Language, Nation and Development
in Southeast Asia

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Cover Photo: Jelutong English School, Penang 1967. Photo courtesy of Lee Hock Guan.

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Preface

In early 2003, the editors of this volume discussed the possibility of holding a workshop on "National Language Policy and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia". After a few meetings, we agreed that the workshop should add another dimension, i.e., economic development. This is particularly essential in an era of globalization where economic issues often take command. We then began to prepare the topics and identify a few individuals; some were to write papers, while others were to serve as commentators. We immediately discovered that it was difficult to get writers for some countries, and as a result, we decided to leave out Laos, Cambodia and Brunei Darussalam.

The preparation of the workshop was relatively smooth. All of the presenters, except one, came to the workshop and were enthusiastic in presenting their arguments. We were fortunate to have Professor Wang Gungwu who agreed to give a keynote speech. He raised some important issues which were later discussed during the workshop. At the end of the workshop, we agreed that the papers should be revised for publication. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the process was very slow. Some papers were dropped as writers did not have time to do the revisions. Meanwhile, both of us were also bogged down by other responsibilities. At last, the revised papers have been edited and published. We would like to offer our apologies to the writers included in this volume for the belated publication. However, the facts and arguments presented in the papers are still relevant to the current situation.

Finally, we would like to thank Ambassador Kesavapany, Director of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), for his support for the workshop and Dr Colin Durkorp of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, who kindly graced the opening of the workshop and financed both the workshop and this publication. Nevertheless, the views expressed in the various chapters are the responsibility of the paper-writers alone.

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Keynote Address

Wang Gungwu

I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in this workshop. It was not difficult to get me to come because I have always had a soft spot for language. Of the three important words of your workshop — language, nation and development — my favourite is still language. However, the nature of language and the ways we use it have changed and I now have difficulty following recent language trends.[1] So I welcome this opportunity for me to think about it afresh. Several common and stimulating themes emerged from the workshop papers. Perhaps the most important point is the multiplicity of languages. We are fortunate in Southeast Asia to live in one of the regions where there are so many different languages and language families.[2] That diversity has enriched all of us.

Let me add a personal note. I was born in a place[3] where there were many different languages around me and grew up in another place[4] where a different set of languages prevailed. I was never able to master those languages, but the exposure to so many of them when young was very important to my life. It meant that I grew up being aware of the importance of language, the various ways people communicate, and the different nuances that surface when similar things are expressed in different languages. All these points I did not fully appreciate when I was young. Only later did I recognize how important they are to us as human beings, and that has left a strong impression on me. My experience was not unusual. Among the people I grew up with, most have had similar experiences. In addition, the people I have known professionally, in the universities and research institutes I have worked in, were also multilingual in one way or another. That confirmed for me that knowledge and sensitivity about language is something that we cannot do without.

Let me briefly discuss the three words, language, nation and development. It is not automatic or natural for us to link the three words together. It may seem obvious today to say language, nation, and development must be connected, but actually this is a very recent occurrence.[5] Of the three, language is the most basic. It has always been

there, from the day we became humans, and probably even before that, when we began trying out utterances that marked the beginnings of language.[6] In a sense, we continue to develop such chains of sound and meaning as soon as we are born; and as our minds grow, so do our language skills. It is natural for us to want to communicate at the most fundamental level. Look at the way we build our own relationships, beginning with that between mother and child, among members of the family and with the community and the tribe when growing up.[7] The web of familial and communal relationships is something that no human being has been able to avoid, and language is the key to sealing those relationships.

This leads me to contrast language with the other two words, nation and development, because the other two are not basic to humans in the same way. The latter two concepts are very much constructs of the modern world and I think we should not forget that. We must not take for granted that nation has always been there. On the contrary, in this part of the world, especially in Southeast Asia, the idea of nation is so new that we still do not fully understand what it entails.[8] We know that the new nation in Southeast Asia was one of the products of our desire to free ourselves from colonial rule, so that we can have the independence to build up our own sense of national identity. But the fact remains that, in many countries, the leaders have been struggling for the past fifty years with the question of what a nation is, and in particular, with the question, "what is a nation-state"?

We know the history of how nationalism followed anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. Knowing that, we cannot help but notice how recent its history is. Indeed, some of us can even remember when the word nation first came into our consciousness. In that context, we should stop and think about the difference between something that is basic to our lives and something that is a recent construct, a new project that would be difficult to realise in a few decades. Indeed, the more quickly we try to develop such a nation-state, the more threats there will probably be. Among those threats are problems associated with the language rights of the peoples that now live within the borders of the national territory. That is a consideration that we shall have to bear in mind. It is actually even more complicated than that. The world is changing so fast that, even as we are struggling with this concept of nation that we have borrowed from Western Europe and are still learning how to handle, we have to face the broader and equally demanding challenges of development.

Again we seem to assume that development is a natural thing.[9] Actually, it is not. Of course, in earlier times, societies that survived through the centuries did gradually develop, but that was not the kind of modern development that most people now expect. Today, when we use the word development, it involves strong and responsible states leading and guiding their peoples to make their nations prosperous through rapid economic development. In global terms, it involves keeping up with a world that is expanding at a very rapid rate, along an upward spiral of economic growth unknown in the human past. This process of globalization is now something that is beyond our control, so powerful and pervasive has it become. We have to respond to it whether we like it or not. Even nations and the nation-states themselves are under tremendous pressure from the fact that everyone is pursuing growth and the world is relentlessly developing. If states fail to respond and develop their countries, their citizens will not accept the leadership of these countries. Hence the tension that is growing between state and society because both the state and the communities that live within it are invariably linked to the capacity to develop together.

Wherever there is failure to develop, we talk about failed states. What do we mean by that? Essentially we mean that the leadership has failed to develop their country in ways that would satisfy the people, by raising their standards of living, and meeting the multiple expectations of modernization. As the people find their voice or voices, and as they are more articulate and speak up more, the states come under even greater pressure to deliver, to meet promises that their leaders had given when they were campaigning for support.[10] All political leaders are under great strain today, in a way that they never were in the past. In fact, if you look at rulers and their courtiers and functionaries in the past, most of them were self-indulgent and corrupt, at the expense of the majority of the people. That was what it used to be, but today most people would not allow that to happen without strenuous protest.

The modern world is putting different kinds of pressure on the political leadership everywhere. And one of the very powerful pressures in Southeast Asia comes from problems of nation-building and development. First, what should they do to build this new nation? Having inherited the bureaucratic state from the colonial power or built a revolutionary state against it, the people want their own nation. But how are they to build it?

Nation-building has been a very difficult task for all our leaders. In every country in Southeast Asia we find not just many languages and

many national groups, but also many sub-languages and many sub-national groups, each demanding national recognition. On top of dealing with that, the political leaders find themselves also having to face pressures from outside. For example, the financial crisis of just a few years ago was an awakening experience for many of us in the region.[11] Suddenly, the whole region found itself utterly helpless in the face of unknown, intangible forces, affecting all of us. None of us quite anticipated the way it happened. The trigger was very sudden, and although it had been building up for sometime, not many people anticipated its coming. Even fewer expected the impact it had.

Let us return to the key word 'language' that lies behind the nation-state but also the process of development. We have had more than a couple of generations to see the kinds of challenges languages have posed to new nations. We have seen how nation-building pressures have strengthened certain languages and weakened others, in some cases, even destroying some languages. Thus one of the natural products of our need to maintain our human links have been so distorted by the pressures of nation-building that some languages have had to be sacrificed, so to speak, in the course of building up one dominant language as the national language. This is not to question the motives of the people who set down national policies. They have often done so for the best of reasons: to strengthen and prosper their countries, to enable their people to be united behind a strong sense of identity, and to enable their countries to be strong enough to defend themselves against their enemies. That is understandable, and indeed there was no way that the leaders who sought to harness the forces of nationalism and anti-colonialism could have avoided it. The damage to some languages was part of the high price that the country had to pay.

I am not talking only of the languages that came from elsewhere into the region — the ones from China or from India or even from the Middle East. Although the speakers of these languages have domiciled in, and identify with, the new nation-states, these languages might be considered alien to the region because they originated elsewhere. In fact, major languages like Chinese, Tamil, Arabic and others are not in any danger. What seem to me important are examples of languages within the region that are facing the pressures and contradictions that accompany the course of nation-building. For example, in a recent study of the census of Indonesia, we are reminded that, while the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, is vital to the nation-building process in Indonesia, the reality

is that the vast majority of the Indonesian people do not speak it naturally.[12] It is striking to see how the people of Java, who make up more than half of the population of the country, speak different mother tongues and would not normally speak the Malay language that is the basis for Bahasa. Bahasa is the lingua franca they all use when speaking with people who are not natives of Java. Of course, this is understandable, but it emphasizes the ongoing contradictions within a nation where there is a national language as well as other languages used by large and powerful groups of people who want to keep and defend the use of their own native languages. The tensions created by the use of state power to treat other languages as secondary or inferior would ultimately be very disruptive to the nation-building process.

I am talking about state power here because this is what the nation-state means and because, in our region, states were established before nations. States set out to build nations using state power — all the bureaucratic modern power that states can wield today to try and forge a nation out of many different peoples and with many different cultures and languages. In the course of nation-building, it is to be expected that many of these languages and cultures would be under pressure, and some would disappear, or so weaken that they cannot survive on their own. In all Southeast Asian countries, the state apparatus and power has been used to deal with the sub-national languages, regional languages, tribal languages, community languages and foreign languages. State policy can be extremely beneficial, but it also can be destructive. I think we have to recognize that reality, and also that the need for this power is likely to remain for some time.

What really should get our full attention today is the pressure of development. This is the next stage. What does this mean? In fact, during the past few decades, the development demands are contrary to the nation-building pressures. This is largely because development requires something else, for example, the need to maintain a good standard of living or, better still, to improve standards of living so that people will be satisfied and not turn against the leadership. You have to accept that the linguistic skills needed to enable development are not necessarily the same as the linguistic needs for national solidarity. Indeed, the contradictions arise from the borderless nature of the economic situation today, seen for example, in the financial crisis that enveloped the region where economic forces rapidly and indiscriminately acted on every country. Thus the countries that are less prudent ended up hurting those that were more

prudent. This was beyond the control of the leaders at the time. Given that experience, different attitudes towards change are now necessary, including that towards the uses of language.

In India, for example, private colleges are growing at a very fast rate by announcing and advertising the fact they are teaching in English. Even families from poor villages try to save money to send their children to these private colleges. The private colleges do not charge very high fees; in fact, their fees are low compared to elsewhere. The demand for private colleges is high because students prefer to go to private colleges teaching in English and not to state schools that teach in Hindi or in other regional languages. I remember travelling around Delhi seeing signs saying, "We teach in English" and being told what a strong selling point this is.[13] To actually forsake the public school system that teaches in your own language for the private one that teaches in English is an increasingly common phenomenon.

Not that many years ago, it was just the other way round. People gave up English so that students could learn in the national language. Everyone was encouraged to use the national language so that it could become a great and superior language. People were willing to give up a lot of to achieve that. We could look at what happened to the students in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). In the 1950s, Sri Lanka had universities and schools with probably the best English standard of the non-English-speaking parts of the British Commonwealth in Asia and Africa. Yet, within a decade or two of changing its language policy to one of teaching everything in Singhalese, that position was lost. This was made clear to me when I interviewed a post-graduate student from Sri Lanka who wanted to do a research degree with me in the field of Chinese history. His Chinese was good, having studied the language in China, but his English was quite inadequate for an English-language university. What amazed me was that a Sri Lankan university graduate could have lost the ability to use English at that level just a decade or two after the switch to national language teaching. It was painful to see him struggle with a language that his fellow graduates a generation earlier had used with skill and eloquence. It is interesting, however, to see how, during the past decade, that position has been reversed, not just in Sri Lanka, but also almost everywhere in Asia.

One of the most remarkable developments observed in the last two decades is the way the People's Republic of China changed its language policies and the Chinese students have picked up English. It is simply incredible how language skills have changed. When I visited China in

1973, only a handful of Chinese could speak foreign languages, and the foreign language they knew best was Russian. English had virtually disappeared. But by 1980, second-hand bookshops were full of books in Russian that nobody wanted because everybody had switched to English. This came about because of the recognition that China needed to develop quickly out of the impoverished condition brought about by the decade of the Cultural Revolution. In order to do that, Deng Xiaoping, the country's new Communist leader, admitted that the Chinese had to learn from the outside world and that the best way to do so was through mastering the English language. Among the first things he did was to go to America and make his peace with the Americans. He also made English the foreign language that students needed to gain admission to the best universities. The four compulsory subjects for the examination to enter university were Chinese, English, and Mathematics and a fourth subject, usually Science.

It was a dramatic change to make English one of the compulsory subjects given that China had been ideologically anti-American for many years and forced everybody to learn Russian. The reason they switched was because of the pressure of rapid industrial development. Since the Chinese State put development ahead of everything else, they were willing to change their policies when they thought it would help accelerate that development. It is really staggering to see what they have done to transform the economic structure of the country. Today, every primary school child in China is starting on English. The Chinese have even reached the stage where, like the Indians, they are setting up private schools and colleges that allow the use of English as a medium of instruction, or at least teach much more English than is taught in the state institutions. The private schools are attracting parents who are prepared to pay higher fees in order for their child to learn English one or two years earlier. So within a generation, development has now almost superseded the question of linguistic nationalism in China. Indeed, many countries, including those like China which were once isolated, hostile, and almost xenophobic about foreigners, have in just one generation, completely turned around their language policies to favour a language that would support rapid development. We can now meet Chinese in Shanghai or Beijing who speak better English than people in Singapore.

I do not want to overstate this, but let me go back to the general point I made earlier. The three words — language, nation and development — are not equal. While they have different origins and histories, it is important to stress that only language is basic. But language can be sacrificed in the

name of nation-building and, in turn, the national demands for development would put every person and institution under ever-greater pressure. What that could do to language use, and to the native languages themselves, is something of great interest. Many of the papers at this conference have touched on this aspect, and I do not need to say more. I would simply conclude in this way. Because the pressures facing us today are different, they require different strategies. National education systems need to adjust to meet some of these new demands. That is to be expected. There will be different rates of change in different countries, even within Southeast Asia, where you can see different countries responding differently to the challenges. I would be interested to find out how the different rates actually affect what the respective countries become in ten or twenty years' time. As for language policy, how much would that act as a kind of measure or index of how a country has moved from being nation-centred to development-centred? Language is a many splendid thing and its possibilities are great. We cannot underestimate the importance of language as a symbol that strikes deep chords in people. Hence, while states and their peoples are focused on some of the practical needs for development and globalization, it is still important that they do not lose the national and community languages that were there in the first place and that are so natural and so important for human development.

Notes

1. See for example the range of topics covered in the volume edited by Phillipson (2000).
2. Southeast Asia is a region of enormous linguistic diversity where hundreds, perhaps thousands, of languages are spoken. The classic work on this is still Norman H. Zide's *Studies in Comparative Austroasiatic Linguistics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966).
3. Surabaya, Indonesia. Surabaya is a multilingual city in the eastern part of Java. The languages spoken in the city during my childhood were Indonesian/ Malay (as a lingua franca), Madurese, Dutch and various Chinese dialects (Hokkien, Hakka and Cantonese).
4. Ipoh, Malaysia. Besides Malay and English, there was Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka and Teochew among the Chinese, and at least Tamil, Malayalam, Punjabi and Telugu among the Indian languages.
5. For a comprehensive discussion of nationalism and language, see Chapter 2 in May (2001). The global presence and role of English has led many countries to see that knowledge, if not mastery, of this language has become an important factor in helping most countries in their economic development.

6. There are two general theories of language. Noam Chomsky, the renowned linguist, proposed a naturalist theory of language which argues that linguistic capacities are already pre-wired into our brain as a result of natural selection. In contrast, a cognitive theory of language viewed human linguistic acquisition as a result of learning and cultural development.

7. As indicative of the importance of the mother-child dynamic we have the notion of 'mother tongue'. However, the mother-child dynamic today has become less fundamental in certain societies due to a variety of intervening agencies: television, maids, early childhood centres, and so on.

8. Experiences of nation-building in selected Southeast Asian countries can be found in Wang (2005).

9. Arndt (1987) and (1993).

10. The voice of the people has gained much mileage with the growing influence of democratic governance in the region; the most recent experience being that of Indonesia after the downfall of Soeharto.

11. Jomo (2004).

12. Suyardinata, Nurvidya, and Ananta (2003).

13. Command of English also enhances employment opportunities especially in jobs outsourced from Western countries.

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Introduction

Lee Hock Guan
Leo Suryadinata

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, a surprising development in the Western European world was the emergence of spirited debates on the identity question. This rethinking of the identity question was propelled by two major transformations, one external and the other internal. The external transformation was in relation to the formation of the European Union, which aims to integrate the various European nation-states into a supranational state of sorts. In this supranational state, questions were raised about what will happen to the cultures and languages of the individual nation-state as it evolves. The internal transformation refers to the fact that many of the individual nation-states have over the years and with the arrival and settlement of non-European immigrants, become multiethnic societies.

Increasingly, the identity debates in Europe have revolved around the concept of "multiculturalism". According to Bhikhu Parekh, multiculturalist perspectives recognize the cultural embeddedness of human beings, the inescapability and desirability of cultural plurality, and the plural and multicultural constitution of each culture. It follows that a multicultural society values its cultural diversity and respects the rights of its members to their cultures and languages. The multicultural perspective is indeed a stark contrast to the traditional concept of the nation, also a European construct, which imagines a nation as a homogenous cultural entity. It is in fact the overwhelming dominance of this concept of nation that historically made and transformed the various Western European nation-states into largely culturally homogenous entities. Thus, in Europe now the move is to shift from the culturally homogenous nation to one that accommodates multiculturalism.

Ironically, in the post-colonial world, including Southeast Asia, the nation-building processes continue to be largely influenced by the prevalence of the traditional concept of the nation. In this regard, language

was and remains a key site of contention. In the early years of nation-building, attempts to build a monolingual nation was the overriding policy in the Southeast Asian region even though the inhabitants in all the countries spoke a variety of languages. Efforts to build a monolingual nation in Southeast Asia were complicated by the recognition that as citizens, members of minority groups do have cultural rights, including the right to their language. The recognition of language rights, however, varied from country to country with some countries less tolerant than others. Even more importantly today is the minority groups' growing awareness of their cultural rights.

Besides the cultural aspect of language policies, globalization has also increased the awareness of the linkage between language and development, especially acquisition of scientific knowledge and for purposes of economic development. Indeed, this awareness, to a large extent, led the Singaporean leaders to adopt English as the medium of instruction since Independence. Similarly, in the latest move in 2003, the Malaysian Government has decided to re-introduce English as the medium of instruction for mathematics and science subjects. In general then, this linkage has forced the Southeast Asian countries to re-think their national language policy.

It will be pertinent to study the language policy of the Southeast Asian countries and issues in terms of nation-building and development. How was the national language chosen and pursued? Who made and what went into the policy? What are the positions of other non-national languages, both local/regional and foreign? How did the national language policy affect national integration and social cohesion, and national and ethnic identity formation? In light of the increasing recognition of a linkage between language and development, how has it influenced national language policies? What are the problems and prospects of the language policy in Southeast Asia?

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The two chapters on the Philippines demonstrate clearly the limits of the bilingual education policy in the country. On the one hand, Pilipino, which is largely Tagalog-based, is the national and official language which the majority of Filipinos accept as the national linguistic symbol of unity and identity and support teaching it in the educational system. Pilipino was indeed perceived to be essential to the construction of a national

identity. On the other hand, English language competence continues to be regarded as an asset, in particular in relation to access to economic opportunities. Gonzalez shows that for a number of reasons "little investment" was devoted to developing Pilipino as a national language and this, in turn, has diminished its role as a symbol of unity and identity. A major problem was because of the growing dependence of the country on remittances from Filipinos working overseas, the preference for English as the main medium of instruction has further strengthened. This has led the State to put more emphasis and allocate more resources to "maintain and enhance competence in English among Filipinos".

From his analysis of the language debates since the 1970s, Tupas claims that the prominence of English in the educational system and society was kept because it was the "language of the rich". That is to say, since competency in English is linked to access to political and economic opportunities, the Filipino elite has a vested interest in preserving English as the main medium of instruction. It also helps that the educational system is structured such that children of the rich receive a superior English education while children of the disenfranchised are provided with an inferior English education. The perpetuation of the unequal quality of English education in the Philippines thus contributes to the reproduction of the existing class structure.

Indonesia is one of the few countries in the world where the ethnic majority's language, in this case Javanese, was not elevated to the status of official and national language after Independence. Montolalu and Suryadinata's chapter analyses the elevation and implementation of Malay, the vernacular language of the ethnic Malay minority, as the national language or Bahasa Indonesia. Historically, the status of Malay received a major boost when the Indonesian nationalist movement chose the language as a means to unify the multiethnic and multireligious population of the archipelago. For many decades after Independence, the post-colonial State has pursued a largely monolingual policy using Malay to promote nation-building such that vernacular languages and foreign languages have become marginalized. In recent years, however, the fortunes of the foreign languages, particularly English, and vernacular languages have experienced an upward swing; the former as a result of globalization, while the process of decentralization, since the fall of Soeharto in 1998, has revitalized the latter. Hence there are growing pressures on the Indonesian State to modify the national language policy.

Budianta's chapter examines the changing evaluation of what constitutes national literature in Indonesia, arguing that fixing the boundary of national literature invariably "involves power relations and subordination". When Malay was chosen as the national language, a hegemonic notion emerged and declared that national literature would include only works written in Malay, thus consigning works written in the other vernacular languages and foreign languages to the periphery. During the New Order era, the national literature boundary was further fixed to exclude works in Malay which the regime found ideologically unacceptable or did not fit with their imagined nation. Fortunately, the fall of the New Order has stirred up debates to revisit and redefine the concepts of national literature, in particular, "the decentralization movements and the regional awakenings in literature have strongly voiced the need to acknowledge literatures written in other languages as equal to that written in Bahasa Indonesia".

In multiethnic Singapore, the State regarded the function of language in nation-building in terms of constructing a Singaporean-Singapore identity that would avoid "setting off [the] centrifugal tendencies" in the society. National language and education policies were, however, in part dictated by a language ideological framework that: upheld a English-mother tongue bilingual strategy; assumed language as purveyor of ethnic cultures; aimed to create "a core of cultural elites for each race"; and adopted "a pragmatic approach to the learning of mother tongue languages and the fundamental of economic relevancy in language planning". Tan rightly noted that the competing objectives potentially could result in "governmental interventions in the language and cultural realm [that] do not always produce the convergence of goals much sought after". The changing Government policies toward the Chinese language since Independence captured very well the twists and turns of its language strategies. While initially politics and fears of Chinese chauvinism led the State to marginalize the Chinese element in the educational system, by the 1980s, policy-makers started to reverse somewhat the situation because they feared that Chinese Singaporeans were losing their cultural heritage and roots and becoming too "westernized". In the 1990s, the position of the Chinese language was considerably enhanced when the rise of China added an economic dimension to learning the language. This enhanced status of the Chinese language, however, potentially would have negative impacts on ethnic relations if it were not managed carefully.

The chapter on Malaysia shows that although Malay nationalism was influenced by the notion of a linguistically homogenous nation, various factors and circumstances hindered them from pursuing an unambiguously

assimilationist policy. In particular, the prevailing "consociational politics", which give emphasis to inter-ethnic bargaining, effectively circumscribed the Malay-dominated state language and education policies. Implementation of the consociational elites' compromises on language and education, however, was marred by conflicting interpretations of the terms of the compromises, and encountered determined opposition from civil society groups who found the compromises unacceptable. The twists and turns in language and education issues and developments in Malaysia were also subjected to three central rationales: Malays' desire to consolidate their language as the sole official language and main medium of instruction; Chinese insistence on their citizen rights to be instructed in their mother tongue; and the ruling elites' perception that linked English competency to scientific and economic progress.

The chapter on Myanmar argues that Burman leaders were not single-minded in wanting to establish a monolingual nation precisely because they had "neither a clear nation-building discourse, nor a clear definition of Myanmarness". Thus, their real aim in promoting Burmese as the official language was more a strategy to perpetuate their rule than for the purposes of nation-building. Ethnic minorities hence were given the freedom to speak and write their own languages, provided such activities were not being used to undermine the legitimacy of, or attempt to topple, the Burman-dominated governments. Unsurprisingly, in recent years, the ethnic minority nationalists' growing grievance over the language question is not over the adoption of Burmese as the official language, but rather, over the diminishing status of their languages and cultures, as a result of neglect and negligible financial support by successive Burman-dominated governments.

The chapter on Vietnam focuses on why and how the Vietnamese State has changed its language and media policies so as to benefit from the opportunities brought about by globalization. Specifically, the Vietnamese State is keen to profit from the Vietnamese diaspora; there are about 2.7 million Vietnamese residing overseas. Thus, from the mid-1990s onwards, the Vietnamese State has reformulated its language and media policies from the past exclusive focus on "territorialized" nation-building to the current emphasis on "deterritorialized" nation-building, which "involve extending national belonging … to those who have left, despite the fact they may have taken out citizenship in and undergone social and cultural integration into second nations". A variety of language and media initiatives have been employed for this purpose, such as: teaching Vietnamese language in overseas Vietnamese communities; Vietnamese newspapers

and magazines, including using the Internet, and radio and television broadcasts. However, for a number of reasons, the State has managed only very limited success in its goal "to create a sense of connectedness and nationalist affect in overseas Vietnamese communities, and thus to sustain links to the homeland across diasporic generations".

Just like the other Southeast Asian countries, Thailand is both a linguistically and culturally diverse country. The author argues that initially, successive Thai governments had pursued a "hidden policy" that emphasized "assimilation". The then prevailing rationale was that national unity and security could only be realized on the basis of "one language and one culture in Thai society". Invariably, this was translated into the elevation of the language of the dominant group, the Thais, as the national language such that there is a language hierarchy, which is a mirror image of the social hierarchy: Standard Thai, regional Thai languages/dialects and minority languages (in descending order of importance). The author claims that "Thailand has never had serious racial problems that led to riots and wars", even though Southern Thailand has witnessed periodic armed confrontations, in part, due to the Malays' grievances against the "suppression" of their language and culture. Nevertheless, future ethnic relations, despite the recent violent conflicts in Southern Thailand, may benefit from a major shift in Government policy towards some sort of linguistic, and cultural, pluralism.

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Language, Nation and Development in the Philippines

Andrew Gonzalez

Among the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Philippines has been considered a laggard performer in socio-economic development. Although many development social scientists have often pointed out its vast potential (in terms of natural and human resources), the sad reality is that in the last thirty-years, the country has been described as on the verge of take-off but never quite taking off. Promise has not borne fruit in actual progress. The progress has been slow, erratic, and insufficient to make the economy match the better performers of the region.

Many explanations have been given for this poor performance. In James Fallows' article in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1987), he described the Philippines as "a damaged culture", an apt though hardly diplomatic remark, especially for a foreigner to make. It seems, to use the language of the Bible, that there was initial damage or "original sin" which was inflicted on the society which makes cultural cohesiveness very difficult to attain. A kinder remark has been made by a Japanese anthropologist (Kikuchi 1991) who characterizes Philippine culture as not having been sufficiently "crystallized" to make the necessary movement towards unity, nationhood and following this self-identity, rapid development.

Actually, Filipinos in this generation have been their own worst critics, blaming "politics" for the ills of society without quite defining what they mean by "politics". The euphoria following the dismantling of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 was soon followed by disappointment and disenchantment, so much so, that many of the country's talented have been leaving in hundreds. In the 1950s and the 1960s, it was mostly members of the less affluent socioeconomic classes, who saw little opportunity for advancement, who left. The past twenty years, however, it has likewise been the affluent, some of the best and the brightest, who