External Intervention and the Politics of State Formation

China, Indonesia, and Thailand, 1893–1952

This book explores ways in which foreign intervention and external rivalries can affect the institutionalisation of governance in weak states. When sufficiently competitive, foreign rivalries in a weak state can actually foster the political centralisation, territoriality, and autonomy associated with state sovereignty. This counterintuitive finding comes from studying the collective effects of foreign contestation over weak states as informed by changes in the expected opportunity cost of intervention for outside actors. When interveners associate high opportunity costs with intervention, they bolster sovereign statehood as a next best alternative to their worst fear – domination of that polity by adversaries. Sovereign statehood develops if foreign actors concurrently and consistently behave this way toward a weak state. This book evaluates that argument against three “least-likely” cases – China, Indonesia, and Thailand between the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries.

Ja Ian Chong is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the National University of Singapore. He received his PhD in politics from Princeton University in 2008 and was a 2008–2009 Research Associate with the Princeton-Harvard China and the World Program. His research has received support from the Chiang Ching-kuo International Foundation for Scholarly Exchange, the Woodrow Wilson Society of Fellows, the Bradley Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the Princeton Institute of International and Regional Studies, and the Princeton East Asian Studies Program. He has worked in the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, as well as the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies and the East Asian Institute in Singapore. He has previously taught at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. His work has appeared in Twentieth-Century China and Security Studies.
To my parents, Chong Tjee Teng and Yuan Chien,
and my wife, Grace.
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JA IAN CHONG

National University of Singapore
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Abbreviations

AH       Academia Historica, Taipei
AS       Institute of Modern History Archives, Academia Sinica, Taipei
CCP      Chinese Communist Party
FHAC     First Historical Archives of China, Beijing
KMT      Kuomintang (Guomindang); Chinese Nationalist Party
KMTPA    Party Archives, Kuomintang Party History Committee, Taipei
PKI      Partai Komunis Indonesia; Indonesian Communist Party
PNI      Partai Nasional Indonesia; Indonesian National Party
PRCFMA   PRC Foreign Ministry Archives, Beijing
SHAC     Second Historical Archives of China, Nanjing

Note: I use Hanyu Pinyin transliteration for Chinese except for names and terms where other transliteration methods are more popular. Examples include Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Ching-kuo, H.H. Kung, Hong Kong, Kaohsiung, Kuomintang, Sun Yat-sen, T.V. Soong, and Taipei.
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