

Southeast Asian History Preliminary Examinations (2016) – Suggested Approaches

2. Assess the claim that successful pre-1941 movements were mainly driven by Western ideologies.

The claim suggests that movements which were successful either by making significant progress towards independence through a collaborative relationship with colonial masters, establishing broad based support as a critical foundation to the eventual aim of overthrowing unrelenting colonial masters or simply preserving their ethno-religious identities in an overwhelming climate of Westernization; were all driven by Western ideologies in the form of democracy or communism.

While this is true as seen via movements which were sophisticated in their worldview and stratagem as well as the failures of petulantly traditional movements, this claim overlooks the fact that there were Western-driven movements which failed. In addition, movements which were successful in either garnering broad-based support or preserving the ethno-religious identity of particular segments of the society utilized the masses' ethno-religious adherence as much as they were driven by modern ideologies. Furthermore, the question has limited success to the mere facilities of Western ideologies without acknowledging the important role played by the attitudes of colonial masters in determining the success of pre-1941 movements.

(Supporting) Line of Argument 1: successful movements with sophisticated world view and stratagem

Vietminh which utilised the Communist strategy to break into cell groups; dual function: infiltrate into the rural population (peasants) faster & to avoid the detection of the punitive French colonial masters

(Supporting) Line of Argument 2: failure of traditional movements which refused to embrace Western ideologies and were crushed under Western firepower

Case studies: Mat Hassan & the Kelantan Uprising (1915) & Saya San rebellion (1931)

(Challenging) Line of Argument 3: failed to acknowledge that there were movements driven by Western ideologies which struggled or totally failed as the masses couldn't identify with their alien concepts

Indochina Communist Party (ICP) & Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI)

(Challenging) Line of Argument 4 : movements which was successful because they were driven by a combination of ethno-religious concepts & Western ideologies.

Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) : Sukarno's "Nationalism, Islam & Marxism" and the concept of Ratu Adil

Dobama Aseayone: Mass support spearheaded by General Council of Burmese Associations & intellectual direction provided by students from Rangoon University

(Challenging) Line of Argument 5: movements were successful not because they were driven by Western ideologies but because they were focused on preserving the ethno-religious identities of the majority of the population

Muhammadiyah and YMBA

(Challenging) Line of Argument 6: Question underestimated the role played by the attitudes of colonial masters in determining the success of nationalist movements

Permissive colonial masters: America & their attitude towards the Nacionalista Party

Oppressive colonial masters: French towards Phan Chun Trinh

3. To what extent was decolonization in Southeast Asia halted due to the intervention of foreign powers?

The question requires an analysis of the negative impact of the Japanese during the Japanese Occupation (1941-45) and the superpowers during the Cold War upon local nationalists' attempts to attain independence from their colonial masters. This essay will assert that the Japanese presence in Southeast Asia did cause the decolonization process to come to a halt as they stunted promised independence for the Philippines. Furthermore, the US paranoia manifested through the Domino Theory during the Cold War period will delay the complete decolonization and subsequent unification of states like Vietnam and Laos. However, the question overlooked the role played by the Japanese who actually quickened the decolonization process via their unprecedented militarization of nationalist movements which provided the much needed leverage for nationalists against their returning colonial masters. In addition, US paranoia continued to significantly influence the pace of decolonization in Southeast Asia albeit by hastening the decolonization process by pressuring colonial masters to grant the elusive independence to anti-communist nationalists. Furthermore, the question's emphasis on the intervention of foreign powers undermined the significant role oppressive colonial masters had in halting the process of decolonization in Southeast Asia.

(Supporting) Line of Argument 1: Japanese presence halted the decolonization process in the Philippines

(Supporting) Line of Argument 2: US intervention in Southeast Asia because of Domino Theory paranoia further significantly delayed progress towards independence

Vietnam: supported by installing Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam; prolonged unification process (1954-1975)

Laos: Pathet Laos came into power; US fear of communist threat led to their intervention up till 1975

(Challenging) Line of Argument 3: Japanese actually quickened the pace of decolonization

Unprecedented militarization and politicization: PETA/BNA/PUTERA/kujeros for Malay elites

(Challenging) Line of Argument 4: US intervention hastened decolonization

Madiun Affair (1948) led to US pressurizing the Dutch to withdraw from Indonesia

(Challenging) Line of Argument 5: the role of foreign powers significantly delayed/halted decolonization process

French: dragged the war in Vietnam to almost ten years (1945-1953)

Indonesia: despite Renville and Linggadjati Agreements, still imposed 2 Police Actions

4. 'The Asian Financial Crisis proved the incompatibility of capitalism with Southeast Asian economies.' How far is this assertion justified?

The given assertion posits that the Asian Financial Crisis is a glowing evidence of how capitalism was ill-suited for Southeast Asian economies. Indeed, this claim is supported by how the devastation caused by the Asian Financial Crisis impacted only Southeast Asian states which embraced capitalism which highlighted how the much lauded economic miracle was a mere illusion and that the collapse of capitalist economies due to inherent structural deficiencies highlighted how Southeast Asian economies were not ready to deal with the repercussions brought about by a capitalist system. However, this assertion erroneously failed to point out that the downfall of Southeast Asian economies was not because of the incompatibility of capitalism with Southeast Asian economies but more to the malpractices and poor decisions made on the part of the governments which laid the foundations for the Asian Financial Crisis to occur. In addition, the ability of the Singapore and Malaysia governments to recover from the initial speculator attacks during the conflict despite the capitalist structure they both embraced further highlighted that capitalism was always compatible to Southeast Asian economies so as long as governments remain incorruptible and pragmatic. Furthermore, to merely use the Asian Financial Crisis as a basis to highlight the incompatibility of capitalism to Southeast Asian economies would be to grievously overlook how capitalism was pivotal to the rapid development of Southeast Asia economies which brought about unprecedented growth and prosperity in the said region.

(Supporting) Line of Argument 1: the collapse of capitalist economies during AFC highlighted how Southeast Asian economies were not ready to deal with the repercussions brought about by a capitalist system hence proving its incompatibility

By mid-1997, Thailand's debt to foreign banks was US\$69 billion, 70% of this being short-term loans

The value of the rupiah fell from 1 USD = 2400 RP to 1 USD = 4000 RP by October 1997 and the stock market declined as investors pulled out

(Challenging) Line of Argument 2: the downfall of capitalist economies was caused by the malpractices and poor decision of the governments

Malpractices: Premature liberalization of financial institutions in Thailand, cronyism in Indonesia, overspending on major projects in Malaysia

Poor decisions: Widespread decision amongst the governments in the region to peg their currencies to the US dollars

(Challenging) Line of Argument 3: Ability of countries with capitalist economies to ride the AFC storm debunked the claim

Singapore: Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) ensures the proper regulation of money while the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) clamping down on abuses of power

Malaysia: decided to cut down on spending on mega-projects like Putrajaya and Petronas Towers which significantly reduced its inflationary rate

(Challenging) Line of Argument 4: One event cannot be used as a justification for incompatibility of capitalism with Southeast Asian economies because capitalism was pivotal

to the recovery of Southeast Asian economies after devastation of war and decolonization process.

Between 1990 and 1995 gross domestic investment grew by 16.3% per annum in Indonesia, 16% per annum in Malaysia, 15.3% in Thailand

5. 'Maximum governments dealt with threats to national unity better than democratic governments.' Discuss.

The statement only holds true insofar as some maximum governments being able to set the crucial platform for the establishment of national unity projects by overwhelming entities which threaten to divide the already fragile post-independent societies as compared to democratic governments which fail to address the divergent political views and ethno-religious demands. In addition, for some maximum governments, their ability to introduce a political homogenous society would enable them to focus on economic growth which was fundamental prerequisite to the attainment of economic equity as compared to democratic governments whose focus to accommodate to the diverse needs of the society meant the introduction of populist and failed economic policies. However, the maximum governments' initiatives at attaining economic equity were often stunted due to their lack of checks and balances which compromised the initial growth which they had enjoyed as compared to democratic governments which had legitimate processes to preserve the legitimacy of their political and economic institutions. Furthermore, the inclusive nature of democratic governments meant that they often strived to be inclusive in their policies towards the minorities within their countries as compared to the discriminatory stance often taken by maximum governments towards non-indigenous minorities under the guise of nationalism. Ultimately, governments which dealt with threats to national unity best were those which upheld legitimate democratic processes in their countries while at the same having no qualms in taking punitive measures unique to maximum governments to these supposed threats.

(Supporting) Line of Argument 1: Some maximum governments set the crucial platform by overwhelming entities which threaten to politically divide societies

Sukarno's 'Guided Democracy' successfully removed the threat of a politically divided society brought about by attempts of five prior governments to uphold liberal democratic principles which had as much as 83 parties in parliament at one time.

(Supporting) Line of Argument 2: Some maximum governments' political homogenization of society allowed for subsequent focus on economic growth: prerequisite to equity

Suharto's use of Pancasila and empowerment of Golkar was complimented by the embrace of a capitalist economy which generated unprecedented growth eg Manufactured exports grew from less than US\$1 billion in 1982 to more than US\$9 billion in 1990.

U-Nu's desire to adhere to the political demands of an increasingly impatient population led to his institutionalization of pyidawtha (Land Of Happiness) which caused more economic strife and unhappiness.

(Challenging) Line of Argument 3: Maximum government failed to address threat to national unity because attempts to provide economic equity would be offset by the lacks of check and balances.

President Suharto has long supported investments in a network of an estimated 300 businesses that are owned by his family and friends in a system known as "crony capitalism"

Ramos adopted anti-corruption stance by introducing policies such as Ramos' programme, with the slogan 'Philippines 2000', put an end to the country's economic malaise. He brought about record growth rates of 7% and reduced the power of the former ilustrado families, bringing about more equitable development than any of his successors.

(Challenging) Line of Argument 4: Inclusive nature of democratic movements meant that they were better able to deal with threats to national unity better through diplomatic means

Ramos signed a ceasefire agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1996 despite a conflict which had been ongoing in 1972.

Suharto's government's military conflict with the Acehnese rebel represented by Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) only ceased upon his removal from power.

(Challenging) Line of Argument 5: Ultimately, question overlooked the fact that the best form of government to deal with threats to national unity will be those which upheld authentic democratic processes but were willing to undertake punitive measures to address threats.

Singapore: Operation Cold Store & Internal Security Department (ISD)

Malaysia: National Operations Council (1969-1971)

6. How true is the assertion that the decisions made by colonial masters were more detrimental to the inter-state relationship between Southeast Asian states as compared to those made by leaders of Southeast Asian states?

Assertion is true insofar as highlighting how the decisions made by the colonial masters in the form of implicit handing over of territories or agreements which displaced populations laid the foundations which led to unresolved conflicts between independent Southeast Asian countries. In addition, the colonial masters' decisions manifested through their varied attitudes to Southeast Asian states would also lay the premise for the nature of relationship between independent states which underwent different colonization processes. In addition, decisions made by colonial masters were more detrimental because leaders of independent Southeast Asian states were actually able to overlook interstate conflicts with each other in order to ensure regional peace. However, the question overlooks the role of leaders who further exacerbated existing conflicts between states which resulted in heightened tension or even actual confrontations. In addition, decisions made by leaders. In addition, the short-sightedness of leaders who failed to see beyond the resolution of their ongoing conflicts would result in the failure or halted function of regional organizations which were formed for the purpose of improving interstate relationships.

(Supporting) Line of Argument 1: Decisions made by colonial masters in the form of implicit handing over of territories or agreements which displaced populations laid the foundations for conflicts

From 1888, Sabah became a British colony and was handed over by the British to the new Malaysian government in 1963. However, the Philippines asserts that the original 1877 agreement provided for a lease, not a cession of Sabah to the British, and hence that the

Philippines, as a successor to the Sulu Sultanate, still has sovereignty over Sabah. The British left the region without clarifying the disputation.

1896 Anglo-French Treaty: Siam ceded the four southern provinces of Patani, Yala, Satun and Narathiwat to the British, who added these to Malaya. However in the 1909 Treaty of Bangkok: the British returned the four provinces to Siam in exchange for the Siamese ending their claims to the northern Malay states. By then, these four provinces had accumulated a significant Malay-Muslim minority totalling 7% of the Siamese population. This minority found it hard to accept the central government in Bangkok, which was ethnically Thai and Buddhist

(Supporting) Line of Argument 2: The varied attitude of colonial masters manifested through the different paths to independence undergone by different Southeast Asian states influenced the nature of relationship between independent states.

Indonesia and Vietnam's rough path to independence as a result of the attitude of the colonial masters towards them influenced the condescending way they viewed their neighboring states who underwent a more constitutional and more diplomatic path to independence. Leaders of these diplomatic states were even deemed to be weak thus prompting expansionist tendencies. Eg Konfrontasi and Vietnam-Cambodia conflict (1978)

(Supporting) Line of Argument 3: Decisions made by leaders of Southeast Asian states were less detrimental because they were more willing to overlook ongoing inter-state conflicts to focus on other aspects of cooperation.

1994 Defence Pact between Mahathir & Ramos

1994 Malaysia-Thailand Joint Authority Agreement between Mahathir (Malaysia) & Banharn Silpa Archa (Thailand) to coordinate oil exploration Malaysia after disputes over overlapping Exclusive Economic Zones.

(Challenging) Line of Argument 4: Decisions made by leaders were more detrimental because the decision made by leaders would exacerbate existing tensions to the point whereby tensions were heightened or even resulted in actual confrontations

Pedra Branca: Operation Total Annihilation

Konfrontasi

(Challenging) Line of Argument 5: Leaders who failed to see beyond their ongoing conflicts would result in the failure or halted function of regional organizations which were formed to enhance regional interstate relationships.

ASA/Maphilindo (failed due to Sabah conflict/Maphilindo)

ASEAN (1968-1969) due to Corregidor Affair (Sabah conflict)