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## Introduction

*Supaphan Tangtrongpaiboj*

Over recent years the Southeast Asian region has faced many intractable problems. Many countries have faced challenges arising from economic threats, cross-border trade, the environment, stateless persons, or humanitarian problems. Each government has a different response to these challenges.

China proposes a new arrangement for the global economy called “the Belt and Road Initiative,” or BRI in short, to assist in achieving longstanding cooperation with other nations via trade and investment. The BRI consists primarily of the “Silk Road Economic Belt,” linking China to Central and South Asia and onwards to Europe, and the “New Maritime Silk Road,” linking China to the nations of South East Asia, the Gulf Countries, North Africa and on to Europe. Six other economic corridors have been identified to link other countries to the Belt and the Road. However, achieving this vision is not easy in practice and there are significant economic and political challenges. The realization of the potential benefits of BRI is by no means automatic.

In “Belt and Road Initiative at the historic turn of the 21st century,” Thanayod Lopattananont shows how BRI is like networking transnational businesses. As a prelude to BRI, he reviews globalization in the past, starting from the peak of the free-market economy, followed by the economic crises and international disputes that began in the late 2000s.

According to a survey in Southeast Asia by UNHCR in 2015, there were significant numbers of stateless persons spread across the region. The country with the highest number of stateless persons was Myanmar, followed in order by Thailand, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Although the Asian Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with the cooperation of each country, have made efforts to address this issue, the number of stateless persons in Southeast Asia

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persists. In “The management strategy for stateless persons in South-east Asia,” Unchalee Srichomphu and Pitch Piyapramote describe the situation of stateless persons in Southeast Asia, analyze the causes of the problem, and suggest strategic solutions for statelessness using a conceptual framework based on fundamental human rights and the stability of the region.

Bhutan is a small and landlocked country. Most of the terrain is highlands and valleys. However, the country is rich in natural resources, especially rivers. The country’s economy relies on agriculture, while hydropower development is on the increase. Bhutan’s economic growth is not as robust as the World Bank expects. However, Bhutan is committed to a different approach to development which prioritises the conservation of natural resources and the environment. Bhutan has her own development model based on the concept of Mahayana Buddhism. The main idea is to live in harmony with nature and not create problems for nature. In “Environmental conservation in Bhutan: Organisation and policy,” Suppawit Kaewkhunok uses qualitative research methodology to study and analyse the effects of sustainable development and public participation through policy setting and organisational structure. The study shows how integrating indigenous ideas with international principles, and building public participation, are the bases of Bhutan’s success in driving environmental policy.

The situation of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar is dire, with no sign of relief. According to the United Nations, since late August 2017 approximately 582,000 Rohingya refugees have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh and around 15,000 refugees are stuck on the Myanmar frontier. As in most conflicts, there are opposing arguments in the debate on the root causes of the Rohingya conflict. The severe measures taken by the Myanmar government and military in the villages of Rakhine State have resulted in large scale forced migration to neighboring countries. In the article, “International mechanisms towards the Rohingya crisis,” Hakim Pongtigor encourages international bodies to develop strategies to solve the Rohingya crisis through mechanisms such as the International Humanitarian Law, the International Covenant on Political Right, and the Responsibility to Protect.

Finally, Waraporn Ruangsri and Kriangsak Chetpatanavanich examine “The dynamics of the cross-border trades and the traders of Northwestern Thailand, 1950s to 2010s,” focusing on Mae Hong Son,

*Supaphan Tangtrongpaibroj*

a border province close to Burma. The authors offer three main points. First, they evoke the impact of economic reform of border trade on the trader's lived experiences through an exploration of the traders' collective memories. Second, they show how memories of cross-border trade are interconnected with socio-cultural relations along the border between Thailand and Myanmar. Third, they point out that the period under study coincides with what is commonly called the modernization era, which is often associated with free trade policy. Their conclusion is that the dynamics of cross-border trade in northwestern Thailand between the 1950s and 2010s provide a perspective on the modern economy of the Thai state and its relationship to economic and political change within Burma. Lastly, this work contributes to an understanding of cross-border trades in the transnational context by supplementing economic history with social history.

## **Belt and Road Initiative at the historic turn of the 21st century**

*Thanayod Lopattananont*

**ABSTRACT**—China announced the Belt and Road Initiative project in 2013 as an attempt to build a new Silk Road. The project is intended to assist China in achieving longstanding cooperation with other nations via trade and investment. It is planned to cover Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia and has now progressed to the point where trade and infrastructure have taken shape in the targeted zones. However, to understand that the Belt and Road Initiative or, in short, BRI, is a vibrant option for the world economy may not be sufficient. The conditions of the global system have changed significantly. The concept of nationalism has arisen to run counter to globalization and the free market economy while tensions between the superpowers intensify unceasingly. With reference to these conditions, BRI is considered in this article as containing the implication to encourage a new politico-economic network to address the idea of being nationalist. It resets the globalization of the world economy and can be deemed to be a long-term defense against the US by tightening relationships with the strategic nations, especially, the close allies of the US in Europe and Southeast Asia. The project, therefore, has the intention and potential to be a way to security and peace amidst all the uncertainty. This article is written in a non-research format to broaden comprehension of BRI. A large body of information was collected in support of the discussion and suggestions are included at the end to provide information on more matters for future debate.

**Keywords:** BRI, globalization, China

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## **The management strategy for stateless persons in Southeast Asia**

*Unchalee Srichomphu and Pitch Piyapramote*

Abstract—The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has affirmed the fundamental rights of every person without taking nationality into consideration. However, significant populations world-wide are unable to exercise these rights. Thus, citizenship is a prerequisite to gaining one's rights within the state. When individuals are unable to register or are rejected from registering as legal persons in the civil registration of any state on earth, this creates problems in terms of individual status certification and renders certain rights to be inaccessible. Although the Asian Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with the cooperation of each region have made efforts to help solve statelessness problems in this region, the number of stateless persons in Southeast Asia still makes up roughly 40 percent of total stateless persons world-wide. This issue reflects a considerable gap between the written law and its application. The objective of this article is to present the situation of stateless persons in Southeast Asia, analyze the causes of the problem and suggest strategic solutions for statelessness by using a conceptual framework relating to fundamental human rights and the stability of regions.

Keywords: Stateless person, human rights, Southeast Asia

### **Introduction**

Nationality is a legal commitment of government towards an individual. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines “de jure statelessness” as an individual who is not considered to be citizen under the law of a state. Stateless persons also include citizens who do not have the rights they ought to have, which



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## **Environmental conservation in Bhutan: Organization and policy**

*Suppawit Kaewkhunok*






**Abstract**—This article is about Bhutan's success in conserving natural resources and the environment through its organizational and public policy perspectives. At the same time, it analyses the weaknesses and strengths of Bhutan's policy and organizational management in environmental conservation. The integration of the sustainable development approach and the Mahayana Buddhism philosophy has led to the creation of the Gross National Happiness (GNH) which is an important concept that drives the Bhutan government to pay more attention to environmental protection. The close relationship between the Bhutanese and the environment is in accordance with the old beliefs and the influence of Buddhism has contributed to the successful implementation of the government's environmental policy. In addition, the driving force behind the environmental policy has been to design an organizational structure that promotes public participation in order to truly reflect the problem and contribute to sustainable solutions. Integrating indigenous ideas with international principles and building public participation, which indicates Bhutan's success in driving environmental policy, is an important finding of this work.

**Keywords:** Bhutan, environmental conservation, environmental policy, public participation

### **Introduction**

The land of the Thunder Dragon is a state located in the eastern part of the Himalayas. The country currently has a total area of 38,394 square kilometres. The northern border is adjacent to China, while

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## International mechanisms towards the Rohingya crisis

*Hakim Pongtigor*

**ABSTRACT**—The Rohingya crisis is extremely complex and will be very difficult to resolve if the only solution to the problem is up to the Myanmar Government alone and the Rohingya people. This is because the crisis involves gross violations of humanitarian principles. Resolving this conflict demands the participation of members of the international community as the violations fall within the realm of International Humanitarian Law, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). International mediation may also be required to resolve the conflict. The R2P seems to be an effective mechanism to solve this phenomenon. Unfortunately, there are some limitations so the R2P has not been applied yet. Not only all the mechanisms mentioned earlier share some components in different dimensions but they can be all together applied and be of support in solving this crisis more effectively. However, the Myanmar government and the Rohingya people are the key factors needed to accept these mechanisms in order to prevent further violence and bloodshed and to bring sustainable peace to Arakan or the Rakhine state of Myanmar.

**Keywords:** Rohingya, Myanmar, international mechanism

### Introduction



For over seventy years since the end of World War Two, there have been continuous attempts to develop strategic mechanisms to facilitate cooperation in maintaining peace and stability between nation states. As a matter of fact, the nature of the conflicts that have increased is not between nation states but in the form of internal conflict within national boundaries. These conflicts often stem from different forms of inequality and injustice that have impinged upon liberty and fundamental human rights as well as conflicting political ideologies that exist

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## **The dynamics of the cross-border trades and the traders of Northwestern Thailand, 1950s to 2010s<sup>1</sup>**

*Waraporn Ruangsri and Kriangsak Chetpatanavanich*



**ABSTRACT**—This research examines the dynamics of cross-border trade and the lives of the traders in the northwest part of Thailand between the 1950s and 2010s, focusing on Mae Hong Son, a border province close to Burma. Since the 18th century, the ethnic Tai traders transported commodities by pack-saddle on trade routes cutting across northern Thailand, Shan state, and the south of Burma. Under the process of nation-building throughout the 20th century and especially the centralization of the economy, their trading activities eventually came to a halt. The article explores three main points. First, it highlights the impact of the economic reform of border trades on the trader's lived experiences through an exploration of the remaining traders' collective memories.<sup>2</sup> Second, memories of cross-border trade are interconnected with socio-cultural relations along the border between Thailand and Myanmar, and the research argues that memories of cultural ties and the historical turning point mentioned above are crucial for any understanding of cross-border trade in the modern era. Finally, the period under study coincides with what is commonly called the modernization era, which is often associated with free trade policies. The article highlights how cross-border trading in northwestern Thailand in this era became a bone of contention between local traders and new entrepreneurs. Local traders know well the natural routes with informal border stations while the new entrepreneurs have official support from both government and non-government agencies. This article contributes to an understanding of cross-border trade in a transnational context by supplementing economic history with social history.

## Contributors

**Hakim Pongtigor** holds a Bachelor Degree in Political Science. Since graduation, he has been a committee member of the Board of Strategic Direction, and head of the Political Capacity Development, Steering Committee, Patani, supported by the European Union. He has participated in projects to support International Humanitarian Law in Patani. He is now pursuing a master degree in Human and Social Development at Chulalongkorn University. His interests are in human and social development, International Humanitarian Law, and studies of peace and conflict.

**Kriangsak Chetpatanavanich** is an associate professor at the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University. He received his PhD in Social Sciences from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University in 2007. His most recent publication is “The creation of new culture and the historical plays of Luang Wajitwatkarn: The structure of feeling and militarist nationalist memory under the People’s Party military wing” in *Journal of Social Sciences*, Naresuan University.

**Pitch Piyapramote** obtained BSc in psychology from Chulalongkorn University. He has previously worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Rescue Committee. He is currently working with the United Nations Office for Project Services.

**Supaphan Tangtrongpairoj** is a lecturer and researcher in ASEAN studies at the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University. She is currently a PhD candidate in Development Education at Chulalongkorn University. Her recent research focuses on security cooperation in ASEAN and on China’s soft power in Southeast Asia.

**Suppawit Kaewkhunok** is currently a Researcher at the Thailand Political Database Research Centre. He holds an MA in International

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Relations and Area Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India (2018) and a BA in Public Administration from Thammasat University, Thailand (2016). His research interest spans energy and environmental issues, Himalayan countries, global governance, and South Asian Studies. His most recent publication is “The Commodification of Culture: Bhutan’s Tourism in Globalisation Context” (in *Thammasat Review*, 2018).

**Thanayod Lopattananont** is a research fellow at the Multicultural Studies and Social Innovation Center, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University. Most of his research concerns socio-cultural issues, but he takes a deep interest in geo-political interactions as exemplified by the case of China and the rest of the world. Another work, exploring China’s Belt and Road Initiative in the eyes of ASEAN, will be published in Thai in *Journal of Asian Review*.

**Unchalee Srichomphu** obtained a BE in Non-Formal Education from Chulalongkorn University. She has worked with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Bangkok Refugee Center. She is currently a ChildSafe Project Assistant in Friends-International Thailand and a M. student in Human and Social Development at Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University. Her thesis focuses on the guidelines for educational quality development for migrant children in the Thai-Myanmar Border Well-being Development Center, Ranong province.

**Waraporn Ruangsri** is a lecturer at the Department of History, Chiang Mai University, Thailand. She obtained a doctoral degree in history from Chulalongkorn University in 2013, and shortly after published a book based on the thesis entitled *Caravan and Merchants: The Modern State in Northern Thailand and Mainland Southeast Asia* (Asian Study Center Press, Chiang Mai University). Her research area cover economic and social history, micro history, and Lanna and Southeast Asia studies.

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