

# Introduction

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The penetration of capitalism into developing societies has encouraged new attempts to reconstitute state and society. How it is accomplished can have severe, even violent ramifications regarding national foundations as well as individual behaviour. Accordingly, this selection of papers aims to illustrate some of the ways in which economic development has caused conflicts.

Sheng Sixin demonstrates how the commodification of social security by the insurance industry has impelled both buyers and sellers towards extreme levels of social and individual fragmentation. The marketing efforts of insurance agents have undermined the cohesiveness of their social networks even as the commission basis of their incomes leads them to abuse their social and mental health to attain their companies' targets. Meanwhile, Joeven Castro documents that capitalism has resulted in the commodification of sex in the mass media, with grave consequences towards the well-being of all. In contrast, Saroja Dorairajoo shows how the efforts of the Thai state to incorporate marginal groups into mainstream Thai society have resulted in the rise of separatist movements. Yet, Huang Hui-Tun supplies a timely counterpoint to the foregoing by depicting the instance of culinary tourism in constituting Taiwanese identity during a period of social change.

While much of the disruption has been discerned from a culturalist perspective, the crux of such problems can often be traced to the interwoven issues of economic discrimination and cultural oppression. In the case in point of terrorism in Singapore, Noor Aisha Abdul Rahman blames the essentializing of the Malay Muslim identity for creating a chasm between the Malay Muslims and the non-Muslim population. In turn, this causes inter-group suspicion and a lack of social cohesion.

Hence, this collection of essays shows that the efforts to reconstitute state and society can have critical consequences concerning national foundations in addition to individual behaviour.

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