ASEAN Forum 2016 Abstracts
Friday 7 October 2016

SECURITY

• Associate Professor Jing Dong Yuan (University of Sydney)
  Great-power rivalry and emerging maritime security issues in the South China Sea
  This paper discusses recent developments in naval competition and territorial disputes in the South China Sea and examines the strategic drivers and rationales behind the renewed interest and rivalry for maritime supremacy and territorial claims. Given the relative peace between the late 1990s and most of the past decade, the re-emergence of disputes and potential escalation of conflicts provide unique case studies of the two competing international relations theories on the specters of conflicts and prospects for peace in this region of growing geo-strategic salience. Does realism, and in particular power transition theory, or liberalism with its emphasis on economic interdependence and institution building, offer not only the more accurate description of what has transpired so far, but also provide more useful policy prescriptions to prevent conflict and promote cooperation and stability in the South China Sea? Given the critical sea lanes of communication (SLOCs), potential future maritime resources, and unresolved territorial disputes, how can we best understand and address these emerging security challenges and develop mechanisms for managing these crises that have such enormous policy implications for the key players involved, including the United States and China.

• Dr Merriden Varrall (Lowy Institute for International Policy)
  How China’s world views are manifested in the South China Sea
  Chinese policy elites take international relations personally, especially in the South China Sea. There are four key worldviews that underpin China’s choices in this region: (1) history is destiny, and it is right and inevitable that China will resume its former role; (2) the region is a familial hierarchy in which China is the strict, but well-meaning, father figure, and other claimants are wayward children; (3) China continues to be the victim of bullying by other countries who want to prevent its rise; and (4) cultural characteristics are inherent and unchanging. These views are constructed, changeable, and not the only factors at play. Regardless, they are powerful. Many Chinese elites presume others should also see the world this way,
and China increasingly has the material power to back its claims. Naturally, ASEAN countries have their own deeply-held views, often incompatible with China’s. Can the tensions between conflicting views of how the region should work be resolved? If so, how? If not, what happens next?

• **Professor Renato Cruz De Castro** (De La Salle University)

  **China’s maritime expansion realpolitik approach in the South China Sea**

  China poses the biggest challenge to any efforts to either resolve/manage or escalate the South China Sea dispute and the tension associated with it. It has declared full sovereignty over most of the contested sea based on an old and official Chinese map featuring a nine-dotted line that extends as far south as the northern Malaysian and Bruneian coast. Since the mid-1990s, China has developed an arsenal of conventional yet inexpensive and highly precise armed ballistic and cruise missiles aimed at virtually every US air-base and port in the Western Pacific. These weapons are also designed to sink enemy surface vessels (including US aircraft carriers) operating hundreds of miles off China’s coastal areas. Chinese planners believe that their missile, with anti-access/area denial capabilities, can adequately prevent the US Navy from intervening or provoking a confrontation with the China in the region. Way into second decade of the 21st century, the South China Sea is now a focal point of US-China strategic rivalry.

**ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY | Lecture Theatre 026, New Law Building**

• **Dr Pichamon Yeophantong** (University of New South Wales)

  **Environmental aspects of Chinese economic investment in ASEAN**

  What is the ecological footprint of Chinese investment overseas? As China’s demand for energy and natural resources continues to grow, Southeast Asia has witnessed a steady rise in Chinese investment, particularly in the hydropower, extractives and agribusiness sectors. But despite coming with the promise of accelerating regional economic integration, Chinese resource investment schemes are often accused of entrenching uneven development and environmental injustice within the region. In Cambodia and Myanmar, Chinese-financed hydropower projects have not only exacerbated local political tensions, but have also given rise to a host of exigent concerns, ranging from forced displacement and livelihood loss to water contamination and biodiversity erosion. Across Southeast Asia, we are now seeing a buildup of anti-Chinese sentiments as well as grassroots activism against such investment schemes. And so, the question remains: how can Chinese investment be made more environmentally sustainable and socially accountable to serve the regional public good?
Chinese trade and investments in ASEAN marine resources

As China’s middle class continues to grow and the consumption of higher-value food products such as seafood increases, China is increasingly sourcing these products externally from countries such as those in ASEAN. Direct trade and imports of seafood to China are growing, while Chinese investments in aquaculture, fisheries facilities and distant water fishing fleets are also unfolding across the region. At the same time, such trade and investments are marked by pronounced political tension, such as that between China and the Philippines. In this presentation I will discuss various ways in which China sources seafood from ASEAN countries, highlighting both the scale of these investments and trading patterns, and the ways in which they are embedded within wider political contexts.

China’s economic statecraft in Myanmar: a steep learning curve

In August, Aung San Suu Kyi made a surprising choice for her first overseas visit to a non-ASEAN country since the April 2016 elections: China. Her decision contradicts widespread assumptions by outside observers, who predicted that China’s influence in Myanmar would rapidly erode as Myanmar’s political liberalisation advanced. This presentation traces one reason for Aung San Suu Kyi’s decision: a process of learning and adjustment in China’s economic statecraft in Myanmar since 2012. Counterparts in Myanmar, including longstanding opposition groups, have responded in flexible fashion, laying the foundation for a more stable relationship going forward. More broadly, Myanmar is an important example of the reassurance and incentive strategies in China’s economic statecraft now being employed across mainland Asia and beyond.

China in Cambodia

China’s role as Cambodia’s largest foreign investor and economic beneficiary has raised concerns among think-tanks and government officials over its growing economic influence in the country. Chinese-funded projects are often implemented in Cambodia by companies with questionable support for labour standards, environmental protection, quality of work, and a reputation for involvement in corrupt practices. Furthermore China’s increasing economic clout partly contributes to the regression of good governance, the rule of law, and the advancement of democratic values in Cambodia, as Western donors have gradually lost their leverage in pressing Phnom Penh to promote those issues. Finally being overly dependent on China economically might undermine Cambodia’s foreign policy autonomy as well as its role in ASEAN. Despite these concerns, Cambodia’s
relations with China transcend economic reasons. Given recent border disputes with Thailand and Vietnam, Phnom Penh has opted for alignment with China. Therefore, the author argues that China’s growing influence in Cambodia has been cemented not only by increased Chinese aid and assistance, but also by Cambodia’s strategic choice to strengthen political relations with its great northern power.

CHINESE DIASPORAS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA | Lecture Theatre 024, New Law Building

• Dr Jayde Roberts (University of Tasmania)

The place of the Chinese in Myanmar
Writings that conceive of Chinese overseas as a global diaspora lead to an erasure of local differences and an overemphasis on the power of the overseas Chinese network in Southeast Asia. This is particularly misrepresentative of the Sino-Burmese (Tayout) who were effectively cut off from overseas Chinese commerce during the Burmese Socialist period and remain on the economic periphery. Indeed, the labels of Tayout and Chinese fail to recognize the linguistic, cultural and political differences between the separate groups that have settled in the country – Hokkien, Cantonese, Yunnanese and others – and conflate this diverse population with the state actions of the People’s Republic of China. Although the Sino-Burmese identify with and choose to reside in Myanmar, they continue to live in between states, cognizant of the insecurity in their unclear political status but also aware of the economic and social opportunities in this grey zone between two historically oppressive states.

• Dr Chang-Yau Hoon (Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam)

Chinese Indonesians: identity and place in post-Suharto Indonesia
The Chinese have lived in the Indonesian archipelago for generations, some with lineages extending back to the 1600s. However, many Indonesians view and treat them as outsiders or foreigners. This minority has also been described by scholars as “unique” because they occupy a significant role in the nation’s economy but were historically marginalized in political and citizenship rights. They have suffered a long history of persecution and rendered convenient targets of social hostility, culminating in the anti-Chinese violence of May 1998. The fall of Suharto in 1998 and the recent rise of China have concomitantly contributed to the change of dynamics of the position of the Chinese in Indonesia. This paper reflects on the place of the Chinese in Indonesia, focusing on their ethnic identity, cultural hybridity as well as their ongoing cultural and economic ties to mainland China.
Dr Hui Yew-Foong (ISEAS, Singapore)

Singaporean Chinese and relations with mainland China
Among Southeast Asian countries, the ethnic Chinese of Singapore are unique in that they constitute the majority at around 74% of the residential population. Nevertheless, because of Singapore’s multi-ethnic make-up and politics, Chineseness was not mainstreamed in the process of nation-building, and was in some instances suppressed and/or re-invented in accord with the politics of the day. This presentation will examine the contours of Chinese identity in Singapore, especially in view of Singapore’s relationship with China. In particular, the recent rise of China as an economic powerhouse and the influx of new Chinese migrants have situated Singaporean Chinese in an enigmatic relationship with their Chinese identity. Finally, the presentation will consider the Singapore case in comparison with other Chinese communities in Southeast Asia.

Professor Kasian Tejapira (Thammasat University)

The Sino-Thais’ right turn towards China
Thailand’s drastic political and economic twists and turns over the past two decades have increasingly inclined the Sino-Thais (Jeks or Lookjins i.e. Thais of Chinese descent) who predominate its business and political elite and constitute the plurality of its established urban middle class, to the political right as well as towards China. From the main supporters and mass base of pro-Western democratization and free-market economy against the threat of communist dictatorship from China and its allies in the Cold War period, they have turned in recent years into rightwing royal-nationalists who mistrust and oppose U.S.-led economic globalization, Western liberal values, and majoritarian democracy. In this dramatic shift, China has become the magnetic pillar of a new regional axis whose economic clout, cultural values, and alternative model of political and economic development the Sino-Thais find congenial and appealing and are oriented towards.
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