ANU Southeast Asia Institute Student Research Symposium 2024

Program booklet

26-27 November

ANU Southeast Asia Institute
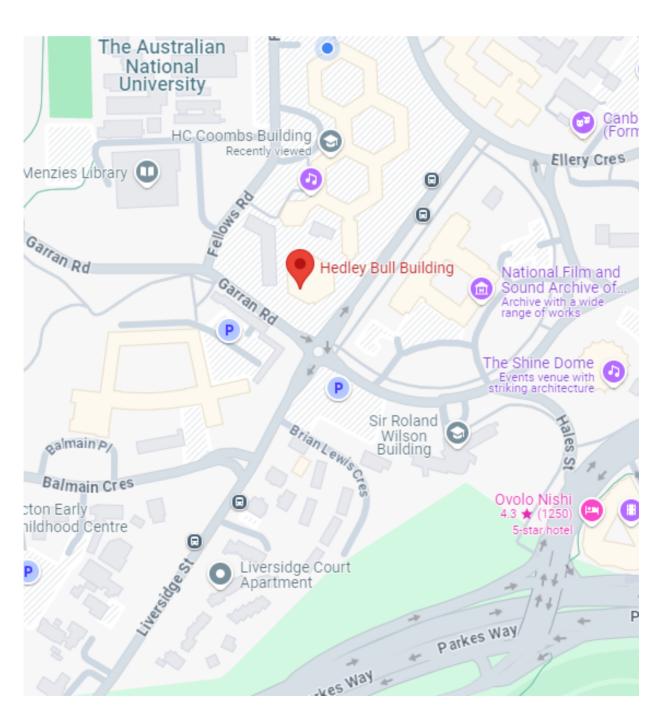
Contents

General information

Location

Hedley Bull Building #130

130 Garran Rd

Acton ACT 2601

Wifi

Username: ANUSEAI

Password: ANU2601

Getting to Canberra

If you're travelling or transiting from Sydney, it is highly recommended to take a bus for a convenient and comfortable journey. Some reliable bus services to consider include:

- Murrays: Offering regular services between Sydney and Canberra with comfortable seating and amenities.
- Greyhound Australia: Another popular option for bus travel, with multiple departures daily.

Both services provide an affordable and efficient way to reach Canberra, and the trip typically takes around 3.5 to 4 hours.

For more details on schedules and bookings, please visit their websites directly:

- [Murrays](#)
- [Greyhound Australia](#)

Getting around in Canberra

How to find your way around ANU Campus

Public transport

Recommended bus stops near the Hedley Bull Building are bus stop #3486 (Liversidge St before Ellery Cr) and bus stop #3487 (Liversidge St after Ellery Cr). You can take bus 53 to-and-from City Interchange Platform 8. You will need to purchase and top up a MyWay Travel card at Supa24, located at 2 Mort Street behind City Interchange Platform 8. We recommend topping up your card before your journey for convenience.

For real-time schedules, routes, and a journey planner, visit [Transport Canberra](#). If travelling from Canberra Airport, bus 3 connects to Civic, where you can transfer to ANU routes.

Taxi

ACT Cabs is the local taxi service in Canberra. To book a taxi, call (02) 6280 0077.

Alternatively, you can use ride-hailing services such as Uber to reach our campus.

On foot

It will take approximately 20 minutes to walk from the city centre (Civic) to Hedley Bull Building.

Dining options

Below are some popular dining options close to campus

- Rasa Rosa (5-9pm) – Indonesian. Sydney Building, Verity Lane, 50 Northbourne Avenue.
- Pappa Rich (opens daily until 9pm) – Malaysian, halal. Bunda Street.
- Asian Street Food (opens daily until 9pm) – Malaysian. EY Canberra, Building 4/121 Marcus Clarke.
- Char-Char (opens until 8pm) – Thai, halal. Kambri precinct, Australian National University.
- Urban by Asian Tiger (opens until 6pm) – Chinese. Kambri precinct. Australian National University
- Nandos (opens until 9pm) – chicken, halal. Bunda Street.
- Kebaba (opens until 8pm) – Turkish, halal. Kambri precinct, Australian National University.
- B-One (opens until 12.30am) – Korean. 16 West Row.

Program

Day 1. Tuesday 26 November 2024

We encourage all participants, including our valued presenters, to take full advantage of the symposium by attending panels, keynote sessions, workshops, and events throughout the day. Your active participation enriches the experience for everyone and fosters meaningful connections and discussions. Please see page 10 for paper titles and abstracts.

All sessions: Hedley Bull Building and HC Coombs Extension Building, ANU (Please refer to our signs for directions.)

TIME	PROGRAM
8.30am	Arrival and registration *Venue: Atrium, Hedley Bull Building*
9am	Welcome and Opening Remarks *Venue: HB1 Lecture Theatre 1, Hedley Bull Building*
9.40am	How do we study Southeast Asia as a region? The program opens with a conversation led by Hutchcroft and Goh, on the Symposium's theme of studying Southeast Asia as a region. How can we approach this diverse and complex region to conduct research with integrity and attention to detail? Do those coming from comparative politics and comparative international relations have different insights, and how can we build across and beyond these approaches and literatures? • Professor Paul Hutchcroft, Australian National University • Professor Evelyn Goh, Australian National University Chair: Nicholas Chan, Australian National University *Venue: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building*
10.30am	Morning Tea and Networking *Venue: Atrium, Hedley Bull Building*
11am	Student Panel – Parallel Sessions <u>Panel 1. Ontological Security and Digital Lives</u> • Ziran Zhao, Monash University Malaysia • Lynrose Jane Genon, Queensland University of Technology • Kriswanda Krishnapatria, University of Melbourne • Minh Son To, Nanyang Technological University • Chair and Discussant: Dr Nicholas Chan, Australian National University *Venue: Lecture Theatre 2 (HB2), Hedley Bull Building* <u>Panel 2. Governance, Society, and Resistance</u> • Len Ang, Australian National University • Indra Surya Ramadhan, Australian National University • Kay Thwe Phyo, Flinders University • Nyo Mee Oo, Flinders University • Chair: Hanh Nguyen, Australian National University

- Discussant: Hunter Marston, Australian National University

Venue: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building

Panel 3. Statecraft and Strategy

- Bowen Yao, Nanyang Technological University
- Viet Dung Trinh, University of Queensland
- Nguyen The Phuong, UNSW Canberra
- Aristyo Rizka Darmawan, Australian National University
- Binyi Yang, Nanyang Technological University
- Chair and Discussant: Minh Phuong Vu, Australian National University

Venue: Seminar Room 3 (HB3), Hedley Bull Building

12.30pm	Lunch and Networking *Venue: Atrium, Hedley Bull Building*

1.30pm Launching the ANU SEAI Original Recording Series: Southeast Asia from the Ground Up

Southeast Asia from the Ground Up: Researching the Region?" is a seven-episode series produced and directed by Emir Syailendra, featuring interviews with six scholars at different career stages, from recent PhD graduates to established experts. The series offers insights into the design, execution, and writing of research about Southeast Asia. It is the second interview series produced by the ANU SEAI (watch the first series HERE). This session will launch and preview the series, giving the audience a glimpse of what's to come.

- Chair and Producer: Emir Syailendra, Australian National University

Venue: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building

3pm	Afternoon Tea and Networking *Venue: Atrium, Hedley Bull Building*

3.15pm Student Panel – Parallel Sessions

Panel 4. History and Boundaries

- Hwee Ping Teo, RMIT University
- Angshuman Choudhury, National University of Singapore
- Lohit Roy, University of Melbourne
- Maxime Herinckx, University of Melbourne
- Lin Pu and Kevin Nielsen M. Agojo
  (Presenter: Lin Pu, Australian National University)
- Chair and Discussant: Tommy Chai, Australian National University

Venue: Institutes Boardroom, HC Coombs Extension Building

Panel 5. Religion, Culture, and Sexuality

- Lim Yun, Nanyang Technological University
- Win Pike Myo and Kanokwan Tharawan
  (Presenter: Win Pike Myo, Mahidol University)
- Dyah Kartika, Australian National University
- Chair and Discussant: Dr Eva Nisa, Australian National University

Venue: Seminar Room 3 (HB3), Hedley Bull Building

Panel 6. Dynamics of Thought, Practice, and Regionalism

- Quah Say Jye, University of Cambridge
- Van Quan Nguyen and Minh Hoang Nguyen
  (Presenter: Van Quan Nguyen, University of Queensland)
- Serena Eleonora Ford, Monash University
- Huqing Lin and Benny Teh Cheng Guan
  (Presenter: Huqing Lin, Universiti Sains Malaysia)
- Sahely Ferdous, Macquarie University
- Chair and Discussant: Emir Syailendra, Australian National University

Venue: Lecture Theatre 2 (HB2), Hedley Bull Building

4.45pm	Evening Break and Networking *Venue: Atrium, Hedley Bull Building*
5pm	Policy Keynote The ANU Southeast Asia Institute in partnership with the ASEAN-Australia Centre is pleased to invite you to a keynote address by the Secretary-General of ASEAN H.E. Dr Kao Kim Hourn as he reflects on 50 years of the ASEAN-Australia relationship. *Venue: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building*
6pm	Light Refreshment and Networking *Venue: Atrium, Hedley Bull Building*
6.40pm	END OF DAY 1

Day 2. Wednesday 27 November 2024

We encourage all participants, including our valued presenters, to take full advantage of the symposium by attending panels, keynote sessions, workshops, and events throughout the day. Your active participation enriches the experience for everyone and fosters meaningful connections and discussions. Please see page 10 for paper titles and abstracts.

All sessions: Hedley Bull Building, ANU (Please refer to our signs for directions.)

TIME	PROGRAM
9.00am	Student Panel – Parallel Sessions Panel 7. Environmentalism, Developmentalism, and Geoeconomics - Lin Pu, Shaka Y.J. Li, and Raras Cahyafitri (Presenter: Lin Pu, Australian National University) - Cahyani Widi Larasakti, University of Melbourne - Hanna Nur Afifah Yogar, Chulalongkorn University - Arrizal Anugerah Jaknanihan, Australian National University - Chair and Discussant: Professor Evelyn Goh, Australian National University *Venue: Lecture Theatre 2 (HB2), Hedley Bull Building* Panel 8. Migration and Diaspora

- Xincheng Hong, National University of Singapore
- Yongrong Du, City University of Hong Kong
- Anna Joceline Dizon Ituriaga, National Chengchi University
- Pechpoom Kasurop, Thammasat University
- Jinlong Yu, East China Normal University
- Chair: Dr Nicholas Chan, Australian National University
- Discussant: Dr Yingxin Show, Australian National University

Venue: Seminar Room 3 (HB3), Hedley Bull Building

Panel 9. Authoritarianism and Democratic Backsliding

- Prem Singh Gill, Nanyang Technological University
- Dimas Lazuardy Firdauz, Airlangga University
- Anthony Neil, London School of Economics
- Chair: Dyah Kartika, Australian National University
- Discussant: Dr Greg Raymond, Australian National University

Venue: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building

10.30am	Morning Tea and Networking
	Venue: Atrium, Hedley Bull Building

11am	Publishing Roundtable

This roundtable aims to open the "black box" of the academic publication process. It features regional experts, members of influential editorial teams, and advocacy networks. Together, they will discuss how to identify quality outlets for your research and what it takes to meet the expectations of reviewers and editors. Attendees will learn how and where Southeast Asia based research can make an impact beyond regional studies.

- Professor Meredith Weiss, University at Albany
- Dr Ian Storey, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
- Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide
- Dr Greg Raymond, Australian National University
- Professor Sango Mahanty, Australian National University
- Associate Professor Lia Kent, Australian National University
- Associate Professor Cecilia Jacob, Australian National University
- Chair: Dr Katrin Travouillon, Australian National University

Venue: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building

12.30pm	Lunch and Networking
	Venue: Atrium, Hedley Bull Building

1.30pm	Professionalisation Workshop: Preparing for the Job Market

This workshop provides aspiring Southeast Asia scholars with insights into the academic job market. Featuring a panel of scholars at different career stages, the workshop will cover key topics including navigating Australian and international markets, choosing between postdoctoral positions and tenure-track roles, and essential soft skills. Attendees will gain practical advice on enhancing their competitiveness and adapting to the changing academic landscape.

- Associate Professor Pichamon Yeophantong, Deakin University

	• Dr Eve Warburton, Australian National University • Dr Nicholas Chan, Australian National University • Dr Jarrah Sastrawan, Australian National University • Chair: Tommy Chai, Australian National University *Venue: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building*
3pm	Afternoon Tea and Networking *Venue: Atrium, Hedley Bull Building*
3.30pm	Student Roundtable: Reflections on Southeast Asian Research This session features a roundtable of student participants sharing their experiences of the symposium, as well as their personal journeys in researching, writing, and thinking about Southeast Asia and beyond. The roundtable will gather early career researchers representing diverse research traditions, methodologies, and interests to foster an inclusive dialogue. Attendees are invited to join this interactive and casual session to share their insights and experiences. • Lynrose Jane Genon, Queensland University of Technology • Viet Dung Trinh, University of Queensland • Pechpoom Kasurop, Thammasat University • Cahyani Widi Larasakti, University of Melbourne • Hwee Ping Teo, RMIT University • Chair: Quah Say Jye, University of Cambridge *Venue: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building*
4.30pm	Final Remarks and Formal Symposium Closure *Venue: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building*
5pm	END OF PROGRAM

Panels and abstracts

1. Ontological Security and Digital Lives

Beyond Root Narrative: Malaysian Chinese's Media Practices in Little Red Book

Ziran Zhao, Monash University Malaysia

Malaysian Chinese are an important part of the worldwide Chinese community, shaped by the precipitate of spatio-temporal cultural practices. With the rising stage and expansion of digital platforms in China, the identity of Malaysian Chinese is being reinterpreted as they migrate their habitat from physical space to cyberspace. On the emerging Chinese-language platform *Little Red Book*, a large number of Malaysian Chinese share their daily lives in Malaysia's cultural milieu, shaping their integration with China's cyberspace of discourse, and reintegrating the two discourse spaces into one. How do Malaysian Chinese perform themselves on Chinese platform media? How are their identities shaped and transformed in the digital space? Applying the theoretical framework of the Communication Theory of Identity, this paper conducted in-depth interviews with 12 Malaysian Chinese bloggers who were active on *Little Red Book*, supplemented by textual analysis of their posts. The findings show that *Little Red Book* has reunited the Malaysian Chinese community as a tribe with a unique identity in the Chinese cybercommunity. They also use the "fallen leaf narrative" to confirm their identity construction and resist the traditional "root narrative".

"Digital Peacebuilding": Examining Young Women Leaders' Use of Social Media to Build Peace in the Philippines

Lynrose Jane Genon, Queensland University of Technology

This research project conceptualises young women-led digital peacebuilding, demonstrating how it aligns with and differs from existing peacebuilding roadmaps, and expanding the current conceptualisation of everyday peacebuilding to encompass digital practices. It does this by examining how Muslim, Lumad (Indigenous) and Christian young women leaders, also known as tri-people youth, who are marginalised in peacebuilding processes, are using social media to build everyday peace in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Southern Philippines. Through feminist standpoint theory and intersectional feminist lens, this research elucidates how these young women navigate their diverse identities online, shaping discussions on peace and security within BARMM and extending their influence beyond the region's peace process. The project combines social media analysis with Filipino methods, such as *kwentuhan* (talkstory), and participatory design workshops grounded in *pakikipagkapwa* (treating everyone as a fellow human), to conceptualise digital peacebuilding. Preliminary findings from Phase 1 (social media analysis) reveal that: (1) social media is a generative space for young women to voice their peace agendas, which are often neglected in traditional and institutional peacebuilding roadmaps; (2) within a diverse context such as BARMM, different groups of young women hold distinct conceptions of peace and perceptions of violence and insecurity; (3) the practice of care is central to their work; and (4) their digital peacebuilding extends beyond mere technology use to encompasses unique 'platform vernaculars' (Gibbs et al., 2015). This project contributes to exploring young women's often overlooked roles in digital peacebuilding, providing new evidence for policymakers and practitioners to make more informed decisions that are inclusive of young women's needs and perspectives.

Digital Polarisation in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Study of Kaskus in Indonesia and 'Dutertards' in the Philippines

Kriswanda Krishnapatria, University of Melbourne

This paper explores the phenomenon of political polarisation in Indonesia through the lens of virtual communities, focusing on *Kaskus*, the country's largest online discussion forum. As political discourse increasingly shifts to digital platforms, this study investigates how *Kaskus* amplifies political identities and polarisation through derogatory labels like "kadrun" and "cebong." The paper employs discursive analysis to examine how digital communities contribute to entrenched opposing viewpoints by analysing user interactions during key political events, such as presidential elections. The research also draws comparisons with the Philippines, where terms like "Dutertards" are used to describe fervent supporters of Rodrigo Duterte, similarly deepening political divides on Reddit. Both labels have become polarising terms in their respective countries, used to criticise a segment of the political spectrum and entrench divisions within the country's political discourse. By situating these cases within the broader Southeast Asian context, the study highlights the role of digital platforms in shaping political discourse and the challenges they pose for democratic engagement.

Counter-Imaginaries, Ideological Residuum, and Postcolonial Ontological Security: Southeast Asia against the Ukraine and Gaza Wars

Minh Son To, Nanyang Technological University

Visible resistance from postcolonial states in response to Western mobilization on the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Gaza wars marks a fundamental contestation of Western liberal appeal and signals a resurgence of the 'Global South' imagination. Drawn from the literature on postcolonial ontological security and Gramscian hegemony, this article proposes an account of 'counter-imaginary' – a contingent imagination and counterhegemonic identification by postcolonial polities with non-Western entities to soothe postcolonial ontological insecurity. Emerging from existential questions prompted by resonant events in world politics, a 'counter-imaginary' stems from the postcolonial frustration and ambivalence towards their assimilation into Eurocentric international relations, temporarily displacing the identification with the West that undergirded postcolonial ontological insecurity. Such counter-imaginaries persist within what this article calls the 'ideological residuum'—discursive remnants of a radical politics arrested by the acceptance of the Western imaginary—of the postcolonial state. These dynamics are investigated in the cases of Vietnam-Russia relations in the Ukraine war and Malaysia-Palestine relations in the Gaza war. In both cases, conflicts abroad have created 'national questions' about their positions vis-à-vis the West, prompting counterhegemonic identification (with Russia and Palestine) despite the material risks involved. Vietnam and Malaysia's counter-imaginaries tap into their discursive reservoir of radical politics, whether ideological or religious, and manifest as powerful imaginations that resist full identification with the West. These dynamics speak to the relevance of the undertheorized postcolonial dimension in Southeast Asia's international relations.

2. Governance, Society, and Resistance

The Trajectory of Cambodia's Local Governance Officials: Pre-Reform, Reform, and Post Reform

Len Ang, Australian National University

Cambodia's local governance is the central foundation of economic and socio-political development for rural communities. Established by the French colonial administration in 1908, the commune office has been transformed by different regimes. Local governance officials, mainly the commune chief, were elected by the electorate during the colonial administration, the Sihanouk regime, and the PRK (only once in 1981) under Vietnamese advisors. In terms of their role, local officials played a central key contact in tax collection, security protection, and minimal local development tasks (under the Sihanouk regime) to establish legitimacy. They were even involved in the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge regime. After the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, the local administration conscripted people for military services and served the interests of the centralized power under the current ruling CPP. A reform program was introduced in the early 1990s, immediately after the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991. It largely targeted local governance by introducing commune elections for local councils. The reform transformed the role of the local government, which had previously conscripted people and served the ruling CPP to eliminate the Khmer Rouge resistance, into one that served the interests of the electorate for local development. This change shifted people's perspective towards the elected councils from fear and distance (during the civil war) to greater respect. Since the reform aimed to alleviate poverty and legitimise the ruling CPP's dominance in the rural political arena, the CPP restricted the elected council's access to budget and local revenue collection. This was followed by the promulgation of regulations, party nominations before local elections, and a reassertion of power control from the central level.

Regime Preferences and the Struggle for Liberal Democracy in Southeast Asia: A Conjoint Experiment Framework

Indra Surya Ramadhan, Australian National University

Many nations in Southeast Asia remain stuck in autocratic or semi-democratic (electoral democracy) regimes, and the debate continues over why this is the case. A common explanation suggests that Southeast Asian cultural values and their interpretation of democracy are misaligned with the principles of liberal democracy. However, instead of focusing solely on how people in the region perceive democracy in theoretical or cultural terms, this paper argues that it is more insightful to directly ask Southeast Asians what type of government they prefer—democracy or autocracy. To investigate this, the paper proposes using a conjoint experiment, a research method that allows for a detailed examination of individuals' regime preferences. The aim is to systematically explore how people make trade-offs between different types of government based on specific attributes, such as economic prosperity versus political freedoms. The paper's central claim is that many Southeast Asians may favour autocratic regimes because they associate these systems with better economic outcomes, which often take precedence over democratic governance in their decision-making. However, this preference is not uniform and may vary across different social and demographic factors, such as age, income, education, and more.

Crisis and Education: Voices from Myanmar's Higher Education Teachers

Kay Thwe Phyo, Flinders University

This research examines the influence of the 2021 coup on Myanmar's higher education teachers, with a specific emphasis on the multifaceted difficulties they encounter in both their professional and personal

lives. The research highlights the difficulties arising from their involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), which promotes an education system that ensures academic freedom, democratic principles, and equitable opportunity for everyone. Windschitl's four constructivist dilemmas—conceptual, pedagogical, cultural, and political—are employed as the theoretical framework, offering insights into the challenges teachers face following the 2021 military takeover. A case study methodology, including semi-structured interviews, allows for in-depth exploration of experiences of teachers who have been directly impacted by the coup. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method were utilised to identify significant themes and patterns in the data. Findings indicate that the coup has halted significant educational reforms, limiting teachers' ability to adopt new concepts and maintain academic freedom. Teachers experience oppression, displacement, and emotional distress, affecting both their professional and personal lives. Despite these difficulties, many remain remarkably determined, establishing alternative educational initiatives and networks to ensure the continuity of education and continuing to advocate for an education system based on equal rights and international collaboration. However, they lack a concrete plan for reconstructing the system post-conflict. This research provides unique insights into the impact of violence and conflict on education and offers guidance for forthcoming efforts in supporting teachers and enhancing educational achievements after the coup in Myanmar's higher education sector post-coup.

How Do the Vulnerable Groups in Myanmar Use Non-Violent Tactics Especially via Digital Media Platforms to Resist Military Forces after the 2021 Coup, and What Role Does This Community Solidarity Play in Sustaining the Resistance Movement?

Nyo Mee Oo, Flinders University

The study explores two key points: how vulnerable groups in Myanmar utilise non-violent tactics to resist military forces following the 2021 coup, and the role of community solidarity in sustaining the resistance movement among communities in Myanmar. Various forms of nonviolent resistance, such as peaceful protests, civil disobedience movements, and digital activism, are analysed to shed light on the dynamics and participatory nature of these strategies. The paper highlights the significance of mass media, particularly social media—Facebook—in creating in person and/or online resistance campaign. The study examines the unique hybrid tactics utilised by Myanmar's diverse communities, especially women and marginalised groups. For instance, the *longyi* campaign—a feminist approach that non-violently opposes soldiers—is one example. The discussion emphasises how non-violent movements promoting community solidarity and modern revolution methods can effectively impact society, influencing public opinion and political landscapes, including freedom of expression under oppressive military regimes. The research contributes to a broader understanding of the evolution of civil resistance movements in Myanmar by comparing the 1988 and 2021 movements against the Burmese military, primarily led by students. It also highlights their capacity to foster democratic or federal transitions and social change in dictatorial political settings.

3. Statecraft and Strategy

The Rise of Hedging in Southeast Asia: A Historical Institutional Review

Bowen Yao, Nanyang Technological University

Hedging has garnered significant policy and academic interest in the post-Cold War era, particularly in Southeast Asia. Existing literature predominantly attributes the rise of hedging in Southeast Asia to security concerns arising from great power rivalry and economic dependence on China. However, these explanations fall short of accounting for the exclusive prevalence of hedging in this region. This article addresses this gap by employing historical institutionalism, focusing on the concepts of path dependency and critical junctures, to explain why hedging is particularly favoured in Southeast Asia. By examining several Southeast Asian countries during two critical periods—the colonial period and the Cold War—this study reveals how historical legacies and experiences of geopolitical rivalry have profoundly shaped the region's contemporary strategic preferences. The analysis concludes that the colonial legacy instilled a deep emphasis on sovereignty and resistance to foreign control, while Cold War dynamics fostered a culture of strategic autonomy through hedging. This article provides an alternative explanation for the origin and rise of hedging in Southeast Asia, highlighting the enduring influence of historical processes on current foreign policy strategies.

Securitization versus Non-Securitization: Vietnam's Different Responses to Sino-centric Security Challenges

Viet Dung Trinh, University of Queensland

Facing Chinese "illiberal hegemony," Vietnam has responded differently to Sino-centric security issues related to maritime security and economic coercion. Applying securitisation theory from the Copenhagen School, this paper clarifies different modes of Vietnam's securitisation against these two China-linked security challenges. It focuses on analysing securitising language and urgent measures adopted by the Vietnamese government to protect the country's national interests and offset the adverse impacts posed by China on maritime security and economic development, as well as public reactions to the government's actions. The paper argues that Vietnam has a strong securitisation process toward China-linked threats to maritime security but exhibits vague problem framing and late, weak, and inconsistent responses to Chinese economic coercion. This is associated with Vietnam's "cooperation and struggle" policy in its relationship with China. The paper also briefly compares how other Southeast Asian states have securitised Sino-centric security issues in maritime security and economic coercion, contributing to an understanding of the hybridity and diversity in the region, partly shaped by their diverging securitisation practices against similar emerging threats. The author indicates that securitisation theory remains applicable in an authoritarian country like Vietnam, as securitisation is a means through which the Vietnamese government maintains its power and legitimacy and cements the people's confidence in its leadership. Moreover, securitisation theory is a helpful theoretical framework to compare and contrast how ASEAN states politicise Chinese influence and to understand internal differences between them, offering an alternative to concepts like hedging, bandwagoning, and balancing.

Vietnam's Evolving Strategic Space: A Strong Maritime-Oriented Continental Country in the 21st Century?

Nguyen The Phuong, UNSW Canberra

In Vietnam's strategic thinking, the concept of "strategic space" encompasses the physical domain through which the Vietnamese nation-state can ensure its survival, development, and future prosperity. This paper addresses the internal and external rationale behind Vietnam's push to expand its "strategic space" into the South China Sea after the Cold War and the consequential impact on Hanoi's defence and security mindset. Since its inception in 1945, Vietnam's two most essential strategic missions – building and defending the young communist state – were almost limited to its continental domain, defined as a "strategic space" involving three of its immediate neighbours: China, Laos, and Cambodia. Until the fall of communism in 1991, Vietnam was embroiled in a series of continental wars and conflicts that deeply shaped its strategic orientation toward the land, mostly to serve the defense pillar of its grand strategy. The economic and social crises of the 1980s, the 1988 Johnson South Reef skirmish, and the dissolution of the communist bloc in the early 1990s taught the Vietnamese leadership several critical lessions about alliance, pragmatism, and the benefits of opening its economy. Since the 1990s, Vietnam has been pushing hard to extend its living space toward the eastern maritime domain to secure a better springboard for prosperity in the maritime century ahead and to reinforce the legitimacy of the ruling party.

The Lawyers of the Sea: How Identity, Coalitions and Diplomacy Redefine Indonesia's Archipelago

Aristyo Rizka Darmawan, Australian National University

For many years, scholars of international law and international relations have debated the nature of states' compliance with international law. One major argument is that compliance with international law is highly dependent on domestic actors. The more robust the domestic coalitions supporting compliance with international law, the more likely compliance is to materialise in practice. This theory is also applicable to understand state compliance with the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The convention contains considerable ambiguity in its text, which contributes to issues of noncompliance. Indonesia is often considered a major beneficiary of UNCLOS because it was recognized as the world's first archipelagic state under the convention. However, Indonesia's practice of international law is frequently regarded as inconsistent with UNCLOS. This research attempts to provide a socio-legal analysis of Indonesia's compliance with UNCLOS through the interpretation and interaction of its domestic institutions. In doing so, this research will use a social science methodology to understand how actors involved in international law policy interpret and implement international law. This research does not aim merely to understand the doctrinal obligations under UNCLOS or the "law-in-books"; rather, it seeks to understand the human and political dimension of the actors who have the authority to enforce UNCLOS in a domestic setting, or "law-in-action." This research, therefore, aims to fill the gap in our understanding of how Indonesia's compliance with, and interpretations of, UNCLOS are shaped by the perspectives and practices of domestic policy actors.

Data Sovereignty in the Digital Age: ASEAN's Strategic Integration of Smart City Technologies

Binyi Yang, Nanyang Technological University

What are the implications of the rise of data politics and emerging technologies for ASEAN politics? How do small states in Southeast Asia navigate the complex landscape of global technological competition while safeguarding their data sovereignty? In an era where smart city technologies are rapidly transforming urban governance, can ASEAN countries maintain autonomy over their data flows, or are they at risk of ceding control to external powers? This research investigates these critical questions, exploring how Southeast Asian states strategically integrate foreign smart city technologies within their data governance frameworks. Focusing on countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore, the study challenges the conventional narrative of passive adaptation to external influences. Instead, it posits that these states are actively shaping their governance models to balance the benefits of technological advancement with the imperatives of data sovereignty. By embedding external technologies within their own regulatory frameworks, ASEAN countries are not only responding to global trends but also reinforcing their strategic autonomy in the digital age. This analysis contributes to the broader discourse on data sovereignty and technological adaptation, offering a nuanced understanding of how Southeast Asian states exercise agency in a multipolar world. The research underscores the strategic significance of smart city initiatives as tools for asserting sovereignty, revealing the complex interplay between global technological pressures and regional governance imperatives.

4. History and Boundaries

Conceptualising the Use of Historical Multi-Lingual Sources in Southeast Asia

Hwee Ping Teo, RMIT University

Before there were nation-states in present-day Southeast Asia, there existed distinct language and cultural groups. This paper addresses three major challenges historians face in using multi-lingual sources created in Southeast Asia. A problem unique to Southeast Asia is that historical sources were created in pre-colonial and colonial times. Consequently, historical sources were produced for different reasons, and the languages used varied between the two periods. For instance, the present concept of history as a discipline is steeped in the European scientific tradition and involves (re)interpreting the past, whereas traditional linguistic and codified oral conventions in pre-colonial Malaya dictated that history be written for the court or in the form of myths. Second, the historian encounters varying interpretations of the same event among different linguistic groups. For example, the reported number of victims in Japanese wartime atrocities varies by language source. To elicit meaning from these contradictory sources, the historian studies and compares the social institutions and material practices unique to each language group. By decreasing dependence on English colonial records and embracing multi-lingual sources, the historian can transform the understanding of existing knowledge. Finally, the historian grapples with reconciling different translations of the same source. An example is the *Sejarah Melayu*. Historians have offered a revisionist account in response to different translations, showing that the past is open to infinite reinterpretation. In conclusion, this paper highlights how historians read multi-lingual Southeast Asian sources created in the pre-colonial and colonial eras and compare varying accounts and translations of the same event.

Borderlands as Scholarly Bridges: Can Myanmar's Borders Show Us an "Asian Way" of Doing Collaborative Research?

Angshuman Choudhury, National University of Singapore

Thinking about "regional research" in Southeast Asia has never been easy, partly because of entrenched geographical dogmas. This paper proposes a new framework of collaborative borderlands research as a way to break free from these dogmas and foster greater engagement between country-specific scholars in Southeast Asia. It does so by taking Myanmar's eastern (Thailand) and western (India) borderlands as a single case study within the remit of what may be called "western Southeast Asia." This approach also allows the paper to make the argument that "regional research" in Southeast Asia can only come of age by challenging the standard geographical imaginations of the region. The paper situates itself within the broad domain of borderlands research, as these spaces represent the extraordinary pluralism and porosity of Southeast Asian lifeworlds. Consequently, they may be framed as sites where genuine cross-fertilisation, not just between country-specific research but also between scholarly and non-scholarly actors, may be possible. The paper also explores the methodological, conceptual and ethical complications of engaging in such research. More importantly, it proposes ways to collectively think about methodological intersubjectivities as a way to build synergy between scholars across the region. The choice of the case study is salient due to the acute lack of scholarly exchanges between India, Myanmar, and Thailand, despite the abundance of common conceptual and empirical concerns. The big question that the paper attempts to answer is: can Southeast Asian borders show us an "Asian way" of doing collaborative research?

Constitutive Others: Power, Hierarchy and the Census in British Burma

Lohit Roy, University of Melbourne

Fictive constitutive formulations involved in the creation of ethnic fissures in modern Burma have been regularly acknowledged. Burma's status as an appendage to British colonial rule in India allows a shared historical experience of the reframing of hierarchies along racialist lines using the map, census, and museum to construct regulatable, reconstituted worlds against which subaltern subjects push back and acquiesce in their own ways. The refusal of Rohingya identity exists within this paradigm, as groups manoeuvre to either justify, legitimate or demand rights within the confines of colonial misinterpellation or assent to their symbolic effacement. The discourse of caste and race allows groups to be enmeshed in the process of reification through the production of knowledge in many ways that are particular to the context of British India but conforming to local precepts for measuring cultural differences, usually language and the Buddhist faith. The project of national rejuvenation through the search for new mythical horizons bleeds into the othering of South Asian and Muslim subjects, as well as indigenous identity formations. Labour is transformed from that of pre-colonial Burma—characterised by corvee systems tied to religious lands beholden to the Church or to temporal functionaries—replaced by fluid systems of migration and settlement of coolie labourers, resulting in disaffection and the solidification of anti-Muslim tendencies in the province of Arakan. This paper emphasises the enduring impact of these linkages, which continue to shape ethnic and political dynamics in contemporary Burma.

Geographic and Conceptual Boundaries: Illiberal Peace-Building in Southeast Asia and Beyond

Maxime Herinckx, University of Melbourne

Situated at the geographic and conceptual intersection of South Asia and Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka is an ideal starting point to interrogate the linkages between case studies and regional comparative approaches. Analysing a country at the conceptual boundary of Southeast Asia may prove particularly illuminating as geopolitical shifts suggest that the wider "Indo-Pacific" may potentially supplant "the Middle East" as the epistemological category *du jour* amongst Western policymakers. Sri Lanka shares two notable similarities with many Southeast Asian states that extend beyond the cultural, ecological, and religious spheres. The first is the prevalence of domestically driven, so-called "illiberal peace-building" in response to interstate conflict, which has seen fairly durable peace emerge in countries ranging from Indonesia and Thailand to Sri Lanka, despite a generalised failure to address the underlying causes of the various conflicts. The relative stability of the "illiberal peace" in Sri Lanka, even in the face of the almost unprecedented economic crisis the country began experiencing in 2019, is a testament to the durability of such peace. The second similarity is the region's emergence as a zone of great power politics and contestation between the US, China, and India, with the corresponding external pressures this entails for countries "caught in the middle." Drawing on Elman and Sartori's groundbreaking work, my comparative analysis of "illiberal peace-building" in the region, and its evolution in response to external pressures, highlights the potential value of a "polythetic" approach to grouping together countries in the wider region, as opposed to the predominant "monothetic" approach.

How Does Populist Foreign Policy Reinforce Illiberal Practices? Philippine Law Enforcement Cooperation with China under Duterte

Lin Pu, Australian National University
Kevin Nielsen M. Agojo, City University of Hong Kong

What is the relationship between foreign policy and populism? How do populist leaders (mis)appropriate the state's foreign policy to conform to their popular (but contentious) domestic practices? Philippine foreign relations and civil society experienced drastic changes during Rodrigo Duterte's presidency (2016-2022) due to an intense rapprochement with China and populist governance domestically. Against the backdrop of closer ties to Beijing under Duterte's foreign policy, resulting from his populist style of governance, law enforcement cooperation between Chinese authorities and the Philippine National Police (PNP) was increasingly enhanced. This cooperation included funding and training provided by China for police forces in the Philippines. This paper aims to use the law enforcement cooperation between China and the Philippines under Duterte as a case study to examine how populist foreign policy shaped domestic affairs, specifically during his violent populist regime. In addition, we include the case of Jokowi and the discussion of the global proliferation of Chinese police training as supporting evidence in a strategy of triangulation to underpin the main arguments of our study. Drawing from rigorous fieldwork in the Philippines and data on police cooperation between China/US and foreign countries, it is argued that redirecting foreign policy can provide practical assistance for populist leaders to implement populist mobilisation campaigns facilitated by external support from a new patron. In particular, Chinese police training has not only enhanced the PNP's organisational capabilities but also its performative policing strategies, both of which have been crucial in the enactment of the state-sanctioned war on illegal drugs. Furthermore, the research findings suggest that populist leaders can purposely steer foreign relations and international cooperation to reinforce their illiberal practices domestically.

5. Religion, Culture, and Sexuality

The Politics of Sugar Dating in Singapore: Exploring (Post)feminist Possibilities of the Sexual Subject

Lim Yun, Nanyang Technological University

The newfound visibility of sugar dating in recent years has provoked enduring social norms surrounding female sexuality and intimacy, while also reflecting broader shifts in labour, class, and gender across Southeast Asia. By focusing on the political economy of bodily performances and subjectivities, this paper explores sugar dating as a way of speaking to the evolution of labour, class, gender, and sexuality by centring the voices of women who participate in this form of labour in Singapore. Contrary to the well-rehearsed discourse of intimacy as a private affair, this paper foregrounds the politics of the social by attending to the manners by which sexual agency interacts with neoliberalism and a distinctive Singaporean (post)feminism. This has engendered the formation of a self-responsible, disciplined, autonomous, female entrepreneurial subject. I thus make a case for the conceptual mapping of sugar dating as a mode of neoliberal, middle-class sex work, charting the conditions of possibility by which women can articulate new relational possibilities of labour. By locating sugaring on a continuum and a broader regional context, I highlight the tension that binds sugar babies between an oppressive and emancipatory sexual politics, drawing out the ambiguity, multidimensionality, temporality, and contradiction within this form of 'middling'. In so doing, this research endeavours to speak to wider discourses of (post)feminisms and chart the pluralising of both female sexual and professional subjecthood, centring the in-betweenness that illuminates more than it obscures.

Healthcare Gaps for Myanmar Political Migrants: Regional Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health in Mae Sot

Win Pike Myo, Mahidol University
Kanokwan Tharawan, Mahidol University

This study examines healthcare gaps faced by Myanmar political migrants, focusing on barriers and facilitators to accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in Mae Sot, Thailand. In this study, political migrants are individuals who fled Myanmar following the military coup in 2021. They include activists, former government employees, and others who face political persecution. The research provides a regional perspective on cross-border healthcare challenges for Southeast Asian migrants. The study is based on qualitative interviews with 31 Myanmar political migrants and critical informants in Mae Sot, Thailand. In this study, the researchers found multifaceted barriers, such as concerns about their legal status, language difficulties, economic constraints, and cultural stigma. These challenges are contextualised within the broader framework of regional migration patterns and healthcare systems along the Thailand-Myanmar border. The study identifies community networks, NGO support, and specific health programs as critical facilitators. This evidence demonstrates the crucial role of non-state actors in addressing healthcare gaps for vulnerable migrant populations. This research provides insights into how local experiences in Mae Sot can inform broader theories on migration, healthcare access, and human security in Southeast Asia. The findings underscore the need for regionally informed approaches to migrant healthcare that account for the complex interplay between national policies, transnational movements, and local realities. They emphasise the need for comprehensive, culturally sensitive SRH services for women and LGBTIQ+ migrants, particularly those experiencing gender-specific barriers. This research bridges the gap between country-specific empirical research and regional analysis to provide policymakers and healthcare providers with valuable insights for improving access to SRH for political migrants in Southeast Asian border regions.

Indonesia's Young Anti-Feminists?: Capturing the Socially Conservative Faction within The Student Movements

Dyah Kartika, Australian National University

Historically, Indonesian student movements have been major actors in moments of progressive political change. However, a deeper look at the 2019-2021 student protests reveals a layer of conservatism within the student movement that has been under-examined both by scholars and the media. Who are the socially conservative student groups? How did conflicts among student groups lead the social conservatives to oppose the sexual violence bill and regulation of sexual violence on campuses? How did proponents of these regulations react? How did conflicts over these issues affect the wider student movement? I argue that students' opposition to the Sexual Violence Regulations was part of a broader and systematic campaign of political mobilisation by the Islamist political party and broader Islamist alliances, especially approaching the 2019 election. The party used its extensive network and dominance within student executive councils (BEMs) across Indonesia to propagate a moral threat narrative, underscoring 'the danger' posed by the bill (and feminism more broadly) to gain sympathy and, thus, votes from members of Indonesia's traditional society. The debate on sexual violence regulations further exacerbated the ideological and political divide among student groups, affecting students' coalition building and public trust towards student activism beyond 2019.

6. Dynamics of Thought, Practice, and Regionalism

"Asian Values" and the Liberal International Order: Southeast Asian Studies as Global Intellectual History

Quah Say Jye, University of CambridgeThis paper revisits the "Asian Values debate" in the 1990s, when Southeast Asian state intellectuals, typically led by Singaporean or Malaysian figures, challenged various tenets of the Liberal International Order (LIO) and United States' hegemony. Revisiting the episode from the vantage point of the present precipitates two interrelated interventions. First, it seeks to engage historical international relations, as part of a broader ongoing project of historicizing the 1990s in order to shed light on the current historical juncture characterised by the breakdown of the LIO. Doing so critiques the LIO's sacralised account, emphasising how its triumph in the 1990s was a contingent outcome that required compromise and negotiation; and that the LIO has never displayed a pure, all-encompassing form, instead exhibiting a localised, composite character. Second, it sets the stage for a methodological intervention within Southeast Asian studies. Against popular accounts of "Asia as Method" or "autonomous Southeast Asian history," this paper attempts to resist self-parochialising narratives by instead illustrating the generative capacity of globalising Southeast Asian experiences. The Asian Values debate took place within a contemporary "Republic of Letters," being situated across global fora like *Foreign Affairs* and *The New York Times*, as well as within various United Nations' events. Furthermore, the frames and languages of Asian Values were referenced from Western academic discourse. These sites and languages foreground how Southeast Asian figures occupy a space within a broader universe, with their identity relationally constructed in and through interactive dialogue with interlocutors from beyond Southeast Asia.

Leadership Hollow and Regional Identity: The Elusive Search for Southeast Asia's Flexible Regionalism

Van Quan Nguyen, University of Queensland
Minh Hoang Nguyen, Swinburne University of Technology

Southeast Asia has long been a challenge to international scholarship due to their intrinsic heterogeneity. This paper examines the complexity of the interplay between the absence of intra-regional leadership in the region and its adversities to the building of a collective regional identity or "common sense." From a constructivist perspective, we will discuss how the leadership void in the region is influencing its capacity to define itself cohesively in the context of both internal diversity and external pressures. This paper is based on comparative analysis and case study methodology, looking at the paradox of regionalism in Southeast Asia – efforts toward unity in the face of immense diversity. We argue that the lack of an intra-regional leader, together with geopolitical, historical, and cultural heterogeneity, has led to a splintered approach to regional integration. The fragmentation has further been fuelled by international politics, which frustrates ASEAN's vision of a unified region. To fully capture the adaptability, informality, and multi-layered structure embedded in the essence of Southeast Asia, we offer a new conceptualisation, flexible regionalism, which may help provide a much-needed nuanced understanding of the regional dynamics. It seeks to reconcile the trends towards both unity and diversity within the region. Our study suggests that while this lack of strong intra-regional leadership has long hampered efforts toward a coherent regional identity, it has also nurtured a distinct form of regionalism—one that values flexibility and consensus-building. This work contributes to the wider literature on regional integration and the making of identities that will pave the way for a "common sense" in an ever-complicated region.

Situating the Local in ASEAN's Women, Peace and Security Agenda

Serena Eleonora Ford, Monash University

Countries in Southeast Asia are increasingly adopting policy frameworks to engage with the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda: a UN Security Council resolution seeking global commitments to ensure women and girls are systematically integrated into peace and security. ASEAN as a bloc has itself adopted a regional plan of action to implement the WPS agenda in 2022. Peace and security activism in ASEAN member states, including on gendered security issues, significantly pre-dates the introduction of WPS into the region. This paper theorises to what extent Southeast Asian conceptions of gendered peace and security are integrated into WPS frameworks in the region to examine the relationship between global, regional, state, and local approaches to gender, security, and peace in Southeast Asia. In doing so, this paper argues that WPS benefits from integrating local knowledge on gendered power relations and security issues emanating from the region, rather than promoting universalist conceptions of peace.

ASEAN's Dilemma: Balancing Regional Cooperation and Chinese Power

Huqing Lin, Universiti Sains Malaysia
Benny Teh Cheng Guan, Universiti Sains Malaysia

The article explores the complex relationship between China and ASEAN, focusing on how China's growing influence affects ASEAN's autonomy and strategic independence. It discusses the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), noting that while this trade agreement offers significant economic opportunities, it also risks deepening ASEAN's economic dependency on China, potentially limiting their ability to make independent policy decisions, especially when national interests conflict with China's goals. The article also examines the South China Sea disputes as a test of ASEAN's unity and independence, highlighting the challenges posed by differing responses among member states to China's actions. This internal divergence complicates ASEAN's ability to manage relations with China and protect its interests. In conclusion, the article underscores the challenges ASEAN faces in balancing economic benefits from China against the risks to its sovereignty. It suggests that ASEAN should strengthen internal cohesion and diversify partnerships with other global powers like the United States, Japan, and the European Union to reduce reliance on China and maintain autonomy in both economic and geopolitical contexts.

From Structural Violence to Regional Insecurity: A Conflict Theory Approach to Understanding the Rohingya Crisis and Its Impact on Southeast Asia's Stability

Sahely Ferdous, Macquarie University

Drawing on structural violence as a concept within conflict theory and focusing on the Rohingya crisis, this paper examines how the systematic inequalities and state policies in Myanmar have led to security threats that transcend national boundaries. Prayogi (2023: 38) supports conflict theory as a 'normal social phenomenon' required to change society. MacGinty & Williams (2016: 3) assert that violent conflict is country-specific and thus 'poorly placed to observe regional' patterns. Myanmar's ethnic conflicts are researched in several ways but the Rohingya crisis, through the lens of conflict theory, is less explored. Therefore, this paper fills that gap and presents an in-depth analysis of how the ethnic conflict in Myanmar, viewed through the lens of conflict theory, contributes to regional insecurity and poses threats like terrorism, radicalisation, and illegal trafficking. These issues, in turn, disrupts stability in Southeast Asia. With entrenched traditions of structural violence through ethnic conflicts and civil war since its independence in 1948, Myanmar continues to face military coups, military administration, and power-sharing arrangements, which marginalised ethnic minority groups like the Rohingyas. This paper argues that structural violence, built into the structures of the society, changes security dynamics in the region. In doing so, it analyses the relationship between continuity and change. Beyond examining the security threat in Southeast Asia, this qualitative analysis also helps articulate how structural violence transforms into an ethnic conflict that captures the relationship between statist choices and diffused externalities, and how Myanmar's local actions generate wider regional impacts.

7. Environmentalism, Developmentalism, and Geoeconomics

Where Does Extractive Repression Occur? Chinese FDI and Civil Society Repression in Southeast Asia

Lin Pu, Australian National University
Shaka Y.J. Li, Florida State University
Raras Cahyafitri, Tulane University

What is the relationship between Chinese outward foreign direct investment (FDI) and human rights in host countries? Existing studies suggest that China's outward FDI, primarily driven by resource-seeking motives, targets countries rich in natural resources. Meanwhile, Western media and think tanks often accuse China's economic presence of exacerbating human rights violations in developing countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, where governments are heavily influenced by China both economically and politically. The central hypothesis of this study—the extractive repression hypothesis—posits that Chinese FDI is more likely to be directed to countries where civil society is repressed, and there is a greater reliance on natural resource rents. Using regression analysis with moderation models with a timeframe from 2003 to 2023, the results show no significant interaction effect between natural resource rents and the relationship between civil society repression and Chinese FDI on a global scale. However, the extractive repression hypothesis is supported in Southeast Asia, where governments that extensively repress civil society attract more Chinese FDI, particularly in countries with higher dependence on natural resource rents. To illustrate our statistical findings, this paper examines extractivism in Indonesia and the Philippines, key recipients of Chinese outward FDI under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as both countries have recently faced shifts in resource regimes and fluctuating relations with civil society campaigning on human rights issues. This study contributes to the literature on FDI and Chinese influence by highlighting the distinctive dynamics of Southeast Asia in comparison to the rest of the world.

Carbon Club's Energy Transition: The Win-set Area of Transitioning Energy in Resource-Rich Countries

Cahyani Widi Larasakti, University of Melbourne

This article raises an important question about the stigmatisation of resource-rich countries as climate laggards due to their slow participation in multilateral schemes. Despite this perception, they are actively working on greening their energy sector through bilateral alliances. How can we make sense of this seemingly contradictory behaviour? Instead of relying solely on multilateral governance like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Indonesia and Australia take strategic bilateral approaches using trade and investment agreements to accelerate their energy sector transition. This study particularly examines the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA) and the Just Energy Transition Partnership, led by the Group of Seven (G7) Countries. This article contends that the energy transition in resource-rich countries is influenced by political and institutional efforts to balance industrialisation interests. These countries seek to maintain competitive energy prices for economic growth while addressing international pressure on climate change and promoting renewable energy development. This carbon club is also trying to capture regional demand for sustainable energy to maintain its regional energy market dominance. A bilateral approach through trade and investment allows alliances to pursue more aligned and complementary aims that serve both their political and economic interests. The argument is developed using primary and secondary data collected through interviews and discourse analysis of the government's official documents, constitutions, and mass media through an international political economy lens. The findings of this study first have the potential to significantly contribute to the literature on the linkages between trade agreements and environmental protection that

have yet to tap into bilateral partnerships. Second, this illuminates the Carbon Club's preserved dominance, reshaping international political economists' voices on the loss of resource-rich countries in the era of global energy transition.

From Necro to Symbio: The Politics of Palm Oil Plantations Development and Multispecies Life in West Kalimantan

Hanna Nur Afifah Yogar, Chulalongkorn University
Chulalongkorn University

The final 15-minute flight from Jakarta to Pontianak in West Kalimantan would always offer passengers a dramatic view. It is a swift transition from dense forests to sprawling palm oil plantations, and from smog-filled air to an illusion of lush greenery. This transformation vividly illustrates how the palm plantation-induced ruptures are deeply intertwined with Indonesia's broader development agenda. In the context of the Anthropocene, such scenes likely form the foundation of the narrative. Some key concerns arise over environmental destruction, forced relocations of communities, and the widespread blame placed on mega-plantations. And this study takes a different approach—building a chronicle of necropolitics and symbiopolitics within a multispecies context. It explores how palm oil plantations are shaping and reshaping the relationships between life and non-life, human and more-than-human entities, and those among politically-assigned vulnerable groups—such as indigenous communities, more-than-human beings, and their dynamic interactions. Observing development through a multispecies lens, this perspective reveals how the development narrative can also serve as a vehicle for internal colonisation and slow violence. From this perspective, the politics of Indonesia's development agenda reveals two key insights: (1) state-driven development plans have always determined who stays, who arrives, and who is displaced, making the outcomes predictable, yet met with insufficient response-ability in addressing the consequences. (2) The multispecies necro- and symbiopolitics emerge as a form of resistance by Beings, manifesting through collaborations between humans and more-than-human entities, through the growing disconnection between the state and people, the rise of newly invasive terrestrial pathogens and diseases, climate fluctuations, and spiritual life, all of which challenge the very foundations of Indonesia's development agenda.

Calibrated Liberalisation and the Geoeconomics of Southeast Asia

Arrizal Anugerah Jaknanihan, Australian National University

This research aims to develop an approach to analyse the practice of geoeconomics in Southeast Asia (SEA). Geoeconomics, the strategic use of economic tools for geopolitical objectives, has been widely understood as a major power's statecraft. This leads to the belief that SEA, a region comprised of non-aligned small and middle powers, serves only as the receiving end of geoeconomic practice by external powers. Instead, this research contends that SEA countries have been active geoeconomic players. Geoeconomics in SEA manifests in what the author terms "calibrated liberalisation," which refers to the selective use of suboptimal economic liberalisation measures to maximise their political leverage. Such measures, including "shallow" free trade agreements and regional economic institutions, are utilized to build a conducive geopolitical environment and mitigate the impact of conventional geoeconomic practices. Geoeconomics exhibits three distinct characteristics in SEA: the practice a) is often not inherently protectionist, b) focuses on institution-shaping rather than targeting specific countries, and c) hinges on domestic economic security performance. By analysing distinct economic-security features in SEA, this research will contribute to theoretical and empirical works on geoeconomics that are hitherto centred on major power cases.

8. Migration and Diaspora

Coastal-hinterland Continuums from South China to Singapore and Beyond: Connecting Transnational History to Regional Methods of Southeast Asian Studies

Xincheng Hong, National University of Singapore

Sino-Southeast Asian interactions play a crucial part in the past and present of Southeast Asia. Given the long-lasting bilateral ties, Chinese migration serves as an effective method bridging studies on both sides as an entangled history could not be told solely from the perspective of either region. Previous studies, however, mainly emphasise maritime connectivity between port cities, and narratives of the Chinese in Southeast Asia primarily concentrated on port-based urban merchants and their socio-economic networks. Similarly, ancestral homelands of global Chinese migrants, in particular Guangdong and Fujian provinces, are often too readily taken as coastal areas, which overlooks their vast hinterlands with rich rural traditions. Existing dominant narratives hardly reflect commoners' stories and areas beyond port cities, such as the often-ignored rural sectors in modern Singapore, which continued to prosper in the industrial age until the mid-1980s. Connecting transnational histories to regional methods, this study extends the research scope to the coastal hinterlands from South China to Southeast Asia with special focus on grassroot Hokkien communities in Singapore and Malaysia. Building on both Chinese and English materials and oral interview records, the author examines closely migration patterns and living strategies of early Hokkien immigrants who migrated from the coasts to river valleys and inland countryside, starting from different jobs often related to specific economic traditions of counties and villages they were raised in. Showcasing coastal-hinterland continuums across the sea, the history of Hokkien migration and their settlements in Southeast Asia features not only hometown connections but also local inter-group interactions. It serves as a constant reminder of historical roots of contemporary dynamics in an ever-changing region of multiple interconnections.

Shifting Identities and Re-constructing "Home"—A Study of Malaysian Chinese Transmigrants in Taiwan

Yongrong Du, City University of Hong Kong

As a result of long-standing pro-Bumiputra politics in Malaysia, Malaysian Chinese have increasingly engaged in various transnational activities to overcome the constraints imposed by their secondary citizenship status. During the Cold War, the established Overseas Chinese Education (OCE) policies by the Kuomintang (KMT) aimed to secure the support and identification of overseas Chinese. Consequently, a significant number of Malaysian Chinese started pursuing higher education and eventually settled in Taiwan since then. Through in-depth interviews conducted with 20 Malaysian Chinese transmigrants residing in Taiwan, I explore the diverse interpretations and practices of citizenship among old and new transmigrants. Additionally, I delve into the underlying identity shift within their conversations. Specifically, these differences encompass: (1) varying national consciousness and identity orientations towards Taiwan or Malaysia; (2) contrasting senses of belonging and loyalty towards Malaysia; and (3) diverse strategies of citizenship, as well as distinct attitudes toward transnational political engagement as citizenship practices towards Malaysia. Overall, findings in this study demonstrate a clear distinction among old and new transmigrants in Taiwan. Early transmigrants have established their identity with Taiwan and gradually integrated into Taiwanese society. Comparatively, later transmigrants exhibit a strong national identity with their country of origin and actively engage in transnational political participation to practice their citizenship. Using Malaysia as an example, I highlight that the identities and transnational practices of migrants are not static and limited to a single generation. Instead, they undergo constant reshaping, influenced by national political shifts and institutional advancements within transnationalism.

Third-Country Serial Migration: Filipino Workers in Taiwan Pursuing Opportunities in Poland

Anna Joceline Dizon Ituriaga, National Chengchi University

Migration often shapes the experiences and decisions of migrant workers long before they embark on their journeys. This study focuses on Filipino factory workers in Taiwan who are planning to pursue job opportunities in Poland as part of a third-country migration strategy, which is considered illegal by the Philippine authorities. Through qualitative inquiry, I examine the motivations, preparations, and perceived challenges these workers face as they navigate the complexities of transitioning from one host country to another. The research explores how these workers weigh the prospects of higher wages, better working conditions, and long-term economic stability against the uncertainties of relocating to a new country. It also examines the role of informal networks, recruitment agencies, and regulatory frameworks across Southeast Asia and Europe in shaping their decisions. By delving into the aspirations and anxieties of migrants, the study provides insights into the pre-migration phase, highlighting the regional and global factors that influence their readiness to leave Taiwan for Poland. This article contributes to understanding serial labour migration by focusing on the planning and decision-making processes of Southeast Asian workers in the preparatory stages of third-country migration. It underscores the need for targeted support systems to assist workers in making informed decisions while navigating legal restrictions and cross-regional migration. The findings call for comprehensive policies that address the unique needs of migrants in this transitional phase, promoting safer and more equitable migration experiences despite the legal complexities involved.

Sam-Sam: Rethinking Transborder Ethnic Identity in the Malay Peninsular

Pechpoom Kasurop, Thammasat University

Sam Sam is an ethnic group that inhabits the northern Malay peninsula. Their community is shaped under complex dynamics, including the transborder cultural relationship between the Tai-Thai-speaking (pak tai) and the Melayu- or Java-speaking ethnic groups. This blurred interethnic connection, whether through intermarriage or other forms of linguistic and traditional exchanges, results in the emergence of a distinct ethnic identity that resists categorisation into any of the constituent groups. Yet, this shift in consciousness toward a hybrid identity does not entail a complete severance from the "old" ethnicity(ies). Rather, it still retains the parent familial and social ties but remains under the constraints of the "new" traditional condition. Sam Sam's social change poses challenges to ethnology's traditional approach that considers a rigid identity and social boundaries between various groups of people. In my presentation, I draw on a post-ethnicity approach and ethnography to examine the transborder identity of the Sam Sam people. I will focus on the historical and archival findings, along with the oral histories from community members, before turning to my ethnographic encounter in a seaside Sam Sam neighbourhood in Sathingphra district and its vicinity in Songkhla province of Southern Thailand. I argue that transborder phenomena like this are fluid, flexible, and contingent upon the surrounding socio-natural environment. These factors thus call for an approach that attends to linguistic practices, rituals, lived experiences, and memories of various individuals rather than simply investigating identity distinctions and differences. This approach, in turn, will facilitate dialogues about transborder ethnicity and provide an accurate representation of the fluid identity of the people in the northern Malay peninsula beyond the Tai-Thai/Melayu binary.

"Two China" in Southeast Asia: A Memory Anthropological Study of Chinese Political Refugees and the Lone Soldier Tomb in Thailand

Jinlong Yu, East China Normal University

This article is based on a memory anthropological fieldwork at the World War II "Chinese Expeditionary Forces" (CEF) Lone Soldier Tomb located at the Bridge over the River Kwai in Kanchanaburi. The tomb was built and operated by Chinese political refugees in exile in Thailand, who were excluded from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and integrated their memories into the Republic of China (ROC), which was perceived as anti-the Communist Party of China. Refugees in exile engage in political expression through memory shaping, and the Lone Soldier Tomb is subject to cross-border political pressure from the PRC and the ROC on Thailand due to the ideological nature of the memory practice. The study finds a disembedding of the field of occurrence and field of action of the Lone Soldier Tomb, which is due to the entanglement of historical and contemporary transnational narratives and memories in Southeast Asian countries. For this reason, this study attempts to take a case-by-case approach, break through single national boundaries, place Southeast Asia in a holistic perspective that transcends the region, and write ethnographically about the process of memory practice through the lens of memory shaping and expression, and to explore the ontological sense of the Southeast Asia, and how the subjects of action in it are actively constructed and passively involved.

9. Authoritarianism and Democratic Backsliding

Shinawatra Comeback: Legal Tactics and Military Alliances Undermining Thai Democracy

Prem Singh Gill, Nanyang Technological University

The return of Thaksin Shinawatra to Thailand and the rise of his daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra within a military-backed coalition signify a notable revival of the Shinawatra dynasty amidst ongoing political instability. This resurgence is highlighted by the Constitutional Court's controversial dissolution of the Move Forward Party and the removal of Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin—actions that exemplify the use of judicial mechanisms to influence political outcomes, akin to the dissolution of the Thai Rak Thai Party in 2007 and the removal of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra in 2014. The military-drafted Constitution, intended to prevent significant political change and maintain military dominance, paradoxically enables the Constitutional Court to sidestep parliamentary debate and affect democratic processes. Drawing on Pavin Chachavalpongpun's analysis of the military-monarchy relationship and Duncan McCargo's concept of "network monarchy," this paper has two main objectives: (1) to assess the implications of the Shinawatra family's alliance with military-backed structures for Thailand's political future, and (2) to critically examine how legal mechanisms and judicial interventions serve as tools of political control. The central question guiding this study is: How does the resurgence of the Shinawatra dynasty, supported by military-backed legal strategies and constitutional manipulation, undermine democratic opposition and reshape power structures in Thailand's political landscape? This investigation will explore how these judicial actions contribute to increasing authoritarianism and destabilise democratic forces.

How Jokowi Leveraged Incumbency Advantage for Political Success: Strategic Allocation during the 2024 Presidential Election

Dimas Lazuardy Firdauz, Airlangga University

Strategic allocation is proposed to represent Jokowi's interventionist strategy through social aid programs during the 2024 election. This concept is believed to be a determinant in activating Jokowi's incumbency advantage, specifically the overall perception of the incumbent's equity, which is then utilised to generate support for the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, Prabowo and Gibran. This study focuses on a theoretical exploration by offering a new conceptualisation of incumbency advantage, challenging traditional theorists such as Erikson (1971), Campbell (1983), and Mayhew (2008), whose frameworks are deemed inadequate in explaining the effects of non-candidate incumbent equity on competing candidates, as observed in Indonesia. To elucidate this phenomenon, the study employs the lens of cost-benefit voting rooted in economic voting theory by Downs (1957); Stigler (1971); and pork-barrel politics in the context of constituency service by Ferejohn (1974); Lancaster (1986). This research is grounded in empirical data supported by the Center for the Study of Democracy and Human Rights (Pusdeham). The theoretical conceptualisation presented in this study elucidates two key aspects: first, Jokowi's incumbency advantage is activated through strategic allocation, highlighting that voter preference for Prabowo is, in part, initiated by the distribution of social assistance (BLT, PKH, El Nino, etc.); second, this study introduces the concept of incumbency advantage in the context of a non-candidate incumbent and its implications for specific candidates. The impact of Jokowi in bolstering Prabowo and Gibran's electoral support is indisputable; however, more importantly, its direct implications for the regression of democracy in Indonesia also warrant critical attention.

The (Para) State as Cultural Practice: Armed Group Subject-Making through Education in the Karen Highlands in Southeastern Burma

Anthony Neil, London School of Economics

After the planes came and bombed their school, Karen students walked up into the highlands in southeastern Myanmar and rebuilt their school under the forest canopy. Current research on rebel governance focuses on education as one subset of services. However, such accounts fail to pay attention to processes of inter-subjective meaning making between political authorities and their constituents. Drawing on participant observation as a research approach in a school operated by the Karen Education Cultural Department under the Karen National Union in Mutraw District reveals the hidden objective of schools as ideological apparatuses designed to make distinctive kinds of subjects. Different moral and symbolic registers of pastoral power are used to foster the ethic of serving the community, self-improvement, responsibility, and resilience. Harsh daily routines that start with singing the national anthem at 4.30 am and culminate at 7 pm and include full school days as well as maintaining the school; the students not only prepare their own food but also grow and hunt their food in order to feed themselves. By creating subjects, the Karen National Union (KNU) creates the parastate as well as cohorts of state-servants to join its armed forces, bureaucracy, or the education of subsequent generations.