



Millennia Institute

2025 PU3 H2 History Paper 2 Preliminary Examinations Answer Scheme

Section A: SBCS - ASEAN AND EXTERNAL POWERS

Question 1a: Compare and contrast Sources A and B as evidence of ASEAN's inability to resolve regional conflicts.

Marking Rubric

L4 (7-8 marks): A well-developed answer that provides a balanced comparison and contrast. It uses sources effectively to support both similarities and differences. The answer moves beyond simple description to analyze the evidence, considering the nature and tone of the sources (e.g., satire vs. academic prose).

L5 (9-10 marks): An excellent and perceptive response. It offers a sophisticated synthesis of the sources, recognizing implicit messages and subtext. The evaluation of the sources' nature, purpose, and origin is precise and fully integrated into the argument. It demonstrates a high level of analytical skill.

Similarities:

Inability to Act: Both sources agree that ASEAN is an ineffective body when it comes to resolving conflicts. Source A depicts ASEAN leaders as passive bystanders, sitting on a bench with no role in the "tug-of-war" for the South China Sea. Source B explicitly states that ASEAN is a "conflict resolution organization without any conflict resolution mechanism."

External Power Dominance: Both sources attribute this ineffectiveness to the overshadowing influence of external powers. Source A's cartoon makes this point visually, showing the US and China as the sole actors in the dispute, while ASEAN is a mere spectator. Source B reinforces this by stating that ASEAN's apparent effectiveness was a facade, as it only "appeared effective because its actions coincided with superpower interests," and that it was merely a "convenient front" for these external actors.

Differences:

Nature and Purpose of Sources: This is a key point for a high-level response. Source A is a political cartoon, a form of public commentary and satire. Its purpose is to critique and ridicule ASEAN's inaction on a contemporary issue (the 2014 South China Sea dispute). Its evidence is symbolic and highly subjective. Source B is an excerpt from a 2007 academic text, a piece of scholarly analysis. Its purpose is to provide a reasoned, historical critique of the "ASEAN Way" using a specific historical case study, the Cambodian conflict. Its evidence is presented as a well-reasoned, expert opinion.

Specificity and Scope: Source A focuses specifically on the South China Sea issue. Source B, while referencing the Cambodian conflict, offers a broader, more general critique of ASEAN's fundamental methods and the nature of the "ASEAN Way" itself.

Explanation for Inability: Source B provides a more in-depth explanation for ASEAN's weakness, identifying two key internal flaws: the lack of a formal "conflict resolution mechanism" and the diplomatic practice of "ignoring" underlying tensions. Source A's cartoon, while powerful, simply presents the symptom (passivity) without explaining the root cause in detail.

Synthesis and Evaluation: A top-level answer will move beyond a simple list of points to evaluate the sources. It might argue that while both sources reach the same conclusion about ASEAN's weakness, Source B provides a more credible and analytical explanation from a scholarly perspective. Source A, being a cartoon, is valuable for capturing a public sentiment and the perceived reality of external power dominance in a specific moment but lacks the detailed analysis of Source B.

Question 1b: To what extent have external powers hindered, rather than helped, ASEAN's pursuit of regional unity and stability?

Marking Rubric

L4 (20-24 marks): A sustained and well-balanced argument which uses a good range of sources to support both sides of the "hindered vs. helped" debate. The answer demonstrates an ability to link and synthesize sources to build a coherent case. The evaluation is explicit, and the final judgment is well-reasoned and nuanced.

L5 (25-30 marks): An excellent and evaluative answer that addresses the question with precision. The argument is sophisticated, with sources being used to corroborate, contradict, and challenge one another. The final judgment is perceptive, acknowledging the complex and often paradoxical role of external powers. It shows an excellent command of the sources and the historical context.

Content Points

Argument 1: External powers have HINDERED ASEAN's pursuit of unity and stability.

Source A: The cartoon directly shows how external powers create instability and undermine ASEAN. By engaging in a geopolitical tug-of-war over the South China Sea, the US and China create a conflict that ASEAN is powerless to influence. This rivalry hinders regional unity by forcing member states to align with one side or the other.

Source B: This source presents the most damaging critique. It argues that external powers have exploited ASEAN. By using the organization as a "convenient front" and by solving regional problems bilaterally (e.g., China and USSR in Cambodia), they demonstrate ASEAN's irrelevance and undermine its claim to be a regional leader. This dependence on external actors hinders ASEAN's autonomy and self-determination.

Source C: China's actions at Mischief Reef are a clear example of hindrance. Its "quiet, but apparently determined, advance" into the South China Sea creates immediate instability and causes alarm across the region. The potential for a Sino/Filipino military confrontation, which would inevitably draw in the US under its defense treaty, illustrates how external power behavior can escalate a regional dispute into a major international conflict.

Source F: This 1969 Soviet source provides an ideological critique. It argues that ASEAN is hindered from the start because it is an "imperialist" alliance tied to Western powers. It claims that a regional body can only succeed by resisting external influence, and since ASEAN fails to do this, it is "doomed to fail." This perspective suggests that Western influence is inherently divisive and detrimental to regional stability.

Argument 2: External powers have HELPED ASEAN's pursuit of unity and stability.

Source E: This source offers a powerful counterargument. Despite its public commitment to neutrality (ZOPFAN), ASEAN states have "regularly endorsed, publicly or privately, the continued presence of US forces." This reveals a strategic reality: the presence of an external power is seen as a security guarantor. By providing a deterrent against potential threats and a strategic balance, external powers can help to maintain regional stability.

Source D: This source highlights the constructive, non-military role of external powers. It details China's contribution of US\$5 million to an ASEAN fund and its willingness to explore a Free Trade Area. Such economic cooperation helps to build a foundation of shared prosperity and mutual benefit, which in turn fosters regional unity and stability. The source demonstrates a positive, forward-looking relationship.

Source B (as a counterargument to itself): While primarily a critique, this source contains a kernel of a positive point. It notes that ASEAN "appeared effective only because its actions coincided with superpower interests." This suggests that when external powers' interests align with ASEAN's, they can provide the necessary political and military muscle to achieve a desired outcome. For example, the US and China's interest in containing Soviet influence in Cambodia might have indirectly helped to stabilize the region.

Source C (as a counterargument to itself): While China's actions are a hindrance, the source also shows that the US-Philippines Defense Treaty acts as a stabilizing factor. The fact that a military confrontation could affect "vital, US security and economic interests" suggests that the US will act as a check on Chinese aggression, thereby preventing a major conflict.

Final Judgment and Synthesis

A high-level answer will conclude that the relationship between external powers and ASEAN is complex and ambivalent. While it is clear that external powers have hindered regional unity by using the area for geopolitical competition, undermining ASEAN's autonomy, and engaging in unilateral actions (A, B, C, F), they have also been a source of significant help. This assistance has come in the form of security guarantees (E) and vital economic partnerships (D), which are essential for the region's prosperity and stability. The verdict is not one-sided; the extent to which external powers have hindered or helped has varied over time, depending on their specific actions and the particular interests of the ASEAN member states.

Question 2: How accurate is it to assert that independent Southeast Asian governments were innately authoritarian until 2000?

Marking Rubric

L1 (0-6 marks): A largely descriptive and superficial response. It may define authoritarianism but fails to apply it with specific, relevant examples. The answer is often one-sided or lacks clear structure. Fails to address the word "innately."

L2 (7-12 marks): A better response that provides some relevant examples from one or two countries. It shows a basic understanding of authoritarian rule but lacks balance. The argument is simple, and the conclusion is a restatement of the introduction.

L3 (13-18 marks): A competent and balanced response. It presents arguments for and against the assertion, supported by relevant examples from at least three countries. The analysis is sound but may lack depth or a sophisticated engagement with the term "innate." The conclusion is adequate but could be more nuanced.

L4 (19-24 marks): A well-developed and analytical response. It provides a sustained and balanced argument, using a range of detailed examples from at least three countries. It explicitly engages with the term "innately" and argues for or against its validity. The evaluation is explicit, and the conclusion is a clear, well-reasoned judgment.

L5 (25-30 marks): An excellent and perceptive response. It offers a sophisticated, nuanced argument that fully assesses the accuracy of the assertion. It uses a wide range of specific and well-chosen examples to demonstrate the complexity of political systems in the region. It is able to deconstruct the term "innate" and place the rise of authoritarianism within its historical and post-colonial context. The conclusion is a strong, compelling judgment.

Thesis/Argument

The assertion that independent Southeast Asian governments were innately authoritarian until 2000 is largely inaccurate. While many states adopted authoritarian forms of rule, this was a pragmatic response to specific challenges of the post-colonial era—such as political instability, economic underdevelopment, and ethnic

tensions—rather than an inherent, or innate, quality. Furthermore, the region displayed a range of political models, including periods of genuine democracy and successful transitions away from authoritarianism by the end of the century.

Argument for the Assertion (Accuracy):

Political Instability: The fragility of newly independent states often led to strongman rule. Leaders justified authoritarianism as a necessity for maintaining order and preventing national collapse.

Eg: Indonesia: Suharto's New Order (1966-1998) was an exemplary "developmental authoritarian" state. He seized power after the 1965 coup, citing the need for stability and order following the chaos of the Sukarno era. The military played a dominant role, and the regime systematically suppressed dissent.

Eg: Philippines: Ferdinand Marcos's declaration of martial law in 1972 was justified by the threat of communist insurgency and political chaos. He dismantled democratic institutions and ruled as a dictator until the People Power Revolution of 1986.

The "Developmental State" Model: The belief that rapid economic growth required political stability and strong state control led many leaders to sacrifice political freedoms for economic prosperity.

Eg: Singapore: Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP sg consistently argued that their unique circumstances as a small, multiracial city-state necessitated a highly controlled political environment. They suppressed opposition, restricted media freedom, and maintained a tight grip on power to ensure social harmony and economic progress.

Legacy of Colonialism: The centralized administrative structures and lack of democratic traditions left by colonial powers arguably made the shift to authoritarianism more likely.

Eg: Burma (Myanmar): The military junta, which seized power in 1962, rejected Western-style democracy as unsuitable for the country's diverse ethnic composition. It ruled with an iron fist, leading to decades of isolation and economic stagnation.

Argument Against the Assertion (Inaccuracy):

Democratic Traditions and Resistance: The assertion ignores periods of genuine democracy and the popular resistance to authoritarianism. The term "innate" is therefore misleading.

Eg: Philippines: The country had a functioning, albeit flawed, democratic system with a free press and regular elections from 1946 until 1972. The 1986 People Power Revolution demonstrated that democratic aspirations were deeply rooted and could successfully topple a dictator.

Eg: Malaysia: The country maintained a parliamentary democracy with a multi-party system and regular elections since independence in 1957. While the Barisan Nasional coalition dominated, a viable opposition existed and challenged the government at both federal and state levels.

Democratic Transitions: The end of the 20th century saw significant democratic transitions, demonstrating that authoritarianism was not a permanent or "innate" state.

Eg: Indonesia: The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-98 acted as a catalyst for political change. Mass protests led to the resignation of Suharto in 1998, paving the way for a rapid and successful transition to democracy. This demonstrated that authoritarianism was a temporary, albeit long-standing, political system.

Eg: Thailand: The country's history has been a cycle of military coups and attempts at democracy. The 1997 constitution, drafted in the wake of the financial crisis, was a significant step toward a more democratic system.

Synthesis and Evaluation:

A high-level answer will conclude that the assertion is an oversimplification. While authoritarianism was a dominant feature of the region's political landscape, it was not an innate quality. Instead, it was a contingent political choice made by leaders to address specific, often severe, post-colonial challenges. The existence of democratic traditions in some countries (Philippines, Malaysia) and the successful transitions in others (Indonesia) by the end of the period proves that democratic aspirations were also a powerful force. Therefore, it is more accurate to view the period as a complex interplay between the forces of authoritarianism and democracy.

Question 3: Assess the role of language policies in influencing national unity in Southeast Asian nations between independence and 2000.

Marking Rubric

L1 (0-6 marks): A vague, descriptive answer that lists some language policies without assessing their impact on national unity. The response lacks specific examples or a clear argument.

L2 (7-12 marks): A simple and one-sided response. It may argue that language policies either helped or hindered unity, but not both. Examples are limited to one or two countries and lack detail.

L3 (13-18 marks): A competent and balanced response that addresses both the unifying and divisive roles of language policies. It uses relevant examples from at least three countries. The assessment is sound but may lack a deeper analysis of the nuances and long-term consequences.

L4 (19-24 marks): A detailed, analytical, and well-structured response. It provides a nuanced assessment, using specific, well-chosen examples from a range of countries to show the dual role of language policies. The answer is able to identify the factors that made a policy successful or unsuccessful (e.g., choice of a neutral language). The evaluation is explicit and integrated into the argument.

L5 (25-30 marks): An excellent and perceptive response. It presents a sophisticated assessment that goes beyond the obvious. It is able to demonstrate how the same policy could have both unifying and divisive effects depending on the group affected. The answer shows a deep understanding of the sociopolitical context in which these policies were implemented. The conclusion is a powerful, well-supported judgment.

Thesis/Argument

Language policies played a pivotal, yet complex and often contradictory, role in influencing national unity. While they were a powerful tool for forging a shared national identity and integrating diverse populations, their implementation often created or

exacerbated ethnic tensions, leading to a sense of marginalization and disunity among minority groups. The success of these policies depended heavily on their perceived fairness and political context.

Role in Promoting Unity:

Creating a Shared Identity: In linguistically diverse states, adopting a common national language was seen as a fundamental step towards nation-building and fostering a sense of belonging.

Eg: Indonesia: The adoption of Bahasa Indonesia ID, a lingua franca that was not the mother tongue of the dominant Javanese ethnic group, was a masterstroke. It was seen as a neutral and unifying choice that enabled communication across the archipelago's hundreds of languages and helped forge a single national identity.

Eg: Vietnam: The promotion of Vietnamese as the national language was crucial for integrating the North and South after reunification in 1975, standardizing administration and education across the country.

Administrative and Educational Integration: A common language was essential for building a cohesive civil service and a national education system, which were key tools for disseminating a shared national culture.

Eg: Malaysia: The promotion of Bahasa Malaysia was a key component of the post-1969 racial riots strategy to build a stronger national identity and bridge the gap between ethnic groups. The language became the medium of instruction in schools and the language of government.

Role in Hindering Unity:

Exacerbating Ethnic Tensions: When a national language policy was seen as a tool for cultural assimilation or majority dominance, it caused deep resentment and threatened national unity.

Eg: Malaysia: While Bahasa Malaysia promoted a national identity, the policy caused significant tension. Chinese and Tamil communities felt that their cultural heritage was being marginalized by the closure of vernacular schools. The policy was seen by some as an attempt to enforce Malay dominance and contributed to a sense of grievance among minorities.

Eg: Burma (Myanmar): The military government's aggressive policy of promoting Burmese at the expense of minority languages (e.g., Shan, Karen, Kachin) was a major cause of ethnic conflict. These groups saw the policy as a form of cultural suppression, which fueled separatist movements and civil war.

Creation of Social Division: Language policies could create new forms of social stratification, where proficiency in the national language became a prerequisite for economic and social mobility, disadvantaging minority groups.

Eg: Philippines: The promotion of Filipino (based on Tagalog) as the national language was controversial, particularly in non-Tagalog speaking regions. Many felt it favored the Tagalog-speaking elite of Luzon and marginalized other groups, creating a cultural divide.

Synthesis and Evaluation:

An excellent answer will not just list these points but will assess their relative impact. It might argue that the success of Indonesia's language policy (unifying) stands in stark contrast to the divisive outcomes in countries like Myanmar and the mixed results in Malaysia. The key to a positive outcome was the neutrality of the chosen language and the inclusivity of the implementation. Where language was used as a tool of a majority group to assert dominance, it invariably led to disunity and conflict. Where it was used as a shared, unifying tool, it was a remarkable success in nation-building.

Question 4: How far do you agree that independent Southeast Asian states prioritised economic growth at the expense of equity and domestic control of their economies?

Marking Rubric

L1 (0-6 marks): A weak, descriptive answer. It may talk about economic growth but fails to address the concepts of equity or domestic control. Lacks specific examples or a coherent argument.

L2 (7-12 marks): A simple and one-sided response. It argues either for or against the assertion but does not provide a balanced view. Examples are limited and lack detail.

L3 (13-18 marks): A competent and balanced response. It addresses all three components of the question (growth, equity, and domestic control) with relevant examples from at least three countries. The analysis is sound but may lack the depth to assess the extent of the trade-off.

L4 (19-24 marks): A detailed, analytical, and well-structured response. It provides a sustained and balanced argument, using specific examples to show how different countries navigated the trade-offs. The answer explicitly engages with the phrase "at the expense of" and offers a nuanced judgment on the extent of this trade-off.

L5 (25-30 marks): An excellent and perceptive response. It presents a sophisticated, well-supported argument that demonstrates a deep understanding of the diverse economic models in the region. It is able to show how some states were deliberate in their pursuit of equity and domestic control while others were not. The conclusion is a clear, compelling judgment on the accuracy of the assertion.

Thesis/Argument

The assertion that independent Southeast Asian states prioritized economic growth at the expense of equity and domestic control is a significant oversimplification. While some countries did embrace a "growth-at-all-costs" model, others actively sought to balance growth with social equity and the maintenance of domestic control. The degree

of this trade-off varied significantly across the region, making a blanket statement inaccurate.

Argument for the Assertion (Prioritizing Growth over Equity/Control):

Sacrifice of Equity: Many governments adopted a trickle-down economic model, where the benefits of growth were expected to eventually reach the wider population. This led to significant income disparities and social inequalities.

Eg: Philippines: Under Ferdinand Marcos, the economy was characterized by "crony capitalism." State resources and privileged contracts were directed at a small elite of business associates, leading to immense personal wealth while the majority of the population remained poor. The focus was on enriching the ruling class, not on broad-based equity.

Eg: Thailand: The military governments in the 1960s and 70s, and the subsequent civilian governments, promoted an export-oriented industrialization model that largely benefited large urban corporations and foreign investors, leading to a widening wealth gap between the urban centers and the rural poor.

Sacrifice of Domestic Control: To attract foreign capital and technology, many countries offered generous incentives to multinational corporations (MNCs), often giving them significant control over key economic sectors.

Eg: Singapore: As a city-state with limited natural resources, Singapore's economic strategy was fundamentally dependent on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This meant ceding control of key manufacturing and technology sectors to foreign MNCs. While this led to an economic miracle, it was a deliberate trade-off to achieve growth.

Eg: Malaysia: The government actively courted FDI, especially in the electronics and manufacturing sectors. This led to rapid industrialization but also meant that the country's industrial base was dominated by foreign firms, with domestic companies often playing a subordinate role.

Argument Against the Assertion (Balancing Growth, Equity, and Control):

Prioritizing Equity: Some states explicitly implemented policies to address social and economic inequality, even if it sometimes meant a slower pace of growth.

Eg: Malaysia: The New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971-1990) was a landmark policy designed to achieve social equity and restructure society after the 1969 racial riots. It used affirmative action to increase Malay and Bumiputera participation in business, education, and the civil service, demonstrating a clear commitment to social equity.

Eg: Indonesia: Despite its authoritarian nature, the Suharto regime implemented poverty reduction programs and invested in rural infrastructure in the 1970s and 80s, which led to a significant decrease in poverty and improved living standards for many.

Maintaining Domestic Control: Some states were careful to ensure they retained strategic control over key sectors, even while attracting foreign investment.

Eg: Singapore: While dependent on FDI, the government, through state-owned enterprises like Temasek Holdings and the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC), maintained control over strategic sectors such as airlines, telecommunications, and finance. This ensured that the profits and control of critical industries remained in Singaporean hands.

Eg: Indonesia: Under Suharto, the government promoted large, state-owned enterprises and fostered a class of domestic "conglomerates" that were loyal to the regime, ensuring that economic power remained in the hands of a domestic elite rather than being entirely ceded to foreign control.

Synthesis and Evaluation:

An excellent answer will conclude that the assertion is only partially accurate. It will show that the trade-off was not a universal constant. While countries like the Philippines and Thailand leaned more heavily towards prioritizing growth at the expense of equity, others, most notably Malaysia, made a conscious political decision to prioritize equity, even if it was at times controversial. Furthermore, Singapore demonstrates that a high level of foreign investment does not necessarily mean a complete loss of domestic control if the state is strategic in its management of key assets. Therefore, it is more accurate to say that independent Southeast Asian states navigated a complex relationship between growth, equity, and control, with different countries and different regimes making distinct choices.

Question 5: Assess the role of ethnic communities in contributing to the economic development of independent Southeast Asian nations.

Marking Rubric

L1 (0-6 marks): A vague, descriptive answer that lists some ethnic groups without assessing their role in economic development. The response lacks specific examples or a clear argument.

L2 (7-12 marks): A simple and one-sided response. It may only focus on the positive contributions of one group (e.g., the Chinese) without addressing the social and political consequences. Examples are limited and lack detail.

L3 (13-18 marks): A competent and balanced response that addresses both the positive contributions and the resulting tensions. It uses relevant examples from at least three countries. The analysis is sound but may not delve deeply into the nuances of government policy.

L4 (19-24 marks): A detailed, analytical, and well-structured response. It provides a nuanced assessment, using a range of specific examples to show how different ethnic groups contributed. It also explicitly analyzes how the economic prominence of these groups led to social and political tensions and subsequent government policies designed to address them.

L5 (25-30 marks): An excellent and perceptive response. It presents a sophisticated assessment that shows a deep understanding of the complex and often paradoxical role of ethnic communities. It is able to demonstrate how the very success of certain communities became a source of political fragility. The answer is well-supported with specific examples and a powerful, well-reasoned judgment.

Thesis/Argument

Ethnic communities, particularly the Chinese diaspora, played an indispensable and disproportionately significant role in the economic development of independent Southeast Asian nations. Their contributions in providing capital, entrepreneurial skills, and commercial networks were crucial. However, their economic prominence also generated deep-seated resentment and political tension among the indigenous majority, which often led to government policies that sought to redistribute wealth and power, sometimes at the expense of national unity.

Positive Role (Contributions to Economic Development):

Entrepreneurship and Capital: The Chinese diaspora filled a crucial vacuum in post-colonial economies, which often lacked a strong indigenous business class. They were highly skilled entrepreneurs who controlled much of the private sector and provided the capital for new industries.

Eg: Malaysia: The Chinese community dominated key sectors like tin mining, rubber, and later, banking and manufacturing. Figures like Robert Kuok and the founders of major banks were central to the country's economic dynamism.

Eg: Thailand: Thai Chinese families were instrumental in establishing a modern banking system and industrial enterprises. Many of Thailand's largest conglomerates (e.g., Charoen Pokphand Group) are run by ethnic Chinese families.

Commercial Networks: The Chinese diaspora maintained extensive regional and international business networks that facilitated trade and investment. These networks were vital for connecting Southeast Asian economies to global markets. These informal networks often served as the backbone of intra-regional trade, allowing for the rapid flow of goods and capital.

Other Ethnic Communities: While the Chinese are the most prominent example, other communities also played a vital role.

Indians: In countries like Malaysia and Singapore, the Indian community formed the backbone of the plantation workforce and provided a professional class of doctors, lawyers, and civil servants.

Indigenous Groups: Indigenous peoples were the backbone of the agricultural sector, providing the primary products (e.g., rice, rubber) that underpinned the national economies.

Negative Role (Challenges and Tensions):

Economic Disparity and Resentment: The concentration of wealth in the hands of a minority group created significant social and political tensions, which sometimes erupted into violence.

Eg: Indonesia: The economic dominance of the Chinese minority became a major source of resentment. This flared into targeted violence and looting during the 1998 economic crisis, where Chinese businesses and homes were attacked. The government's reliance on Chinese businessmen for economic development was often at odds with popular anti-Chinese sentiment.

Eg: Malaysia: The perceived economic imbalance between the Chinese and the indigenous Malays was a primary cause of the 1969 racial riots. The economic dominance of the Chinese became a political threat to the ruling party, which led to the creation of the NEP.

Government Policies of Restructuring and Assimilation: In response to these tensions, many governments enacted policies to curb the economic power of ethnic minorities and promote the indigenous majority.

Eg: Malaysia: The New Economic Policy (NEP) was explicitly designed to restructure society and address economic imbalance, often through affirmative action programs that favored the Bumiputera. While intended to foster unity, this policy created new forms of social friction and a sense of marginalization among minorities.

Eg: Indonesia: The Suharto regime-imposed policies of forced assimilation on the Chinese community, requiring them to adopt Indonesian names and restricting their cultural and religious practices, while still relying on their business acumen.

Synthesis and Evaluation:

A high-level answer will conclude that the role of ethnic communities was fundamentally paradoxical. Their economic contributions were undeniable and essential for the region's development. However, their success created a socio-political fragility that governments felt compelled to address. The economic drive of ethnic communities was a powerful force for growth, but the political response to their success was a constant challenge to national unity. Therefore, their role was not simply a positive one but a complex and double-edged sword that defined the political and economic landscape of the region for decades.