms, health challenges, etc.

104 Bertil Lintner, "Myanmar/Burma", in Colin Mackers Ethnicity in Asia, Curzon, Routledge, p.185.
A dimension that needs to be looked at is the issue of drugs and illegal commodities. It has been the conscious strategy of the Myanmar junta to buy peace against permission to carry on unscrupulous business. Such unscrupulous activities include opium cultivation, and illegal timber logging. For instance the Wa people have been in full control of the booming opium and heroin trade and they are the major methamphetamines. Rich dividends from drug-trade give the Wa army the freedom to go shopping for arms and ammunitions from the Chinese and the Thais. The dilemma is that government’s strategy to disengage ethnic groups from anti-State activities by means of lucrative trade permit deals only further increased the financial capacity of these groups.

While finance is a crucial component for sustaining the struggle, weapons are a means of carrying on the struggle. The role of the Chinese in supplying the CPB with arms is well known but the ethnic groups have that kind of money to buy weapons from them. Since the Chinese have a tremendous influence on the tatmadaw, the Myanmar, the army would rather risk the stockpiling of weapons than ask the Chinese to stop selling arms to these kind of anti-state has no counter policy to stop the arms sales. It sits on a time bomb ticking to explode in not so distant future.

The historical animosity between Thailand and Myanmar adds a complex dimension to the ethnic situation. For quite some time now, ethnic minorities facing persecution from the tatmadaw have found shelter in the border areas of Thailand. It serves as a safe haven for anti-state activists. Thailand on its behalf has entertained fleeing

105 Methamphetamines are stimulant type drugs which are commonly known as glass or ice. Students and athletes consume them for enhanced performance. In Southeast Asia they are called ‘yaa baa or crazy drug. Myanmar remains the main producer of methamphetamines or ice, shabu shabu, as they known in Myanmar. The Wa ethnic community produces the largest amount of synthetic amphetamine type stimulants. For long the Myanmar State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has shown leniency towards UWSA, but after Khin Nyunt, it is expected to become very harsh on the drug producers. On September 10, 2005, SPDC had arrested senior UWSA officials but put charges against them on an individual basis rather than on the UWSA. This proves their terrorist support towards the Wa group in drug production. in Michael Black, “Myanmar’s largest drug militia at crossroads”, Asia Times, October 24, 2006.

106 For example, The United Wa State Army (UWSA) is formed by the member of the Wa ethnic minority, is believed to be the largest drug trafficking organisation in Southeast Asia. The UWSA is a splinter group of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). The UWSA was formed in 1989 when the BCP disbanded, inherited a large arsenal of weaponry that was donated to the BCP by China. See, “Burma’s Rebels Launches Arms Spree”, Bangkok Post, July 1, 2000. Also see, reports on the clandestine visits by Chinese officials to Wa areas in Michael Black, “Myanmar’s largest drug militia at crossroads”, Asia Times, October 24, 2006.
minorities as they serve as a buffer between itself and Burma and so long as ethnic elements are provided shelter, the internal security of Burma remains imperilled. The problems related to ethnic settlements along the Thai-Myanmar border have embittered a long standing tiff between the two countries, something that will be discussed some time later.

The present government of Myanmar may be trying its best to counter ethnic movements, but the way in which the army justifies in proposing the monolithic concept of Myanmar, there is great doubt regarding the fruitfulness of the efforts of the army. The army has not been successful in striking deals with the ethnic fronts, New Democratic Front\textsuperscript{107} for instance. Ceasefire solutions have been worked out on a case to case basis, setting out terms and conditions that tempt one to be suspicious of a kind of divide and rule mechanism devised by the army. These ceasefire deals are not based on positive solutions but more on negative peace.\textsuperscript{108} Until a well meaning plan is devised on the basis welfare and development, ceasefires with volatile ethnic groups may not hold peace for long. In certain cases, ceasefires have been struck out because of external pressure and not because the army wanted peace with those groups. Such was the explanation in the case of the ceasefire with Karen National Union; it was under pressure from Thailand that the junta offered ceasefire with the ethnic outfit.\textsuperscript{109}

It is also necessary to understand that the ethnic problems in Myanmar are not as simple as ethnic minorities struggling against the state. It is on the contrary a complex maze of ethnic entities who are equally intolerant about each other. It is a complex phenomenon arising from differences in religion, languages, social perceptions and level of economic development. Shans have clashed with the

\textsuperscript{107} The National Democratic Front is a coalition of the minority groups formed in 1976. It became a member of the National Council of the Union of Burma in 1992.


Kachin; Kachins have problems with the government but some tribes like Rawangs rally behind the government. In a different case the Karens have clashed with the Mons over territorial claims. Intra ethnic differences at the level of party based politics is also apparent as various groups have different priorities. For example the CPB groups – Wa, Kokang, and Pao O feel that following the government is beneficial while the Kachin Organisations and the New Mon State Party are close to the National Democratic Front.

The future of the country depends on the success of the proposed federal arrangements. Over and above one must take note of the fact that democracy or federal arrangement is no fool proof guarantee to the end of all the conflicts. The animosity between the ethnic tribes and the army run state administration is a reflection of the age long chasm between the highland ethnic population and the mainland Burmese population. It is difficult to bridge these differences through political manipulation by the regime. The destiny of Myanmar’s fragile peace is tethered delicately on the goodwill and good faith of both the sides and that is hard to find.

**Indonesia** presents a very challenging picture of identity based complex, social matrix that had to be folded into a democratic nation-state. It would involve an uphill task of bringing the various ethno-religious entities into the folds of a homogenous nation of Indonesia. Ethnic challenges are dominant to the process. Given the rich diversity of ethnic communities and religious groups it is virtually undetermined as to what is ‘Indonesian’. The problem appears more challenging as the variety of ethnic entities ranges from ethnic Chinese to peripheral tribes. The kind of challenges thrown at the Indonesian state over a period of time proves that the authoritarian method of nation-building has been a failure.

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110 The Panglong Agreement of 1947 between Burma and ethnic groups envisaged a federal arrangement of the ethnic based regions of Myanmar. But it did never take place and resulted in outbursts of different ethnic groups like the Shans, the Chins and the Kachins. Recociliation between the government and ethnic groups have become remote after the army took over the political power in the early 1990s. The army has embarked on along-drawn reconciliation process but that does not entail a successful implementation of any federal arrangement. Therefore it is stipulated that if the federal arrangement is considered and if democracy in reinstated in Myanmar, then the ethnic problems could be solved. See *Text of the Panglong Agreement, 1947*, available at, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs/panlong_agreement.htm.
The various upsurges in the post-authoritarian period in Indonesia must be viewed in context of the above observation. Indonesia’s internal stability is likely to be jolted time and again by these conscious ethnic identities. Ethnic undercurrents are to survive because there is a linear relation between territoriality with ethnic identity. Sometimes, other self enhancing components like religion have added another dimension to the problem. It makes ethnic consciousness virtually impregnable to assimilation.

Identity based conflicts in Indonesia have manifold manifestations. First, set of riots have been directed against the ethnic Chinese, who are seen as outsiders. Second, set of conflicts are based on ethnic consciousness of groups where demands range from autonomy to separation from Indonesia. Third, set of conflicts are based on religious identity, thus attaining the communal character. The prominent case in Indonesia is the conflict between the Christians and Muslims in Ambon and Poso.

Ethnic tensions have a longer history compared to the religious ones. They are of two types. The first type is the years of unceasing mutual intolerance between the Indonesian identity and the outsider as has been manifested through sporadic anti-Chinese riots during Suharto period and the latest during the period of economic crisis. The other kind of ethnic tension brings out the contradictions not only between the Indonesian identity and the indigenous one, but also the mutual apathy between the centre and the periphery – both geographical and functional. It is therefore no surprise that the outer peripheries – Aceh, East Timor and Irian Jaya have been struggling to free themselves from the clutches of the Indonesian State.

The conflicts at the peripheries were reactions to the violation of territorial exclusiveness that relates the indigenous character of the population. The place-of-origin basis of expressing ethnic exclusivity may ultimately lead to undesirable balkanisation of Indonesia. It is a serious threat to the Indonesian state. The central authority representing the State is based in Javanese heartland. It fails to understand the intricacies of these ethnic issues. Subsequently, ethnic conflicts at the peripheries are treated as pockets of disturbances. Unfortunately the diverse and dispersed nature of the ethnic groups in Indonesia makes it very difficult for the ethnic groups to make a joint bargaining front to exercise decisive influence on the Javanese authority. The
ethnic representatives are not strong in their ability to work their demands. More often than not they look at the central authority to sort their community differences. Government views this as a weakness of the ethnic lobby.

The democratic government has respected the demands of the East Timor, Papua and Aceh. In all the three cases ground realities after their independence speak of situations that ultimately put to stake the security of the region. In the case of East Timor Fretilin succeeded the Indonesian government. The Fretilin and its leadership were accused of alienating non-Fretilin members in the nation building process. Legislating on various laws, the Fretilin government is also accused of making anti-constitutional laws that have an anti-foreigner bias. Since independence, a new kind of community tension has emerged between the East Timorese and their Western counterparts. This kind of community divisions have led to divisions within governmental positions including on security matters. East Timor is a good example of unravelling disunity and tension in a post conflict society. Such identity based tensions are likely to have a destabilising effect not only on the new administration but also on Indonesia's internal security.

Both Aceh and Papua have been granted autonomy in 2001. Such a generous gesture was intended to act an antidote to the secessionist movements. However, these gestures ought to be understood in the context of a better understanding of the government's posture. Special autonomy was granted to these provinces at a time when post-Suharto governments were struggling to attain stability. More important Indonesian economic restructuring and rejuvenation depended on foreign financing. Apart from ethnic secessionism, the government had been facing protests from the civil society, particularly from the students forcing the leadership to change rapidly.

111 Fretilin or Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente is the Portuguese word for the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor. It is a leftist political party. The party began as a resistance movement for the Independence of East Timor first from Portugal and then from Indonesia between 1974 and 1998. Fretilin participated in general elections, it won in 2001 but in 2007 it won only 21 seats forcing it to cobble a coalition with Xanana Gusmao's (another popular leader and once a member of the Fretilin) party National Congress for the Timorese Reconstruction.


113 For instance, in 2003, the Immigration and Asylum laws passed in 2003 is criticized as that which would violate human rights guarantee of citizens as well as for foreigners residing in East Timor and asylum seekers. See, Judicial System Monitoring Program Press Release, Dili, October 1, 2003, http://www.jsmp.minihub.org/News/News/1_10_3E.htm.
Since 2001 the Indonesian government has slowly recovered its authority, tried to sustain its economic performance, subsequently its commitment towards special autonomy has eased, what Rod Mc Gibbon terms as “Jakarta’s backsliding” on commitments.\textsuperscript{114} It shall never hesitate to use forces and even take help of martial law as was declared by Megawati in Aceh in 2003. Gibbon further points out to the weakness and corruption of the local governments in both the provinces, a reason for their failure to materialise the autonomy provisions.\textsuperscript{115} Both the movements demanded self-determination and independence. Yet the government has managed to settle the bargain short of independence. However in the case of Aceh, finally a peace deal was signed in the post-Tsunami period. The deal was signed on August 15, 2005 at Finland. Elections of the Provincial Governor took place in December 2006. Irwandi Yusuf became the elected Governor of Aceh. In Papua the government has granted autonomy to the region In the pre democratic period the authoritarian state had been able to ensure integration of the system at the risk of ethno nationalistic challenges. On the other hand, the post democratic liberal state order respecting ethno national demands run the risk of balkanising the country. Perhaps this is he reason why the state is backsliding from its commitments.

Political reconstruction in these two places is fraught with complications. For the Indonesian government, security has over shadowed other considerations. The over towering presence of the army in both Aceh and Papua inhibits any attempts to make autonomy possible. Human rights records are also poor. Government sponsored transmigration programme are still encouraged but not officially. There are also allegations that the army has been involved in training some Islamic militants in parts of these provinces particularly Papua.\textsuperscript{116} There is also dissatisfaction over the arbitrary division of Papua into smaller provinces; there is an apprehension that such arbitrary division will increase the chance of conflicts among the Papuans themselves. This is often termed as ‘horizontal conflict’, that were common in 2003.\textsuperscript{117} It is an irony that in pre-democratic Indonesia, the ethnic, religious, racial and political issues code, SARA (\textit{Sukumu agama ras antara golongan}) was created

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Benedetti, “Papua Barat: A Province to be Declared to West Papua", \textit{Canada’s West Papua Action Network}, November 12, 2006.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
for maintaining harmonious ethnic relations. The government manipulated the code to the extent all ethnic inter-relations had become anarchic and insular. In the post democratic period claims for regional autonomy have aggravated and so also intra ethnic tensions. Therefore the fears of horizontal conflict are on the rise and regional elites may exploit such social disarray to become powerful. In order to sustain their position the regional elites encourage ethnic mobilisation at the cost of peace, stability and security of the country.

During the late 1990s ethnic conflicts also assumed religious overtones. What initially started as an ethnic conflict between local Ambonese and settlers from outside, soon became a religious conflict between Muslim Ambonese against Christian Ambonese and outside settlers alike. The clash between Christians and Muslims spread to other parts of the Moluccas – Ternate, Tidore and Halamahera. Christian-Muslim conflicts began around the same time at Central Sulawesi, particularly in Poso where Christian locals opposed settlement of Muslims from South Sulawesi. Several other incidents at East Java, West Timor, and even Jakarta Surrabaya bear testimony to the rising religious intolerance between Christians and Muslims in the immediate post-Suharto years. Apart from the communal clashes, Indonesia is also a nodal point in the trans-national terrorist network. Regional Islamic fundamentalist groups have links with larger terrorist organisations like the Al Qaeda. Besides, Indonesians have been traumatised by several terrorist attacks since 2001. Investigations into the Bali and Jakarta bombing have revealed a complex web of ties among extremist religious groups and criminals on the one hand, involvement of regional and trans-national terrorist organisations on the other.

Unceasing ethnic, religious conflicts have provided a fertile ground to terrorist activities in the region. The region has been a witness to the rise in Islamic fundamentalism, some of it has found expression through the rejuvenation of

118 The term SARA indicates the horizontal conflicts that are based on primordial affinities like race and religion. Therefore in order to reduce the conflict, stress is given on unity and diversity; Indonesian government uses the term Bhinneka Tunggal Ika to express unity in diversity. Erna Aryawati, "Reflection of the Meaning of Peace and Conflict; Interpretation and Implementation of peace in Indonesia and Nigeria", Social Peace, November 19, 2007, available at, http://socialpeace.wordpress.com/2007/n/19/28/
119 Gary van Klinken, "Ethnicity in Indonesia", in Colin Mackeras (ed), op.cit.no.89, p. 65.
120 Three of the most prominent attacks in Indonesia includes the Bali bombing in 2001, marriot Hotel explosion in 2003 and the bomb attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in 2004.
political Islam but a substantial part of it has taken up violence supported by trans-
national terrorist outfits. Some of these countries have become home to international
terrorist networks like the Al Qaeda. The latter has found ideal partners in indigenous
Islamic movements and home grown Islamic outfits like the Kumpulan Mujahideen
Malaysia in Malaysia and the Lashkar Jihad in Indonesia. In some other Southeast
Asian countries indigenous separatist movements have moved to another level
wherein Islamic radicals have joined these movements giving it a religious hue.
These movements are mostly funded by Al Qaeda through their regional affiliate
Jemaah Islamiyah. As discussed earlier, this has been the case particularly in the
Philippines and Thailand.

In Laos political opposition has come from an ethnic hill tribe called the Hmongs.\textsuperscript{121}
They had fought the Pathet Lao.\textsuperscript{122} Their opposition to the Laotian state became
prominent with the formation of a right wing group in 1989 in the name of United
National Liberation Front (UNLF). They declared the formation a parallel
government Revolutionary Provisional Government of Laos, under the leadership of
Onthong Souvannvong. It controlled large portions of north Laos. The Hmong
guerrillas have shown their disapproval of what they consider as domination of their
population by the state. Therefore they are not happy with the Government of Laos.
Hmongs have taken to violence and staged attacks on army convoys. In November
1995, several people were killed in an armed assault on a bus near Luang Prabang,
the attack was attributed to the Hmongs who had pledged to disrupt the twentieth
anniversary of the beginning of the communist rule in Laos.\textsuperscript{123} The government is
certainly concerned, although it has claimed of large Hmong surrender since attacks
on the government have not died down. The government is concerned with foreign
funding and its finger of suspicion points to the US and the Europeans. There were

\textsuperscript{121} The term Hmongs refer to an Asian ethnic group in Southeast Asia, they are the largest sub-groups
in South China. At present, Hmongs live in the Southeast Asian countries of Vietnam, Laos, Thailand
and Myanmar. They have been subjected to severe repression in Laos and in the late 1970s thousands
have been settled in the US, Australia, France and Canada. A large number of them are refugees in
Thailand.

\textsuperscript{122} Pathet Lao was a communist nationalist movement in Laos in the mid-twentieth century. This group
was ultimately successful in assuming political power after a civil war, or insurgent revolution lasting
from 1950 to 1975. In the 1960s and early in the 1970s Pathet Lao fought a civil war against a US
backed Vietnam regime. They were also a part of the US Vietnam War. US also gave support to the
Laotian government and trained 21,000 Thai mercenary soldiers to fight the Pathet Lao. Despite that
Pathet Lao took over Laos. The ceasefire took place in 1993.

bomb attacks in 2000 even while Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai was visiting Laos.\(^{124}\) The arrest of two Hmongs did not stop the spate of explosions which took place during the EU-ASEAN Summit bringing upon the Laotian State a lot of embarrassment.\(^{125}\) In 2005, the Hmongs have surrendered officially, it was much publicised affair, yet there are Hmongs who live in far away lands and believe in continuing their struggle.\(^{126}\) Large number activists live in the US and still keep on making an effort to draw attention of the US regarding human rights abuses and military atrocities on the Hmongs. The Hmong radio based in the US continues to air pro-democratic commentaries against the Laotian government. Human Rights have become the core issue for Hmong resistance. Those living abroad have been trying to garner international support for the fellow Hmongs facing the wrath of the Laotian military. The human rights groups Laos Human Rights Council based in Winsconsin have been focusing on the issue of ethnic cleansing of the Hmongs in by the state. So long as the campaign continues, the Hmong cause will not die out.\(^{127}\)

There are other non-military issues that challenge the stability of individual systems. It is necessary to look at these security issues in some detail. Since 1997 the region had fallen victim to the economic crisis, it had its own side effects. Besides, environmental security is an emerging concern for almost all the states of Southeast Asia. The marvel of the Southeast Asian economies attracted Western attention in the late eighties and early nineties. Sooner, the Asian crisis drew Western attention as senior academicians and financial pundits began to look for the reasons for this economic regression. The East Asian miracle turned out to be much ado about nothing but more important, it forced one to look anew at the relationship between economy and the security of the region. There were two stages of the economic crisis. The first round of the crisis in the period between July 2, 1997, and June 1998, it took the form

\(^{124}\) Ibid.
\(^{125}\) Ibid.
\(^{126}\) Ibid.
\(^{127}\) There are at present said to be about 800 Hmong resistance fighters, but their resolve to fight have decreased because of the death of their leader Dr. Paozeb Vang – President of the Hmong Human Rights Council, USA in 2006. This was followed by the arrest of Geberal Vang Pao in 2007; he is another leader of the resistance movement. Some of the resistance fellows have already fled to Thailand. Hmong resistance fighters in Laos are said to be limited to Saison boun and th Van Vieng area, north of Vientiane. As of January 2008, majority of them were concentrated in Moung Mok in Xien Khouang near Vietnam border and they were ready to join the mainstream after a gap of thirty years of resistance. To learn of the fate of the Hmong fighters after surrender see, Gary Yia Lee, “The Hmong in Laos: Victims of Totalitarianism”, available at, http://membersozemail.cam.an/.

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of a speculative attack on the external value of the currencies of the ASEAN States (along with other East Asian states like South Korea and Hong Kong). It was followed by a generalised crisis of the financial, banking and political system accentuated by the sharp fall of the Japanese economy sliding into recession.128

Apart from the economic distress that the economic crisis unleashed, its political implications were of no lesser importance. Internally, most of the states were witness to socio political events, more often than not, accompanied by disturbances that challenged their internal cohesion and political stability. So long as the economic engine performed well, citizens were happy with the flourishing dividends they enjoyed. In fact the extraordinary economic growth in the region had bolstered the nation-building process wherein the political leadership and their regimes continued to gain the legitimacy in terms of public contentment irrespective of the quality or nature of the governance. With the onset of the economic meltdown, public grievances snowballed into challenges to the political legitimacy of the governments that once engineered and piloted the national economy. People questioned the economic strategies and the governments’ capacity to achieve economic recovery.

The economic crisis brought to the forefront a number of challenges. Irrespective of the relativity in the intensity of the variety of threats129, political instability became a source of domestic insecurity. The question of political uncertainty and instability arose from the popular movements in some of the countries to overthrow their existing regimes. Such were the cases in the Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. The worst hit country was Indonesia. Herein it becomes necessary to distinguish between the government and the system. In terms of the crisis, governments that have failed to put up a steady economic performance so as to build economic immunity to uncertainty might have been replaced, however that did not affect the ability of the system to sustain itself. In other cases, where weak economic performance has been coupled with weak political governance, systems have disintegrated under the pressure of the 1997 crisis. In Thailand, though the economic crisis affected the

129 For instance, the crisis was most severe in Indonesia, lesser in Thailand and Korea and still less severe in the Philippines and Singapore. See, Marta Dassu and Stefano Silvestri, "Security Implications of the Asian Crisis", in Maria Weber (ed), After the Asian Crisis, New York, Macmillan Press in association with Institute Pei Glistudi di Politica Internazionali, 2000, p.141.
economy seriously, it did not threaten the political system to the extent that the system would have disintegrated. In comparison, the Malaysian government faced the twin challenge of economic hardship along with severe political crisis. Political crisis gripped the government wherein the Mahathir-Anwar tussle served as the catalyst to the pro-democracy movement. It also saw the rise of political Islam in Malaysia. There were social tensions caused by rapid unemployment. It turned ugly when the Malaysian government decided to deport foreign workers mostly Indonesians.\textsuperscript{130} Such a drastic act risked the relations between both these countries. Nonetheless Malaysia survived the crisis.

On the other hand the crisis hit the State of Indonesia severely – economic, social and political. The economic situation deteriorated rapidly – it suffered the biggest fall in its foreign currency value and the assistance from the International Monetary Fund could not be of much help. The economic trauma led to social dislocation manifested through popular resentment and anti-Chinese riots in Jakarta. Politically, Suharto's failure to contain the crisis resulted in mass unrest within the Indonesian society. Prolonged political unrest created further divisions within the political elites weakening the latter. A weak political authority provided scope for political opposition, and Indonesia saw the rise of Islamic forces particularly fundamentalist Islam. This was coupled with the rise in irredentist forces that made separatist claims. Most important, the internal security of the State continued to be threatened by the rise of radical Islam in liaison with international terrorism.

On the other extreme, Singapore faced the least of political threat. One of the probable reasons was the overwhelming economic performance under the domination of the one-party system. The domino-effect of the economic crisis provided reason to the PAP government to enhance its capacity by undertaking policies single-handedly. Lee Kuan Yew opined, "I believe the root cause of many an economic crisis and the speed with which a country is able to emerge from it depends upon whether the government has the political will and popular support to implement the tough measures that are necessary to overcome the crisis."\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{130} Bruce McFarlene, op.cit.no.113, p.61.
The economic crisis laid bare the weakness of the political systems of the Southeast Asian economies. Cronyism, Corruption, and Nepotism have been branded as the chief mischief makers in various Southeast Asian States worsening the effect of the economic crisis. Serious efforts to wean the state administration from corruption and nepotism were made under international pressure. The western financial aid institutions had lost no time in pushing for economic reforms where the state is expected to play a minimal but more substantial role. The political crisis also proved that most of the authoritarian political states are not capable of handling social tensions precipitated by the crisis. The political turmoil had also exposed that legitimacy can be achieved neither through rigorous economic development nor through authoritarian political means. On the contrary it ought to be secured by compiling economic health with greater accountability, transparency and a political space for mass political participation. However changes are not going to take place either swiftly of smoothly, as changes would be challenged by conservative factions. Such economic downfalls also increase the susceptibility and vulnerability of these economies to external intervention. Seriously hit countries like Indonesia inspite of their initial reluctance had to accept foreign assistance. Therefore economic downturns are certainly not healthy for the economic sovereignty of the states in Southeast Asia. Political tensions within the states had their repercussions at the regional level for it was realised whereas western monetary agencies had come into much help, Southeast Asian’s own regional organisation ASEAN could not do much as it refrained from internal intervention in individual countries. Consequently, the need for reforms of ASEAN principles particularly of non-interference was felt, and a move for people centric approach was initiated.\textsuperscript{132} In fact immediately after the financial crisis ASEAN’s outlook has been changing from non-intervention to enhanced interaction, something that permits the organisation to intervene in the internal affairs of member states.\textsuperscript{133} This change in organisational principles is testimony to the growing concerns of the region towards non-military but very serious threats of economic insecurity.

It is apparent that a majority of the domestic political systems are far from participatory. Over a considerable period of time such systems have build pent-up

\textsuperscript{132} Lily Z. Rahim, ibid, p.39.
\textsuperscript{133} For a preliminary idea of the changes one needs look at the ASEAN documents from 1998-2004. A lucid discussion on ASEAN’s change from non-intervention to enhanced intervention is found in Yongwook Ryu, “The Asian Financial Crisis and ASEAN’s Concept of Security”, IDSS Working Paper, No.148, Singapore, Rajaratnam School of International Studies, January 2, 2008.
pressure that have found manifestation from growing political opposition to popular unrest. Expressions of age long anguish and frustrations have taken onto violence; it is thus difficult for the various governments to contain such long simmering outbursts. Where regimes have changed, they have not resulted in restoration of peace and order, new tensions have surfaced, mostly originating from long years social exclusion from social mainstreams. Thus social tensions, ethnic strife and fundamentalist movements have added to the woe of the individual governments where they torment decision makers. It is not within the purview of this chapter to discuss at length the individual responses of states to meet the challenges mentioned above, but it suffices to stress that it will be a time taking task. It may not be even easy for states to quell such threats in case anti-establishment movements develop cross border and perhaps even regional linkages. In that case regional treatments are necessary. It makes a very good case for response through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as has been done in the case of terrorism. However much of the success will depend on the cooperative gestures of the states of this region. Again it may be easier said than done especially where regional responses will require will presuppose intervention into the domestic political set up of member states.