



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



SOUTHEAST ASIA

LSE SAW SWEE HOCK
SOUTHEAST ASIA CENTRE

Annual Report

2024 — 2025

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Notes from the Director's Chair

John T. Sidel

For better and definitely for worse, the past twelve months have provided powerful reminders of the significance, indeed centrality, of long-distance trade for Southeast Asia today. Over the preceding decade, escalating geo-economic conflict between the United States and China, the global Covid-19 pandemic, and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine had already produced a raft of intensifying regulatory constraints and logistical challenges for global supply chains in the region. The restrictions imposed on the export of Indonesian and Malaysian palm oil under the European Union's Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) regime and the disputes with the World Trade Organization (WTO) over Indonesia's unprocessed nickel export ban made for additional complications and tensions as well.

But with the return of Donald Trump to the White House in January 2025, seismic shocks to global trade soon rocked Southeast Asia in tsunami-like fashion, in the form of massive tariffs imposed on exports to the United States. These dramatic recent developments have focused international attention on the region and generated considerable anxiety within it. Despite the great diversity of the destinations of Southeast Asian exports, the reliance of the region's economies on global trade as the primary engine of economic growth renders it highly vulnerable to downturns in global markets, disruptions to global supply chains, and the damaging costs of American protectionism. Since at least the 1980s if not earlier, the model of economic growth and development in

Southeast Asia has been 'export-oriented' or 'export-led' and based on the assumption of a liberal – i.e. open – international trade regime, which is now under threat. As goes global trade, so goes Southeast Asia.

It was ever thus. Amidst the recent flurry of media coverage of new American tariffs on Southeast Asian goods came the sad news in June 2025 of the passing of Anthony Reid, the distinguished New Zealand-born historian whose two-volume magnum opus, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680* (Yale University Press, 1990 and 1993) established the primacy of long-distance trade among the drivers of formative change in the history of the region. In these volumes and elsewhere, Reid showed how the incorporation of Southeast Asia into the emerging world economy in the early modern era transformed religious life, social relations, and state structures across the region. Reid's account inspired a raft of subsequent studies, including Victor Lieberman's even more ambitious two-volume study, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830* (Cambridge University Press, 2003 and 2009), which matched Reid's special focus on the archipelagic Southeast Asia with close, careful coverage of the mainland and comparative analysis transcending the region and encompassing the vast expanse of the Eurasian landmass.

This kind of multi-dimensional historical research on the impact of trade on early modern Southeast Asia has continued to evolve in new directions, as

the LSE's Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre has tried to spotlight over the past academic year. In November 2024, for example, the Centre hosted the launch of *A Maritime Vietnam: From Earliest Times to the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2024), by the accomplished ANU-based Vietnamese history specialist Professor Li Tana. As suggested by the title, the book recasts the making and remaking of Vietnam over the formative centuries of the early modern era in the light of its immersion within regional and transregional trade flows. Over the upcoming 2025-2026 academic year, moreover, the Centre looks forward to welcoming the eminent Australia-born, Amsterdam-based Professor Sutherland, who published yet another massive, magisterial study, *Seaways and Gatekeepers: Trade and State in the Eastern Archipelagos of Southeast Asia, c. 1600 – c. 1906* with the National University of Singapore Press in 2021. As the title suggests, the book focuses on the islands of the southern Philippines and eastern Indonesia. In early 2026, the Centre will host Professor Sutherland for a 'launch' of her latest book, which is as weighty and wide-ranging as the last. Her mammoth 628-page tome *An Indonesian History: Personalised Politics in Makassar and South Sulawesi, c.1600-2018* (NUS Press, 2025) traces economic, religious, political, and social developments and trends over more than four centuries and nearly up to the present day in the Indonesian city of Makassar.

Meanwhile, over the past few decades, scholarship on Southeast Asian history in the era of high colonialism has continued to explore the transformative impact of the tightening integration of the region into the world economy enabled by the transportation and communications revolutions of the mid-nineteenth century. The export booms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries induced massive demographic and environmental changes – the increasingly dense settlement and exploitation of the fertile plains of the major river deltas and rice bowls of the region, the establishment of large-scale plantation agriculture, the intensified exploitation of forest and mineral resources, the formation and growth of port

cities and of market societies in their hinterlands, and mass migration into the region from the southern provinces of China, the Indian subcontinent, and the Hadhramaut region of the Arabian Peninsula. These export booms accompanied – and impelled – the extension and intensification of colonial rule, while also enlarging the cosmopolitan public spheres and transcontinental and transoceanic political connections which enabled the rise of the movements which in due course led struggles for independence across the region, from the Philippine Revolution at the turn of the century to the decolonization of the region as a whole in the aftermath of World War II. Trade didn't just follow the flag in Southeast Asia, as the old saw goes – it drove the making of states in the region: expanding, proto-absolutizing states in the early modern era, colonial and proto-national states in what Eric Hobsbawm termed 'the Age of Empire'. Such is the backdrop for my own most recent book, *Republicanism, Communism, Islam: Cosmopolitan Origins of Revolution in Southeast Asia* (Cornell University Press, 2021) and for former Centre visiting fellow Hongxuan Lin's *Ummah Yet Proletariat: Islam, Marxism, and the Making of the Indonesian Republic* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the demographic, environmental, and political consequences of contemporary trade patterns in Southeast Asia thus clearly merit close, careful, critical scrutiny today. In this vein, the Centre has taken special care to showcase and spotlight some of the rich and varied body of recent scholarship which has shed new light on the impact and implications of the expanding and accelerating trade flows linking Southeast Asia to the world economy in today's era of globalization. Back in early 2024, for example, we hosted a well-attended **public lecture** by the renowned University of Toronto professor Tania Li, whose research has traced the consequences of the cacao boom on the highlands of Sulawesi in the 1990s and 2000s and, more recently, the massive expansion of palm oil cultivation across vast swathes of Indonesian Borneo, as seen in her book (co-authored with Pujo

Semedi) *Plantation Life: Corporate Occupation in Indonesia's Oil Palm Zone* (Duke University Press, 2021). In 2024, the Centre's podcast series, '[Dialogues on Southeast Asia](#)', likewise featured an interview with the University of Michigan-based anthropologist Alyssa Paredes, whose research investigates the complex dynamics and multiple dimensions of the supply chain linking the banana plantations of the southern Philippines to markets in Japan and, in recent years, China as well. Paredes's work exemplifies the broader development of scholarly investigation and unpacking of the ways in which globalization and global supply chains impact not just on social relations among humans, but on the plants, animals, viruses, built infrastructures, and ecological landscapes with which they are intimately intertwined. Like Paredes, many of the pioneers of this exciting interdisciplinary research project are leading specialists on Southeast Asia, like Anna Tsing, Eben Kirksey, Sophie Chao, and Atsuro Morita, as can be seen in the recently published *Field Guide to the Patchy Anthropocene* (Stanford University Press, 2024), and the Feral Atlas website hosted by Stanford University (<https://feralatlas.org/index.html#>).

Alongside the diversity of countries, disciplines, and topics covered in the Centre's weekly seminar series and other public events, we have also made sure to include expert coverage of developments and trends in Southeast Asia's trade links to global markets. The Centre's annual [Southeast Asia Forum](#) in May 2025 followed on from coverage of Southeast Asian agricultural and mineral commodity chains in the preceding year to treat the economic impact of geo-economic contestation between the United States and China on the region. The day-long workshop featured an especially insightful treatment of the consequences of the 'chip war' for the semiconductor industry in region by Professor Henry Wai-chung Yeung of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the author of *Interconnected Worlds: Global Electronics and Production Networks in East Asia* (Stanford University Press, 2022).

More broadly, the LSE's Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre has tried to emulate the vibrant trading entrepôts of the region, by serving as a hub for the exchange of information, ideas, and analysis imported from around the world, and by encouraging and enabling the production and export of research about Southeast Asia for academic and other audiences across the globe. Here it is worth noting that our events have featured scholars from the UK, Europe, North America, Australia, and, of course, East and Southeast Asia, with coverage extending from real-estate development in Vietnam to hydropower politics in Laos to the cigarette industry in Indonesia, the role of social media in authoritarian repression in Myanmar, and illicit international financial flows in Singapore. Over the course of the past academic year, moreover, the Centre has expanded the scope of its conception of Southeast Asia to encompass Southeast Asians in the UK, as seen in a December 2024 roundtable discussion of the exploitation of [Filipino domestic workers](#) in the country and a May 2025 seminar on [Vietnamese migrants](#), human trafficking networks, and the border control practices of the British government.

Above all, as in Southeast Asia itself, the key to our prosperity and growth as a Southeast Asia Centre lies in the hard work and diverse talents of those who conduct research under our auspices and/or with our sponsorship and support. Over the past academic year, the Centre has continued to provide research funding for undergraduate and Master's-level dissertations, for PhD students' fieldwork and conference attendance, and for the research of staff working on Southeast Asia at the LSE. The Centre has also hosted its second [annual workshop](#) for PhD students working on Southeast Asia from across the UK, while continuing to support the LSE PhD student-led Burma Reading Group in its activities and events.

As in Southeast Asia, the Centre benefited greatly from the presence of several visiting professors and visiting research fellows whom we hosted over the course of the 2024-2025 academic year. These

visiting scholars included [Professor Jeehun Kim](#) of Inha University in Incheon, South Korea; [Dr. Elisabeth Kramer](#) of the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia; [Professor Thitinan Pongsudhirak](#) of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand; [Professor Dan Slater](#) of the University of Michigan and its Center for Emerging Democracies (which he serves as Director) in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA; and [Dr. Vilashini Somiah](#) of Universiti Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Representing disciplines as varied as anthropology, political science, and sociology, these visiting scholars enriched the Centre and the School through their contributions to our seminar series and other activities and their interactions with staff and students interested in Southeast Asia. Here Professor Thitinan Pongsudhirak merits special mention and commendation, for the huge crowd he drew for his talks on [the role of the military](#) in the politics of Myanmar and Thailand in October 2024 and [on ASEAN](#) in March 2025, and for his assiduous efforts to assist the Centre in its outreach and fundraising activities in Bangkok and elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

The past year at the Centre has also seen notable staff accomplishments worthy of celebration and noteworthy staff transitions worthy of commemoration. We hosted the launch of two brilliant new books by colleagues at the Centre: Kirsten Schulze's [Contesting Indonesia: Islamist, Separatist and Communal Violence Since 1945](#) (Cornell University Press, 2024) and Qingfei Yin's [State-Building in Cold War Asia: Comrades and Competitors on the Sino-Vietnamese Border](#) (Cambridge University Press, 2024). The Centre's Management Committee saw the departure of [Professor Kent Deng](#) (Economic History) after a full term of excellent service, and the incorporation of [Dr. Sharmila Parmanand](#) (Gender Studies), who brings new expertise and energy to our work. At the same time, the Centre bade a very fond farewell to Katie Boulton, who did an outstanding job as Centre Manager over the past several years and has now moved on to a new position managing the Institute of Classical Studies at the School of Advanced Study, University of London.

The Centre has also been blessed with a new Manager, [Dr. Petra Alderman](#), a leading specialist on Thai politics with a raft of recent publications and an impressive record of event organizing, research coordination, and, crucially, podcast interviews and production from her previous posts at the Nordic Institute for Asian Studies and the University of Birmingham.

Looking back over the 2024-2025 academic year, I would like to convey my thanks for the excellent work of our two Centre Managers and our Communications and Events Assistant Alyssa Paddidri, the engagement and oversight provided by the members of our Management Committee, and the diverse contributions made by students and members of academic staff affiliated with the Centre. I am also very grateful for the wise advice and assistance offered by our external Advisory Board, which is chaired by Professor Jonathan Rigg (University of Bristol) and includes Professor Anne Booth (SOAS), Professor Chua Beng Huat (National University of Singapore), Dr. Suraya Ismail (Khazanah Research Institute), and Mr. Collin Liu.

Finally, on behalf of the Centre, I would like to convey our enduring gratitude to the late Professor Saw Swee Hock, whose charitable bequest continues to fund the Centre's essential infrastructure and its events and activities, and also our sincere thanks to Mr. Arvind Khattar for his generous support to the Centre in recent years. In an era when support for 'area studies' at universities in the UK, Europe, North America, and elsewhere has dramatically declined, a Southeast Asia Centre such as ours at the LSE faces serious difficulties in securing the financial resources needed to ensure our continued existence. As I look ahead beyond the upcoming academic year, I know that the LSE Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre will need to find new sources of external support for us to continue to operate beyond the short horizon that our existing endowment allows us to envisage. If you appreciate the work that we are doing, we would welcome your advice and assistance in securing further support for our work over the years ahead.

People at the Centre



John Sidel

Centre Director

Professor Sidel is Sir Patrick Gillam Chair in International and Comparative Politics (Joint appt. LSE Government & LSE IR) and Director of the Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre. He received his BA and MA from Yale University and his PhD from Cornell University. He is the author of *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines* (Stanford University Press, 1999); (with Eva-Lotta Hedman) *Philippine Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century: Colonial Legacies, Postcolonial Trajectories* (Routledge, 2000), *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia* (Cornell University Press, 2006), *The Islamist Threat in Southeast Asia: A Reassessment* (East-West Center, 2007); (with Jaime Faustino) *Thinking and Working Politically in Development: Coalitions for Change in the Philippines* (The Asia Foundation, 2019), and *Republicanism, Communism, Islam: Cosmopolitan Origins of Revolution in Southeast Asia* (Cornell University Press, 2021).



Katie Boulton

Centre Manager

Katie was SEAC's Centre Manager until April 2025. She oversaw the Centre's day-to-day operations, including administration of financial, human and physical resources, implementation of events and programmes, and managing communications and outreach strategies, including publications, in addition to supporting the Centre Director with strategic planning, stakeholder engagement and reporting. Katie has worked in Higher Education for over ten years, particularly supporting postgraduate and extended education study.



Petra Alderman

Centre Manager

Dr Alderman took over from Katie Boulton as SEAC's Centre Manager in April 2025. She holds a PhD in Politics and International Studies from the University of Leeds, and before joining LSE she completed a three-year research fellowship at the University of Birmingham and a two-year research fellowship at the University of Copenhagen. Petra's research focuses on democracy, authoritarianism, and promotional politics, with a particular expertise on Thailand. She is the author of *Branding Authoritarian Nations: Political Legitimation and Strategic National Myths in Military-Ruled Thailand* (Routledge, 2023), a monograph that offers a novel approach to the study of nation branding in authoritarian regimes. Her other academic work has been published in leading disciplinary and area studies journals, including *International Political Science Review*, *Geopolitics*, *Politics and Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*.



Alyssa Padbidri

Communications and
Events Assistant

Alyssa managed the Centre's event logistics and communications over the course of the 2024-2025 academic year, while pursuing a Master's in Applied Social Data Science at LSE, with a focus on the intersection of data science and social policy.

[Visit Our People Page >](#)

SEAC Management Committee

The Management Committee convenes and communicates to oversee and advance the Centre's agenda and to help ensure that the Centre's activities and resources are effectively managed in accordance with the Centre's objectives and the School's policies and guidelines. The Committee is also expected to provide consultation for the Centre's direction and development and to make other contributions to the Centre's activities through the advice and assistance of its members.

- **Professor John Sidel**
(Chair; Centre Director)
- **Dr Hans Steinmuller (SEAC Associate;**
Department of Anthropology)
- **Katie Boulton / Dr Petra Alderman**
(Centre Manager)
- **Professor Kent Deng (SEAC Associate;**
Department of Economic History) - until
June 2025
- **Professor Hyun Bang Shin**
SEAC Associate; former SEAC Director;
Head of the Department of Geography
and Environment)
- **Dr Sharmila Parmanand (SEAC Associate;**
Department of Gender Studies) - from
May 2025
- **Dr Qingfei Yin**
(SEAC Associate; Department of
International History)

SEAC Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides independent and external advice and general guidance to SEAC to help ensure robust programming, research agendas, outreach, and increased support for the Centre.

- **Professor Jonathan Rigg** (Chair; Chair in
Human Geography, University of Bristol)
- **Dr Suraya Ismail** (Research Director, Khazanah
Research Institute)
- **Professor Anne Booth** (Emeritus Professor
of Economics, SOAS)
- **Professor John Sidel** (Centre Director)
- **Professor Chua Beng Huat** (Professor, Faculty
of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS)
- **Dr Petra Alderman** (Centre Manager)



Anne Booth is Emeritus Professor of Economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS). Anne graduated from Victoria University, Wellington, and then did graduate work at the Australian National University. She subsequently taught at the University of Singapore for three years before returning to the ANU as a research fellow. In 1991, she accepted a chair at SOAS, University of London. She was awarded a Lee Kong Chian fellowship in 2015/16. Anne has had a long-standing interest in economic development in Asia, with a particular focus on Indonesia. Her most recent book, *Living Standards in Southeast Asia: Changes over the Long Twentieth Century, 1900-2015*, was published by Amsterdam University Press in 2019. She is currently working on a study of the impact of globalisation on Southeast Asia from the pre-colonial period to the present.



Chua Beng Huat is Emeritus Professor, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore and Visiting Fellow, School of Social Sciences and the Urban Institute, Singapore Management University. His published work includes *Political Legitimacy and Housing: Stakeholding in Singapore* (Routledge, 1997), *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* (Routledge, 2002), *Life is Not Complete Without Shopping: Consumption Culture in Singapore* (NUS Press, 2003), *Elections as Popular Culture in Asia* (Routledge, 2007), *Structure, Audience and Soft Power in East Asian Pop Culture* (Hong Kong University Press, 2012), *Liberalism Disavowed: Communitarianism and State Capitalism in Singapore* (NUS Press, 2017), and *Public Subsidy/Private Accumulation: The Political Economy of Singapore's Public Housing* (NUS Press, 2024).



Jonathan Rigg is Professor of Human Geography at the University of Bristol. He has worked on questions of agrarian change and broader development transformations in Southeast (and South) Asia since the 1980s. He is the author of ten books, including *Rural Development in Southeast Asia: Dispossession, Accumulation and Persistence* (Cambridge University Press, 2020) and *More Than Rural: Textures of Thailand's Agrarian Transformation* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2019). He is currently working on a Wellcome Trust-funded project exploring outdoor work and extreme weather in Vietnam and completing a new book with the working title *The Relational Village*.



Collin Liu is the Chief Operating and Sustainability Officer at Rajah & Tann Asia, Southeast Asia's largest legal network, where he also serves on the firm's Regional Management Council. He brings over 25 years of experience spanning operations, strategy, and governance across Asia and Europe. Prior to his current role, Collin was Chief Operating Officer and a member of the Management Committee at Baker McKenzie Asia, held senior business development roles at Allen & Gledhill LLP and PwC Singapore, and began his career as an international tax consultant in London and Singapore. A qualified chartered accountant, Collin currently sits on the board of The Arts House Ltd and is a director of Citystate Capital Asia Pte. Ltd. He previously served as Chair and Trustee of The Singapore LSE Trust, President of the LSE Alumni Association of Singapore, and Vice-Chair of the LSE Alumni Association in London. He remains a lifelong volunteer and supporter of various cultural, educational and charitable causes. Collin holds an honours degree in Economics from the London School of Economics.



Suraya Ismail is Director of Research at Khazanah Research Institute (KRI), a not-for-profit public policy research institute in Malaysia. She is a council member of the National Costs of Living Council (NACCOL), Ministry of Domestic Trade and Costs of Living (KPDN), and a member of the Panel of Experts (POE), Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT). She has served as a Visiting Scholar at the Centre of Housing and Planning (CCHP), University of Cambridge. She has authored and co-authored book-length policy reports, published chapters in academic books and journals, provided policy briefs for governments at home and abroad, and was involved in collaborative work with agencies such as the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), UN-Habitat, Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and Fundacion Metropoli. Suraya was educated at the University of Reading, the University of Malaya and the Bartlett School, UCL. Her research interests include the history of economic growth, housing, cities and regional development, theory of the firm and institutional economics. She is a Chartered Surveyor with the Royal Institute of Surveyors, Malaysia (RISM).



Catherine Allerton is Professor of Anthropology at the LSE and served as Head of the Department of Anthropology over 2022-2025. She is a specialist in the anthropology of island Southeast Asia, with research interests in children and childhoods, migration, kinship, place and landscape. She has conducted ethnographic fieldwork in rural Manggarai, in the west of the Indonesian island of Flores, and with children of Filipino and Indonesian refugees and migrants in urban Kota Kinabalu, the capital of the East Malaysian state of Sabah. She is the author of *Potent Landscapes: Place and Mobility in Eastern Indonesia* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2013) and editor of *Children: Ethnographic Encounters* (Routledge, 2016). She is currently completing *Impossible Children*, a book about childhood, exclusion and migrant life in Sabah.



Laura Antona is Assistant Professor in Human Geography at the LSE. She is a feminist geographer whose research is centred on labour migration, forced migrant removal, and violence in the Southeast Asian region. Laura's work both draws upon and contributes to feminist political economy, urban geography, and critical migration studies, while centring methodological innovation.



Lei (Alice) Bian is a Policy Fellow at the LSE's Global School of Sustainability, seconded from the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment. Alice received her Master of Food and Resource Economics from the University of British Columbia, and an MSc in Global Energy and Climate Policy from SOAS, University of London. Through equitable partnerships with communities, policymakers, researchers and NGOs, Alice is closely engaged in international collaborative research on financing the blue economy to scale up investments to optimise the health co-benefits of sustainable [mangrove livelihoods](#), with a particular focus on improved marine food security and health in lower-income countries. Alice is Principal Investigator for a British Academy ODA Challenge-Oriented research project on [Tackling climate change through health-oriented policy interventions in coastal marinescapes](#) in the Philippines, supported under the UK Government's International Science Partnerships Fund. Alice has previously worked at Clean Air Asia, the World Health Organization, and the Asian Development Bank.



Fenella Cannell is Associate Professor in the LSE's Department of Anthropology and is a specialist in Southeast Asian anthropology. She is the author of *Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines* (Cambridge University Press, 1999) and the editor of *The Anthropology of Christianity* (Duke University Press, 2006). Her research explores the ways in which people have come to think about "culture" in postcolonial societies and focuses on women's lives and arranged marriages, spirit-mediumship, saints' cults and religion, and popular performances, including transvestite beauty contests. She has also carried out historical research on the Philippines, especially on education, kinship, and gender in the American colonial period.



Dr Chris Chaplin was a Visiting Fellow at the Department of Anthropology and Research Director of the Religion and Global Society Research Unit at the LSE between 2021 and 2025. Prior to joining the LSE, he was the Senior Research Analyst covering maritime Southeast Asia at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and held positions at the Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), Amnesty International, the World Bank office in Indonesia. His research explores the convergence of global religious doctrines with local understandings of faith, activism, rights, and citizenship. He is the author of *Salafism and the State: Islamic Activism and National Identity in Indonesia* (NIAS Press, 2021).



Kent Deng is Professor in Economic History in the LSE Department of Economic History. He leads the LSE postgraduate module “Economic Development of East and Southeast Asia”. His research interests and writing include the rise of the literati in the economic life of pre-modern China, the maritime economic history of Asia, and more recently the industrialisation and modernity in East China.



Tim Forsyth is Professor of Environment and Development and Head of Department of International Development at LSE. He has more than six years’ worth of work and professional experience within Southeast Asia and is fluent in Thai with skills in Bahasa Indonesia and Burmese. His research focuses on the politics of environmental policymaking, with a particular interest in understanding local environmental risk and livelihoods and reflecting this knowledge in global environmental policies and assessments.



Jürgen Haacke is Associate Professor in International Relations at LSE. He teaches and researches on the international relations of Southeast Asia, especially the foreign and security policies of Southeast Asian states, the role and policies of major powers in relation to the ASEAN region, and regional multilateral cooperation. He has published particularly widely on ASEAN and Myanmar’s foreign policy. From August 2016 until July 2018 Dr Haacke was Director of LSE SEAC.



Nicholas Long is Associate Professor of Anthropology at LSE. He works on the anthropology of Indonesia and the Malay World (with a particular interest in Indonesia’s Riau Archipelago), and on responses to COVID-19 in the UK and Aotearoa New Zealand. He won the 2019 Stirling Prize for Best Published Work in Psychological Anthropology for his article ‘Suggestions of Power: Searching for Efficacy in Indonesia’s Hypnosis Boom’. He has recently completed an ESRC-funded ethnographic study of Indonesia’s hypnosis and hypnotherapy circuit.



Sharmila Parmanand is Assistant Professor and Programme Director for the MSc in Gender, Development and Globalisation degree at LSE. Her research examines the colonial histories and gendered logics that underpin development and humanitarian interventions in the Global South, with a focus on the politics of knowledge production and feminist entanglements with the state on issues such as migration, gender-based violence, precarious labour, economic restructuring and social protection. She also studies connections between gender and populism and gender and political dynasties in the Philippines. She is a member of the editorial board of the Anti-Trafficking Review, co-convenor of the UK Development Studies Association Gender and Development Study Group, and an affiliate of the ANU-Philippines Institute.



James Putzel is Professor of Development Studies in the International Development Department, LSE, where he served as head of Department 1999-2001 and Director of the Crisis States Research Centre from 2001-2011 and now directs the MSc in Development Studies. He is well-known for his research in the Philippines where he has maintained active research since 1984. His articles and books on Southeast Asia have examined agrarian reform, developmental states, democratic transitions, social capital, development aid, NGOs and civil society, nationalism, armed conflict, communist movements, the role of political Islam and the rise of rightist populist politics.



Kirsten Schulze is a Professor in International History at the London School of Economics. She works on ethno-religious violence, communal and separatist conflicts, as well as militant Islamism in Indonesia. She is the author of *Contesting Indonesia: Islamist, Separatist, and Communal Conflict in Indonesia since 1945* (Cornell University Press 2024) as well as numerous articles on local jihad in Ambon and Poso, Indonesian jihadi training camps home and abroad, and how Aceh moved from conflict to peace. Her new research project looks at the Indonesian Spice Islands during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.



Hyun Bang Shin is a former Director of the Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre (2018-2023) and currently serves as Professor of Geography and Urban Studies and Head of the Department of Geography and Environment. His work spans four key areas: gentrification, urban political economy, urban struggles, and the circulation of urbanism. By challenging conventional perspectives, Professor Shin has contributed to reshaping the understanding of contemporary urban transformation, emphasising the socio-political dynamics of cities in rapidly developing regions, including East and Southeast Asia. His published work includes *Planetary Gentrification* (2016, Polity Press), *Neoliberal Urbanism, Contested Cities and Housing in Asia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), *Covid-19 in Southeast Asia: Insights for a Post-pandemic World* (LSE Press, 2022), and *The Political Economy of Megaprojects in Asia* (Routledge, 2025).



Thomas Smith is Associate Professor of Environmental Geography at LSE. He is an environmental scientist specialising in the causes, dynamics and impacts of tropical peatland fires and associated 'haze' pollution in maritime Southeast Asia. He has conducted extensive field research into greenhouse gas emissions from the peatlands of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, as well as measuring smoke composition at multiple peat fire incidents and experimental fires in the region. His research extends to the social sciences with recent work focusing on the semantic construction of the 'haze season' and how perceptions of novel seasonalities are influenced by the media, governments, corporates, and artists, and why this might be impacting haze mitigation and/or adaptation.



Hans Steinmüller is Professor in the Department of Anthropology, LSE and a specialist in the anthropology of China. He has conducted long-term fieldwork in Hubei Province (central China) and in the Wa hills of the China-Myanmar border. Publications include the monograph *Communities of Complicity* (Berghahn 2013), and more recently special issues on Governing Opacity (*Ethnos* 2023) and Crises of Care in China Today (*China Quarterly* 2023). He is editor of *Social Analysis* and convenor of the MSc programme 'China in Comparative Perspective'.



Qingfei Yin is Assistant Professor of International History at LSE. A historian of contemporary China and inter-Asian relations, her research focuses on China's relations with its Asian neighbours, Asian borderlands, and the Cold War in Asia. Her book *State Building in Cold War Asia: Comrades and Competitors on the Sino-Vietnamese Border* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2024. Her current research projects are on Chinese seamen (including overseas Chinese) during the Cold War and the history of China's ocean shipping during Mao's era, including how it sustained the social and economic connections between China and Southeast Asia.

Non-LSE SEAC Associates



Duncan McCargo is President's Chair in Global Affairs at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He previously held professorial appointments at the University of Leeds, at Columbia University (where he co-founded the New York Southeast Asia Network), and at the University of Copenhagen (where he directed the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies). Duncan works on the comparative politics of Southeast Asia, especially Thailand's ongoing domestic upheavals. His most recent books are *Fighting for Virtue: Justice and Politics in Thailand* (Cornell 2019) and *Future Forward: The Rise and Fall of a Thai Political Party* (with Anyarat Chattharakul, NIAS, 2020). Duncan co-hosts the Talking Thai Politics and New Books in Southeast Asian Studies podcasts. Website: thaipolitics.leeds.ac.uk



Sin Yee Koh is Senior Assistant Professor of Asian Migration, Mobility and Diaspora at the Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam; and Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University Malaysia. She is a human geographer working at the intersections of migration studies and urban studies. Her work uses the lens of migration and mobility to understand the circulations of people, capital, and aspirations in and through cities. She has published on migration and colonial legacies, academic and teacher expatriate mobilities, migration and urban intermediaries, lifestyle migration-led urban speculation, cities and the super-rich, and the globalisation of real estate.

Visiting Fellows

SEAC's Visiting Appointment scheme provides an opportunity for visiting researchers to spend 6-12 weeks at SEAC and LSE, benefitting from access to LSE facilities and events, along with opportunities for networking and collaboration across the LSE community. Visiting researchers form an integral part of SEAC's research culture and community, delivering talks, writing blogposts and working papers, and otherwise participating in SEAC events and activities. All applications for visiting fellowships go through a rigorous panel assessment, and opportunities are competitive. Applicants are selected based on the strength of their proposals.

SEAC was delighted to welcome three Visiting Professors and one Visiting Fellow during the 2024/25 year:



Professor Jeehun Kim is Professor of Sociology in the Department of Social Studies Education and Director of the Center for Global Korean and Asian Studies at Inha University in Incheon, South Korea. His research interests span a wide range of topics on contemporary Korean and Asian societies and global mobilities, including older adults in Singapore, middle-aged and young adult Koreans in Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries, pre-college and post-college student mobilities across Asia and beyond (including Los Angeles, USA), urban neighbourhood changes in post-Suharto Jakarta and globalizing Hanoi, and changing identities of so-called 'multicultural families' in Korea. During his Fellowship, he was working on his book project *Pricing Flexible Citizenship, Practicing Transnational Retirement: Korean elders in Singapore, Seoul and Los Angeles*.



Professor Dan Slater (Visiting Professor) is the James Orin Murfin Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center for Emerging Democracies (@umichDemocracy) at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He specializes in the politics and history of democracy and authoritarianism, especially in Southeast Asia. His books include (with Joseph Wong) *From Development to Democracy: The Transformations of Modern Asia* (Princeton University Press, 2022) and *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge 2010). During his Fellowship, he was working on his latest book project *Battles for Pluralism: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Great Democratic Unknown*.



Professor Thitinan Pongsudhirak (Visiting Professor) is Professor of International Relations at the Faculty of Political Science and Senior Fellow at the Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University. He has authored a host of articles, books, book chapters and over 1,000 opinion pieces in mass media such as *The Bangkok Post*, *Nikkei Asian Review*, *The Straits Times*, *International New York Times*, and *Financial Times*. His comments on Thailand/ASEAN-Southeast Asia have appeared regularly in international media, including *Aljazeera*, *BBC*, *CNN*, *Bloomberg*, *CNBC*, *NHK*, *DW*. His current work focuses on the comparative politics and geopolitics/geoeconomics of ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific in view of the US-China rivalry. During his Fellowship, he was working on finalising a paper on BRICS and Southeast Asia and on writing a book about Southeast Asia and ASEAN.



Dr Elisabeth Kramer (Visiting Fellow) is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at UNSW, a Scientia Fellow and an ARC DECRA Fellow (2023). Her research interests sit at the intersection between politics, policy and interest-based advocacy, with a focus on Indonesia. She holds two Australian Research Council grants focused on therapeutic opioid policy and use and the political dynamics of tobacco regulation in Indonesia. She is the author of *The Candidate's Dilemma: Anticorruptionism and Money Politics in Indonesian Elections* (Cornell University Press, 2022) that offer a nuanced study of how the political and personal intersect with money politics, anticorruptionism, and electoral campaigning in Indonesia. During her fellowship, she was working on several ongoing publications, including an outline for a new book on the topic of the politics of tobacco policy in Indonesia.

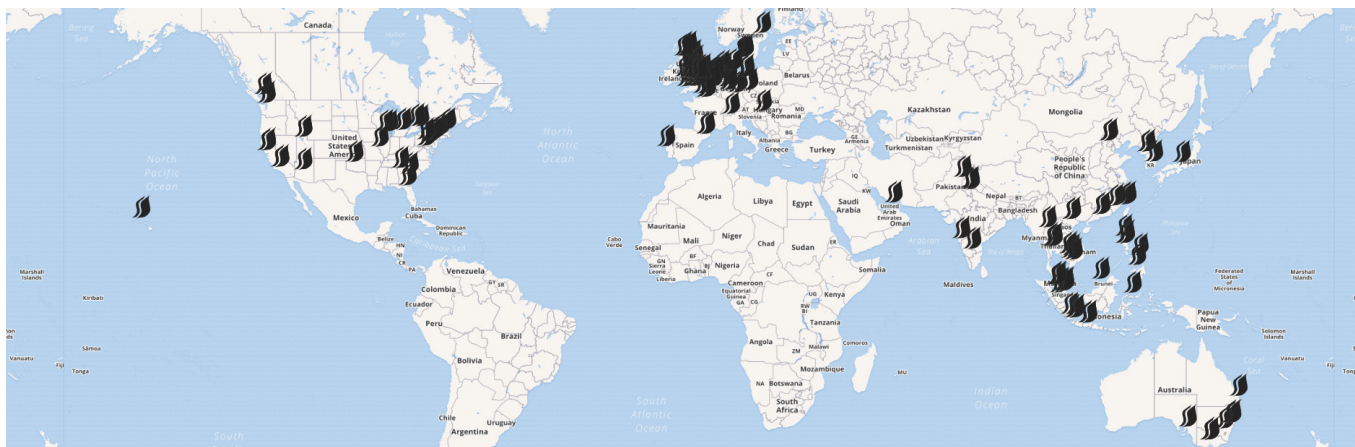
LSE-Southeast Asia Early Career Researcher (ECR) Network

SEAC's ECR Network has continued to grow in the past year, with 314 members, who have research interests across the region, and actively engage via dedicated events, ECR newsletters, and social media promotion.

ECR Network Members



Below is a screenshot of the SEAC interactive global map of network members (accessible at lse.ac.uk/seac/people/ECR-Network), which permits anybody to search by country specialism, locate researchers with similar interests, and promote increased collaboration and scholarly work on Southeast Asia.





I joined the Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre (SEAC) as Centre Manager, following a three-year research fellowship at the University of Birmingham and a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies at the University of Copenhagen. I completed my PhD in Politics and International Studies from the University of Leeds under the supervision of Professor Duncan McCargo (a long-time SEAC Associate) and Dr. Adam Tyson.

My connection with SEAC goes back to my doctoral studies, when I first joined the Centre's Early Career Research network. Over the years, I co-moderated and spoke at several SEAC events on Thailand, co-convened two SEAC seminars, and gave an [invited book talk](#). It is my great honour and pleasure to now contribute to the Centre more fully – both as an academic and as the Centre Manager.

Research

At the broadest level, my research centres on the study of authoritarianism through a range of disciplinary lenses, including comparative politics and international relations. I am particularly interested in understanding how contemporary authoritarian regimes change, and what this means for their stability and future trajectories. I have studied this in the context of authoritarian elections and electoral management, nation branding, polarisation, and future making.

Geographically, most of my research has focused on Thailand, a country I have been fascinated with since my undergraduate days. Over the past 15 years, I have lived and studied in Thailand during

several periods, forging strong connections to the country and its people. These connections and experiences continue to inform my curiosity and research questions. My first book, [*Branding Authoritarian Nations: Political Legitimation and Strategic National Myths in Military-Ruled Thailand*](#) (Routledge 2023), offers the first comprehensive analysis of nation branding in Thailand and a novel perspective on how branding functions as a domestic legitimisation tool in authoritarian contexts. A recent review referred to the book as 'profound, highly citable, empirically rich and well-argued.'

Instead of approaching nation branding from an image management perspective, the book shows that nation branding is a political act that is integral to state legitimisation processes in authoritarian regimes. It explains that nation branding produces specific kinds of applied national myths, referred to as 'strategic national myths.' The book argues that nation branding is an inherently inward-looking strategy aimed at shaping the social attitudes and behaviours of the nation's citizens in line with the authoritarian government's domestic agenda and legitimisation needs.

Alongside my book, my articles have appeared in leading disciplinary and area studies journals, including *International Political Science Review*, *Geopolitics*, *Politics*, *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *Asian Survey*, *Asian Studies Review*, and *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. My [research](#) on the Election Commission of Thailand, for example, has shown how quasi-democratic institutions can be instrumentalised to sustain authoritarian rule – contributing to wider debates on authoritarian resilience.

At SEAC, I continue to pursue an active research agenda. I recently submitted a co-authored article on authoritarian future making to *International Affairs*, expanding my work beyond Southeast Asia through a Gulf-focused case. Nevertheless, the article offers many important lessons that resonate within Southeast Asia and that my future research can build on. Of particular importance is the lesson of how authoritarian regimes understand and utilise future for regime legitimisation purposes.

Other projects in progress include a co-authored comparative study on why some authoritarian

regimes make pro-LGBTQ+ concessions or adopt progressive pro-LGBTQ+ policies. Juxtaposed against the recent anti-LGBTQ+ backlash in many established democracies, this study presents a fascinating research puzzle, with Thailand as the Southeast Asian case. I am also developing policy papers from my Birmingham fellowship into academic publications.

Policy Work

In addition to academic research, I enjoy working at the nexus of research and policy, helping to translate academic knowledge into practical guidance and real-world impact. I was part of a team that won the 2024 University of Birmingham's impact award in the Public Policy and Law category.

During my research fellowship at the University of Birmingham, I worked closely with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), the UK's preeminent public body dedicated to strengthening democracy and open societies around the world. I produced policy reports on electoral management, [legislative leadership](#), and political parties' role in polarisation. I also co-produced an internal WFD guide on how to commission impactful research, reviewed commissioned research on Southeast Asia, and briefed WFD staff on important political developments in Thailand. I continue to explore new avenues of collaboration through SEAC.

I have built strong connections with officials in the South East Asia and Pacific Directorate at the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO). I share my latest research and findings with them, help contextualise political developments in Thailand, advise on possible entry points, and facilitate academic connections within both Thailand and the wider Southeast Asian region.

Media Engagement and Commentaries

Beyond academia and policy, I am committed to making research accessible. I regularly provide media commentary on Thai politics, appearing on outlets including BBC World Service, BBC Thai, ABC Australia, France24, and AP Press. My political analysis and research-led blog pieces have also been featured by [The Conversation](#), The Carter Center, Oxford Analytica, Australian Outlook, among others.

I also have a [passion for podcasting](#) as a way to bring scholarship to wider audiences. At Birmingham, I founded People, Power, Politics, which attracted over 45,000 downloads in less than

two years. I am excited to bring this experience to SEAC's Dialogues on Southeast Asia podcast series, building on my skills as both a host and founder-manager.

Looking Ahead

At SEAC, I look forward to combining my academic research, policy engagement, and public communication to foster new collaborations and conversations. My work on authoritarianism and Southeast Asia has always been guided by curiosity, collaboration, and a commitment to bridging scholarship with the wider world – values I am eager to continue advancing at LSE through both my research and my work as SEAC's Centre Manager.

[Visit My Website >](#)

SEAC Support for Students

PhD Research Support Fund

[Visit Support for Students Page >](#)

SEAC provides financial support to LSE doctoral students through the Fieldwork Support Fund and the Conference Fund. The Fieldwork Support fund provides funding for fieldwork in Southeast Asia, covering travel, accommodation, local services (e.g., transcription/translation), and purchase of research materials. The Conference Fund provides support to enable participation in academic conferences, covering registration fees, travel, and accommodation. These two funds are intended to help doctoral students advance their research and networks and to support the next generation of Southeast Asia scholars.

In 2024-25, fieldwork support was provided to Armand Bin Azlira (International History), Joel Chong (Government), Dwi Anggi Novianti (Economic History), Andi Sparringa (International Relations), Theint Theint Thu (Government), Hanh-An Trinh (Geography and Environment). Conference support was made to Armand Bin Azlira (International History), Morris Chan (Government), Marco Del Gallo (Anthropology), Cla Ruzol (Anthropology), and Tianning Zhu (Economic History).

“The Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre has been instrumental in the development of my early career in academia, for which I am incredibly grateful. SEAC has kindly supported me in my fieldwork. The data I collected in the 2024/2025 academic year allowed me to present a paper titled ‘Radio War Malaysia: Neo-colonial Subjectification under Konfrontasi and the Ghosts of Kalimantan Utara in 1963-1966’ at the Association of Asian Studies in Asia Conference in Kathmandu 2025, which SEAC had also generously funded. None of this would have been possible without the support that SEAC has continuously given me and I hope SEAC can continue to support researchers from Southeast Asia and others who do essential research on the region.”

-Armand Azra bin Azlira (International History)

“With the support of the SEAC PhD Research Support Fund, I was able to travel to several cities across Java, uncovering valuable insights into colonial economic history—particularly the impact of the 1918 influenza pandemic and its connection to the agricultural economy. I am grateful for this support, which has made a significant contribution to the progress of my PhD research.”

-Dwi Anggi Novianti (Economic History)

“I am very grateful for the generous support of SEAC through the PhD Fieldwork Grant. The fund enabled me to examine the everyday urban future imaginaries of an ordinary and quickly urbanising city in Vietnam. I was able to stay in-country for nine months, conducting a multi-sited ethnography across Hai Phong, and establishing meaningful relationships with various stakeholders in the space of real estate, planning, and urban development of the city. The professional network and academic insights I have gained throughout this fieldwork are not only foundational for my PhD thesis, but also essential to my further development as an urban geographer of Southeast Asia. And the support from SEAC – not only through the PhD Fieldwork Grant but also through constant events and networking opportunities – is a crucial element of how I began my academic journey as an early-career researcher.”

-Hanh-An Trinh (Geography and Environment)

SEAC hosted a workshop for PhD students across the UK working on Southeast Asia on 2 June 2025. The workshop allowed eighteen UK university-based research students working on the region to present their work before their peers for feedback and provided a broader opportunity for sharing ideas and information related to ongoing doctoral research focused on Southeast Asia.

International Relations of Southeast Asia

Ann Bajo (University of Portsmouth), "Malaysia's Interventions in Southeast Asia's Conflicts: The Mindanao and Patani Cases"

Tiffany Lau (LSE), "Understanding the Impact of China's Influence in Singapore"

C.K. Ha (University of Cambridge), "It's Not the Security, Stupid! Bargaining Southeast Asian Regional Cooperation during the Early Cold War"

Moez Hayat (University of Cambridge), "Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Post-Mahathir Era: A Case of Who's Hedging Whom"

The Production of Knowledge in/on Southeast Asia

Jinnawat Lertpradit (University of Leeds), "Exploring Place-Related Dimensions in Environmental Learning: Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems through Place-Based Education in Chiang Mai Schools, Thailand"

Charlene Song (University College London), "Comparative Perspectives on Southeast Asian Studies in British and Chinese Universities"

Josh Watters (University of Edinburgh), "Between 'thun tawan tok' (ทุตนะวันตอก) and 'patitcha samupabat' (ปะทีชาสามูปาบ): Towards a Cosmopolitan Framework for Elite Education in Post-/Semi-colonial Thailand"

Abdul Kodir (University of York), "Unpacking Environmental Assessment Reports: Power, Discourse, and Policy Implications in North Kendeng Mountain, Indonesia"

Town and Country in Southeast Asia

Andi Mulyadi (University of Reading), "Bridging Modern Governance and Traditional Leadership: The Implementation of Village Fund Programs in West Sumatra, Indonesia"

Reza Mahardika (University of Sheffield), "The Local Political Economy Effects of Village Elections: Evidence from the Democratic Transition in Indonesia"

Alia Salleh (LSE), "Privatisation of Space in Kuala Lumpur"

Skylar Lindsay (University of Bristol), "Power and Capital in Vietnamese Specialty Coffee: Farms, Mills, Phin and Diverse Networks"

Religion, Politics, and Resistance in Southeast Asia

Nabiyla Risfa Izzati (Queen Mary University of London), "Do Women Resist? Hidden Transcript and Alternative Resistance of Women Gig Workers in Indonesia"

Joel Chong (LSE), "Disenchanted the Divine: Bureaucratising Religion in Thailand"

Meghna Kajla (Kings College London), "Constitutional Law, Religious Freedom, and Courts in Indonesia: A Study of the 'Kartu Tanda Penduduk' Case"

Khin Thet San (Goldsmiths, University of London), "Legacies of Memory in the Human Rights Movement in Myanmar"

Theint Theint Thu (LSE), "From Patients to Participants: Citizen Engagement and Healthcare in a Democratising Myanmar"

"I'm a second-year doctoral student researching the development of Southeast Asian Studies and Area Studies in universities. I got to know LSE SEAC through the recommendation of my undergraduate tutor. I presented at "The Production of Knowledge in/on Southeast Asia" panel at the PhD workshop. The event was well organized as the presentations came nicely together into a conversation on the global, national, local/indigenous forces in knowledge-making. I received helpful feedback from my peer doctoral students at the workshop and shared them with my supervisors. The workshop also helped me better connect with early career researchers in Southeast Asian Studies whom I would not usually meet in my discipline-oriented home department. I'm now developing my workshop paper into a full article. I would strongly recommend this workshop to other research students."

- Charlene Song (University College London)

"It was an incredibly motivating and thought-provoking experience to attend the PhD workshop at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). For me, the chance to participate in critical discussions about Southeast Asian knowledge production was one of the most significant elements. I was inspired to consider power, positionality, and epistemic diversity in both domestic and international academic settings by these conversations."

The workshop was especially beneficial because of the variety of participants. I had the opportunity to interact with PhD researchers from all over the UK, each of whom brought distinct viewpoints from various fields, institutions, and local knowledge. I felt more a part of a larger community of academics dedicated to critical and context-sensitive research as a result of these exchanges, which also expanded my scholarly horizons."

Beyond the scholarly discussion, the LSE workshop facilitated the creation of enduring and significant relationships. In addition to gaining fresh perspectives for my studies, I also connected with peers who are facing comparable obstacles while pursuing their PhDs."

I am grateful to the organisers for establishing such a welcoming, vibrant, and carefully planned environment for discussion and cooperation. Any PhD student interested in exploring decolonial perspectives, regional knowledge dynamics, and establishing robust academic networks throughout the UK and beyond should consider attending this workshop."

- Jinnawat Lertpradit (University of Leeds)

"LSE SEAC has benefited me by providing an avenue to engage with other Southeast Asian specialists, which helped advance my knowledge in Southeast Asia."

- Ann Bajo (University of Portsmouth)

"It was a really wonderful opportunity to participate in and present at the LSE SEAC PhD workshop. As a scholar of Southeast Asia, chances to present to and receive feedback from subject matter experts is rare, even in a highly international institution in London. It was also a good chance to learn about emerging research on the region even if it was not in our direct field of expertise, and also to socialise with our peers from other universities, laying the foundation for future academic collaborations."

-Tiffany Lau (LSE)

"The SEAC PhD workshop was my first interdisciplinary academic event and it proved hugely beneficial for my research. Hearing how scholars from different disciplines approach Southeast Asia opened up new ways of thinking about the region for me and encouraged me to place my own work within a broader dialogue. It was also a great opportunity to connect with other researchers and begin building networks that I hope will be valuable throughout the final stages of my PhD and beyond."

-Josh Waters (University of Edinburgh)



Why is it difficult to access clean, safe water for everyone? Hydro-colonialism and large dam building in the Philippines

I was sitting in an old office chair with worn-out padding and a backrest so permanently reclined that if I were to rest my shoulders, I would feel like falling. I stood and walked toward the pantry enclosed in a corner of the government water regulator's office to wash my lunch box. A colleague walked into the pantry to get some water only to find the water dispenser empty.

"Oh no," she uttered quietly. "There's no more water."

"You can get water from the tap. I do," I said. I then attempted to reassure her with confidence.

"That's where the utility staff are getting the drinking water for the dispenser."

"Really? Maybe I'll come back later," she said.

I never did see her go back to get water from the tap.

It was bewildering to discover that the government water bureaucrats whose very mandate was to provide safe drinking water to Mega Manila— Metro Manila and some parts of Region IV-A— also avoided drinking faucet water. When I started my fieldwork, no one I knew drank from the tap. I did not until I learned from the engineers of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System of Metro Manila that the water distributed by its two private concessionaires should be and is potable. I then stopped buying distilled water and started drinking straight from the tap. This horrified my sibling, who was living with me at the time, as I deliberately changed my drinking ways.

I begin with this short ethnographic encounter to demonstrate the peculiar water experience in Metro Manila in the Philippines— a metropolis where supposedly potable tap water is doubted even by the people behind the public water service. My research critically examines these examples of the mundane, ironic attitudes about water, water provisioning, and water technologies of those who work in the government water bureaucracy. Based on online, ethnographic, and archival research conducted from March 2017, and continuously between September 2021 and August 2023 in Manila and the U.S., my research examines the often unnoticed yet highly impactful expressions of enduring colonial state power as conveyed through water provisioning in the Philippines. Following the case of the controversial Kaliwa Dam, I offer a conceptual grammar to help us understand the cryptic world of public water service that the technobureaucrats inhabit, and how it shapes Filipino society. What else is the purpose of building large dams that supposedly augment water supply if tap water continues to be doubted? Can large dams solve unequal access to water across Philippine cities? What does the water bureaucracy sustain and desire to achieve?

My archival work investigated the historical context of water provisioning in Manila after World War II and its infrastructural legacies for the present system of water provisioning in the region, while my ethnographic fieldwork focused on the sociality between the different scales of political agency cultivated by and in the *kalooban* (inner being), that is, selfhood, governmental persona, and state-corporate personhood. This research contributes to the anthropology of statecraft and infrastructures by focusing on often neglected aspects of street-level government work: the militarisation of bureaucracy and engineering; enmity towards unruly project stakeholders; emotional labour as common sense and self-discipline; indigenous consent as land brokerage; and the reproduction of the elite and the neo-colonial status quo in public corporations.

I am grateful to the Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre for supporting the presentation of this research in conferences in the U.S. in 2023 and in Nepal in 2025. These events have helped me to build a strong network of like-minded academics and scholar activists and otherwise enhanced my intellectual and professional development as a PhD student.

Dissertation Fieldwork Grants

SEAC was delighted to receive many competitive applications for the 2024/25 Southeast Asia Student Dissertation Fieldwork Grants. The 16 student awardees were selected based on the strength of their applications and their proposed dissertation fieldwork and research. The grant provides up to a maximum of £500 per awardee towards research expenses, which can go towards categories like accommodation, subsistence, and local services such as translation or transcription. The Dissertation Fieldwork Grant scheme is supported by Arvind Khattar, whose generous gift has helped SEAC to further develop its research activities.



Kyunghwan Choi

Degree: MSc Environment and Development

Fieldwork location: Indonesia

Topic: Climate Finance Mechanism, Political Ecology, Ecological Debt, Colonial Legacy

Dissertation title: **Evaluating Debt-for-Nature-Swaps from a Political Ecology and Ecological Debt Perspective: The Case of Indonesia**

This study evaluates the effectiveness of Debt-for-Nature Swaps (DNS) as a climate finance mechanism through the case of Indonesia. While DNS is promoted as addressing debt distress and conservation, most research emphasises economic outcomes, overlooking socio-ecological impacts. Drawing on political ecology and ecological debt perspectives, and based on field interviews and literature, this study finds that contradictory government policies undermine DNS by accelerating environmental destruction and marginalising local communities. It argues that these contradictions reflect structural dependencies rooted in resource-extractive economies shaped by the Global North. The study highlights the need to consider climate finance instruments beyond purely economic perspectives.



Ghea Adasta

Degree: MSc Media and Communication (Data and Society)

Fieldwork location: Jakarta, Indonesia

Topic: AI governance in Indonesia's digital marketing sector

Dissertation title: **AI Governance: Infrastructure Dependencies and Regulatory Gaps in Indonesian Digital Marketing Landscape**

This research investigates governance gaps in Indonesia's digital advertising market, where marketers extensively use AI for programmatic advertising and content creation while regulatory frameworks remain misaligned with AI's embedded sociotechnical nature. Through interviews with thirteen Indonesian digital marketing professionals, the study reveals three critical regulatory inadequacies: algorithmic opacity lacking explainability requirements, generative AI creating unaddressed copyright challenges, and privacy violations exposing limitations in consent models. Current laws treat AI as discrete tools rather than coordinating infrastructure within platform ecosystems. The research provides empirical evidence of regulatory misalignment in developing economies, offering insights for governance frameworks addressing AI's embedded nature while maintaining accountability.



Nitchakan Daramatat

Degree: MSc Social and Cultural Psychology

Fieldwork location: Suphanburi Province, Thailand

Topic: Identity Transformation of Ethnic Minority Youth Through Exposure to Community and City Contexts

Dissertation title: **Identity Transformation of Ethnic Minority Youth in Thailand: The Case of Karen Youth in the Baanhuayhindam Community, Suphanburi Province**

This study applies social representation theory (Moscovici, 1961/2008) to explore identity transformation among Karen youth in Baanhuayhindam, Thailand. It examines how ethnic minority identity is navigated in daily life, highlighting the fluidity of identities and challenging stereotypes between the mainstream Thai population and minority communities. The findings

show that identity transformation occurs through cognitive polyphasia, with Karen youth drawing on both community and city knowledge. A key aspect is the integration of values from both systems, nature and monetisation, which enables ethnic minority youth to perform roles and negotiate expectations both within and beyond their community.



Alexandre Dupont-Sinhsattanak

Degree: LSE-PKU Double MSc Degree in International Affairs

Fieldwork location: France, United Kingdom, Laos

Topic: The Laotian crisis

Dissertation title: The disunited front: Western divergences on the Laotian crisis, 1958-1962

This thesis explores why the United States, Britain, and France failed to coordinate effectively in Laos, between 1958 to 1962, despite shared anti-communist objectives and repeated coordination attempts. Through systematic cross-archival analysis, it identifies three interconnected factors that drove coordination breakdown: incompatible worldviews about post-colonial Southeast Asia and neutrality; severe institutional fragmentation within US foreign policy apparatus, with the State Department, Pentagon, and CIA pursuing contradictory policies; and divergent personality assessments of key Laotian leaders. While coordination mechanisms existed, these structural divergences transformed the Western alliance into a disunited front, influencing the US's decision to favour unilateralism in Southeast Asia.



Badrul Hisham Ismail

Degree: MSc. Inequalities and Social Science

Fieldwork location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Topic: Urban Inequality

Dissertation title: After Displacement: The Temuan Community's Everyday Navigation of Urban Life in Kuala Lumpur

Urban resettlement in Malaysia is often framed as social uplift, yet its long-term consequences for indigenous

communities remain underexamined. This study focuses on the Temuan of Desa Temuan, relocated in the early 2000s under a state-facilitated scheme linked to private development. Two decades on, formal housing and proximity to Kuala Lumpur have not erased persistent gaps in income, employment, and education. Guided by Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, the study draws on eight in-depth interviews to explore how residents navigate housing, work, social ties, and cultural identity. It shows that spatial inclusion is conditionally extended through material provision but constrained by planning priorities, administrative categories, and market logics. By situating the Temuan as long-standing urban actors, the paper reveals how such resettlement reproduces and reshapes urban inequality, offering a critical lens on the intersection of neoliberal urbanism and state developmentalism in contemporary Malaysia.



Wulandari Anindya Kana

Degree: MSc Environment and Development

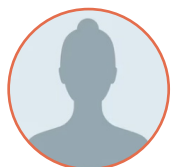
Fieldwork location: Semarang, Indonesia

Topic: Politics of participation in climate adaptation projects

Dissertation title: Wading towards change: How the anti-politics machine complicates transformative adaptation in coastal Semarang

Despite participatory rhetoric and practices in Semarang's climate adaptation projects, coastal communities remain in deepening socio-ecological precarity. Drawing on the anti-politics machine concept, this research explores how participatory politics operates across development discourse boundaries through interviews with NGO workers, academics, government officials, and communities, analyzed using analytic reflexivity. Three mechanisms that constrain transformative adaptation are uncovered: 1) participatory processes channeled toward predetermined technical solutions; 2) political critiques emerging from conversations with community members are tolerated only within academic boundaries; and 3) expert-subject relations between facilitators and community members reproduced even in grassroots organizing spaces. Yet actors

strategically navigate across development discourse boundaries to mobilize resources for political organizing that can produce solutions that escapes exclusively technical problematization. This gives evidence that transformative adaptation requires strategic navigation across discursive boundaries, not better participation within projects.



Ambar Khawaja

Degree: Masters in Public

Administration (MPA)

Fieldwork location: Singapore

Topic: Public Administration, Institutions, and Governance

Dissertation title: Decentralized Authority in a Centralized State: The Majelis Ugama Islam Singapura and Public Service Delivery in Singapore

This dissertation examines how centralised state oversight can coexist with decentralised service delivery through the case of Singapore's Majelis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS). Drawing on interviews with MUIS staff, it argues that existing decentralisation theories—Ostrom's polycentric governance, Faguet's contextual decentralisation, and Schmitter's corporatism—do not fully capture MUIS's hybrid model. While legally embedded as a state-corporatist body under the Administration of Muslim Law Act, MUIS operates flexibly through alternative funding, community empowerment, and mosque-level monitoring. Its "dual accountability" to state and community blurs governance levels, suggesting that hybrid religio-administrative institutions in secular contexts require rethinking conventional centralisation-decentralisation frameworks.



Yuanhang Wang

Degree: MSc in International Affairs

Fieldwork location: Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia

Topic: The Devil You Know: ASEAN's Collaboration and Containment towards the Democratic Kampuchea (1979-1982)



Aya Kobayashi

Degree: MSc International

Development and Humanitarian Emergencies

Fieldwork location: Naga City, Philippines

Topic: How and why do citizen responders either challenge or reinforce formal humanitarian norms and practices during Severe Tropical Storm Trami (Bagyong Kristine)?

Dissertation title: Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself: Citizen Aid During Disasters and the Normative Contours of Humanitarianism in the Philippines

This dissertation investigates how and why citizen responders either challenge or reinforce formal humanitarian norms during disasters. It specifically examines the various practices that citizen and humanitarian responders engage in within a disaster context, focusing on how such practices build the social capital that responders leverage to establish their legitimacy and gain access to alleviate suffering. Findings show that citizen responders leverage immediate networks rooted in trust and kinship, contesting neutrality via improvisation and relational targeting, while reinforcing humanitarian aims through needs-based assessments and ad hoc professionalism. This dissertation highlights local-formal co-constitution, though implications are limited by its single-case design.



Amanda Lingao

Degree: Msc Human Rights and Politics

Fieldwork location: Metro Manila, Philippines

Topic: Human Rights

Dissertation title: Who holds the right to dream? Articulations of Justice, Repair, and Future-Making Among Survivors of the Philippine War on Drugs

The dissertation explores how families of victims killed during the Philippine War on Drugs envision justice. It examines the cascading impact of killings on surviving families, revealing that for many survivors, justice goes

beyond criminal trials. While families want perpetrators to be punished, they also seek to restore stability and a sense of future that has been dismantled by the initial violation. This loss of future is articulated through the yearning for a pangarap or “life dream” that they once held with their loved one, which survivors struggle to reconstruct after their family member’s death.



Hsiang Jien Naik

Degree: MSc Development Management

Fieldwork location: Sabah, Malaysia

Topic: Labour exploitation of stateless populations in Sabah, Malaysia + the local political economy

Dissertation title: The Political Economy of Stateless Labour in Sabah

This dissertation examines how statelessness functions as a deliberate technology of labour control in Sabah, Malaysia. Extending De Genova’s (2002) ‘deportability’ framework, I reveal how systematic corruption networks—rather than capital—are the primary beneficiaries of maintaining stateless populations’ ‘illegality’. My findings demonstrate how those in power transform legal exclusion into profitable extraction opportunities through ‘market-mediated deportability’, where stateless persons’ vulnerability becomes a commodity that can be bartered. This dissertation’s findings provide a novel, critical political economy investigation of stateless labour exploitation in Sabah, theorising how powerful vested interests in preserving statelessness counter meaningful reform.



Giang T. Nguyen

Degree: MSc Global Health Policy

Fieldwork location: Viet Nam

Topic: Assessing Willingness-to-Pay for Mammography in Early Breast Cancer Detection Among Women in Viet Nam



Leon Schachter

Degree: BA Geography with Chinese

Fieldwork location: Philippines

Topic: An Examination of the Balikbayan Route

Dissertation title: The Balikbayan Route: An Analysis of Distribution, Coordination, and Change in the Value Chain of Transnational Kinship

An estimated 15,000 Balikbayan boxes - large parcels filled with personal and household goods - are sent by Filipinos abroad to their families in the Philippines each day. These boxes constitute a form of in-kind remittance, sustaining transnational ties across vast distances. This dissertation shifts the focus from the familiar social and cultural semiotics of in-kind remittances to the precarious yet indispensable freight forwarding networks that enable their movement. Employing a spatial perspective, it traces how goods navigate regulatory complexities and market pressures, connecting migrants not only with urban centres but also with remote rural communities, revealing the economic and transnational forces shaping remittance-driven development.



Moses Siregar

Degree: MSc Political Science (Political Behaviour)

Fieldwork location: Bogor City, Indonesia

Topic: Online Influence Operations and Political Conformity

Dissertation title: Can Hiring a Cyber Troop Increase Political Conformity? Evidence from an Instagram Field Experiment with Buzzer-Coordinated Comment Sections

Does exposure to cyber troop-coordinated operations in social media public discourse increase behavioural and attitudinal political conformity of netizens? In cases like cyber troop operations (CTOs) where persuasion fails to fully explain, I develop the argument that political conformity becomes a primary mechanism of CTOs. Using a one-week pre-registered Instagram field experiment with 913 adult netizens from Bogor City, Indonesia, I

examine how real cybertroopers utilize conformity to shift behaviour and attitudes. Randomizing netizens to groups with anonymous, fake, or no cybertroopers on Instagram comment sections, I find that these operations homogeneously increase behavioural conformity, with attitudinal conformity effects being generally weaker.



Nattakrit Thaicharoenporn

Degree: BSc International Relations and History

Fieldwork location: Thailand

Topic: Siamese institution of slavery and its abolition

Dissertation title: Bondage Capitalism: Slavery and Authoritative Emancipation in the Making of Modern (Thai)land

Thailand/Siam's 1905 slave abolition is popularly remembered as a cornerstone achievement of King Chulalongkorn, in which his political prowess and graciousness towards the slaves (thaat) have enabled a bloodless emancipation. This study challenges such traditional narratives, particularly their emphasis on a dichotomous contrast between 'freedom' (kwarm-pen-thai) and 'bondage' (kwarm-pen-thaat). Examining the lawsuits between debt bondsmen (thaat-sin-thai) and their 'masters' in the fifth reign, this study reveals the extent to which the rights of thaats were both protected and disregarded by preceding laws, arguing that the social hierarchy demarcated by the 'feudal' sakdina system was much more lenient and flexible in practice than previously considered.



Tham Ngoc Truong

Degree: MSc in Global Media and Communications

Fieldwork location: Vietnam (non-migrants) and Vietnamese diaspora (Australia, France, United States)

Topic: Media representations of migration and their influence on perceptions

Dissertation title: How Do Media Representations of Migration Shape Perceptions? A Comparative Study of Vietnamese Non-Migrants and Migrants

This study explores how media stories about migration shape views in Vietnam. It looks not at direct effects but at how people see, interpret, and use migration content from news and social media. Using semi-structured interviews, it compares non-migrants in Vietnam with Vietnamese migrants in Australia, France, and the U.S. Thematic analysis shows non-migrants with migration interests often focused on positive images, while migrants used media more carefully before leaving, relying on agencies and trusted sources. Across both groups, people were active interpreters, not passive. Media influenced ideas but was less important than family, peers, and official guidance.

Postgraduate Dissertation Prize

The LSE Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre Postgraduate Dissertation Prize on Southeast Asia showcases outstanding social science research on Southeast Asia from LSE postgraduate students. Submissions were received from across LSE departments, all of which were at first-class level.



Winner

Sahil Bhagat

Dissertation title:

MA/MSc International
and World History

Department of
International History

Spice Bombs on the Plantation:
Transnational Connectivities of
Malayan Indian Anticolonialism

Sahil Bhagat completed his joint Master's degree in International and World History from Columbia University and the LSE, supervised by Professor Natasha Lightfoot and Professor Kirsten Schulze in July 2024. Before LSE, he obtained an MA in International Relations and Modern History from the University of St Andrews. His research concerns the labour, migration, and spatial histories of colonial Southeast Asian plantations, focusing on British Malaya. Currently, he is a Research Associate at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Reviewer Comments:



"This dissertation offers an elegant account of a multiscalar historiography, shedding light on the diversity of (and within) early pan-Malayan anticolonial movements, which existed alongside nativist movements. It makes productive connections from its analysis of Thondar Padai to the broader anticolonial movements that characterises the spatio-temporality that is being studied."



Highly Commended

Aodamar Owens Deane

Dissertation title:

MA/MSc International and
World History

Department of
International History

Lusophone
Transcontinental
Revolution: East Timorese
Nationalism's origins
in Lusophone African
Socialism (1974-1985)



IMAGE: CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

I was invited to present my research at the international conference on Online Influence Operations and Democracy in Southeast Asia, held on 22–23 August 2025 at Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia. KITLV, the University of Amsterdam, and Diponegoro University jointly convened the event.

Online influence operations (IOs) have become an increasingly prominent feature of both democratic and authoritarian societies. In Southeast Asia, comprising one of the world's most digitized populations, IOs are reforming the practice of politics. Yet, the study of IOs faces significant methodological constraints due to the covert nature of the industry and the ethical challenges that research on the topic entails. This has left essential gaps in our comprehension of how IOs function and influence political and policy outcomes.

This conference was the first of its kind to unite scholars on Southeast Asia to address these challenges. Participants debated how IOs should be conceptualized, how their presence and effects can be accurately measured, and how academic literature can inform relevant stakeholders, particularly policymakers, in countering them. The program featured a diverse

range of approaches, from qualitative interviews on IOs' organization and funding, social network analyses for detection, case studies and digital ethnography analyzing macro-level patterns, and conceptual work refining analytical distinctions. Among the distinguished scholars present were Ward Berenschot, Merlyna Lim, Yatun Sastramidjaja, Ross Tapsell, and Wijayanto.

My paper contributed to these discussions by offering causal evidence about how Indonesian cybertroopers called buzzers, a form of IO, manipulate discourse in social media comment sections. Based on a one-week, pre-registered randomized field experiment involving over 900 adult Instagram users in Indonesia, the study provides the first known causal test of IOs' impact on political attitudes and behaviors. The design initiated important debates during the conference on ethical considerations, especially about the use of low-scale IOs in a field experiment, as well as about how internal and external validity were preserved, given the limitations of the research. Nevertheless, the study was recognized as a pioneering contribution to the field, manifesting the LSE's motto *rerum cognoscere causas* ("to know the causes of things"), given my training in rigorous quantitative methods was done at the School.



IMAGE: MOSES PRESENTING HIS RESEARCH IN FRONT OF ABOUT 20 EXPERT SCHOLARS OF IOS IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGION FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

Several broader implications emerged from the conference. First, scholars are still studying using different definitions and measurement strategies, but across the methodological spectrum there is consensus that IOs are both widespread and effective at manipulating discourse and undermining democratic societies. Second, the operations and effectiveness of IOs vary greatly across Southeast Asia, based on how elite competition exists, how the public and private sectors interact, and how the population engages online.

For example, in Indonesia, my findings suggest that cybertroopers remain influential, especially in online commentaries. However, in Malaysia, evidence indicates that the era of IOs has passed as citizens are increasingly resistant to low-level IOs tactics. In Thailand, IOs are largely state-organized, aimed at suppressing dissent and strengthening the regime's image, while in the Philippines, IOs are run mostly by PR firms hired by political clients.

While some scholars are optimistic about measuring and countering IOs, others are more pessimistic, arguing that IOs' utilization by powerful political and economic elites may render countermeasures redundant.

The conference concluded that publishing a special issue in a Q1 peer-reviewed journal was the most appropriate next step to offer a consistent and united theoretical

foundation for IOs studies and a comprehensive demonstration of methodologies to understand IOs. It also sparked new future research ideas for collaboration among participants. As my first academic conference, this was an intellectually memorable and productive experience, both for progressing my own work and for positioning it within a broader regional and global debate. The LSE's Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asian Centre was mentioned during the conference as an important source of support for my research, hopefully enabling me to embark on further endeavours to understand the consequential operations of online influencers across Southeast Asia.



IMAGE: OPENING DINNER OF THE CONFERENCE OVERLOOKING THE BEAUTIFUL SEMARANG CITY, INDONESIA.

Moses H. Siregar is an MSc candidate in Political Science (Political Behavior) researching the role of cyber troop operations in shaping political conformity insocial media.

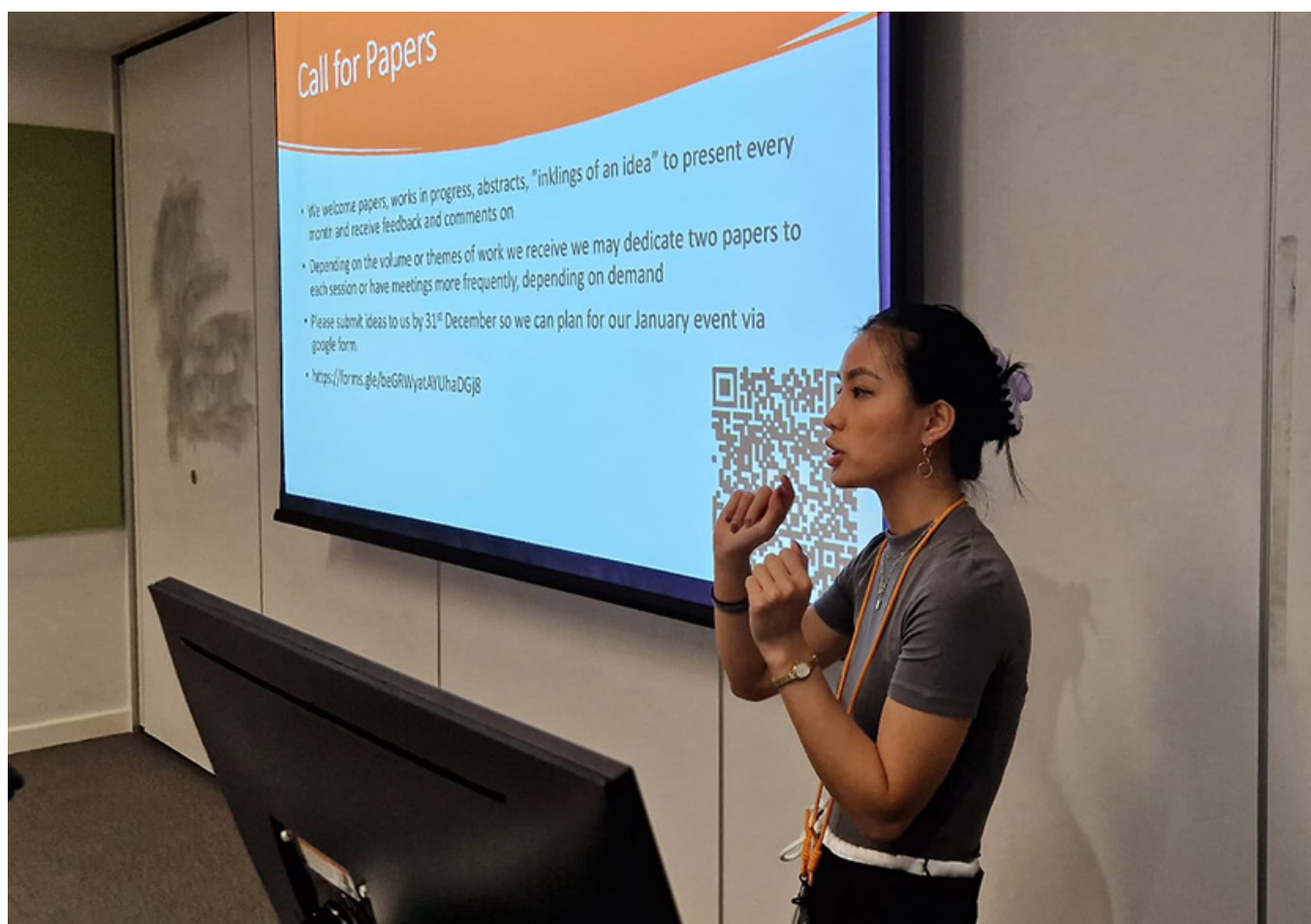
In 2024/2025, the London Burma Reading Group continued to bring together scholars, students, and members of the public to explore Myanmar's politics and society through critical and interdisciplinary lenses. This year's sessions featured timely discussions on art, activism, and ethics in a country still grappling with the aftermath of the 2021 military coup.

We featured an anthropologist's take on *Kachin Amber, Burmese War, and an International Ethics Debate among Paleontologists*, unpacking the global controversy over 'blood amber' from conflict-affected Kachin State and how area studies can contribute to scientific and ethical debates beyond the social sciences.

In *Inter-generational Myanmar Activism and the Quest for Social Justice*, the guest speakers explored the

evolving landscape of Myanmar's pro-democracy movement. The conversation traced the legacies of past struggles while highlighting the voices of a new generation of women, youth, and ethnic and sexual minorities.

We also featured a book discussion of *Frontline Poets: The Literary Rebels Taking on Myanmar's Military*, which showcased the role of literature as a form of political resistance. The authors examined how poets, writing from within Myanmar and in exile, channel lived experience into works that reflect state violence and preserve collective memory. By encouraging dialogue across disciplines and perspectives, the reading group remains a space for engagement with Myanmar's past, present, and possible futures.

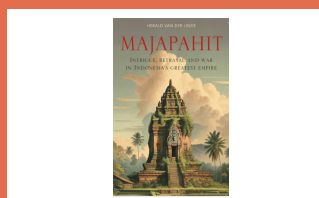


Academic Engagement

2024-25 Events

[Visit Events Page >](#)

Each year, SEAC hosts a wide variety of events that build upon a history of engagement between LSE and Southeast Asia. Over the 2024/25 academic year, the Centre continued to host both in-person and online events featuring a particularly diverse set of speakers and broad audiences from across the LSE, UK, Southeast Asia, and other countries. Events included lectures, roundtable discussions, workshops, reading groups, and seminars designed to showcase cutting-edge research and insights on developments and trends across Southeast Asia.



24 June 2025

Majapahit: Intrigue, Betrayal and War in Indonesia's Greatest Empire (Book talk)

• Herald van der Linde (HSBC)



11 June 2025

Sustainable Urban Development in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

• Albert T. King (Chairman, CX Technology Corporation, and Visiting Professor in Practice, LSE)



2 June 2025

PhD Student Workshop

- Ann Bajo (University of Portsmouth)
- Tiffany Lau (LSE)
- C.K. Ha (University of Cambridge)
- Moez Hayat (University of Cambridge)
- Jinnawat Lertpradit (University of Leeds)
- Charlene Song (University College London)
- Josh Watters (University of Edinburgh)
- Abdul Kodir (University of York)
- Andi Mulyadi (University of Reading)
- Reza Mahardika (University of Sheffield)
- Alia Salleh (LSE)
- Skylar Lindsay (University of Bristol)
- Nabiyla Risfa Izzati (Queen Mary University of London)
- Joel Chong (LSE)
- Meghna Kajla (King's College London)
- Khin Thet San (Goldsmiths University of London)
- Theint Theint Thu (LSE)



27 May 2025

Inter-Asia Seminar Series: International Symposium on 70 Years Since the Bandung Conference

- Professor Kuan-Hsing Chen (National Chiao Tung University)
- Dr. Noer Rachman (Universitas Padjadjaran)
- Dr. Hilmar Farid (Jakarta Institute of Arts)
- Professor Su Lin Lewis (University of Bristol)
- Dr. John Munro (University of Birmingham)
- Professor Jesook Song (University of Toronto)
- Professor Priyamvada Gopal (University of Cambridge)
- Dr. Ashwani Sharma (Independent scholar)
- Dr. Ling Zhang (State University of New York)
- Professor Zhiguang Yin (Fudan University)



22 May 2025

Southeast Asia Forum: Geo-Economic Contestation over Southeast Asia in the Era of Donald Trump and Xi Jinping

- Professor Evelyn Goh (Australian National University)
- Professor Henry Wai-chung Yeung (Chinese University of Hong Kong)
- Dr. Selina Ho (National University of Singapore)
- Alvin Camba (Association of Universities, Inc.)



21 May 2025

'This is not the 90s': Myanmar and Change in ASEAN's Normative Order

- Dr. Aarie Glas (Northern Illinois University)



20 May 2025

Frontline Poets: The Literary Rebels Taking on Myanmar's Military (book talk)

- Aung Naing Soe (Photojournalist)
- Joe Freeman (Amnesty International)



15 May 2025

China-Japan competition in the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway (HSR): HSR as the Mobile Technology Between State-Business Spaces

- Caixia Mao (Columbia University)



14 May 2025

Vietnamese Migrants and UK Bordering Practices

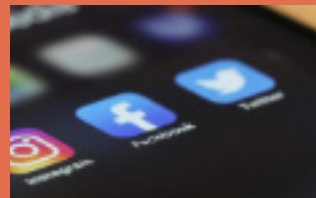
- Dr. Tamsin Barber (Oxford Brookes University)



8 May 2025

Conflict Brokers: How Local Politicians Make or Break Insurgencies

- Dr. Dotan Haim (Florida State University)



7 May 2025

Social Media's Algorithmic Affordances for Authoritarian Repression in Myanmar

- Dr. Mai Van Tran (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)



26 March 2025

The Neighbourhood of Southeast Asia and ASEAN: More Region, Less Regional Organisation

- Professor Thitinan Pongsudhirak (Chulalongkorn University, SEAC Visiting Professor)



24 March 2025

Navigating Disruptions: Southeast Asia's Future in Global Value Chains

- Professor Pavida Pananond (Thammasat University)



20 March 2025

London Burma Reading Group: Inter-generational Myanmar Activism and the Quest for Social Justice

- Dr. Maaike Matelski (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)
- Dr. Cecile Medail (Australian National University)



19 March 2025

Do Post-Conflict Referendums Promote Peace and Democracy? East Timor and Beyond (Book talk)

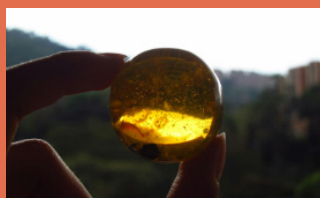
- Dr. Kentaro Fujikawa (Nagoya University)



12 March 2025

The Hydro-Crypto Nexus in Laos: Paradoxes and Perils of the Demand for Decarbonization

- Dr. Pon Souvannaseng (Bentley University)



10 March 2025

London Burma Reading Group: Kachin Amber, Burmese War, and an International Ethics Debate among Palaeontologists

Dr Laur Kiik (University of Oslo)



5 March 2025

Bud Dajo, 1906 – Recovering the Story of an American Atrocity in the Southern Philippines

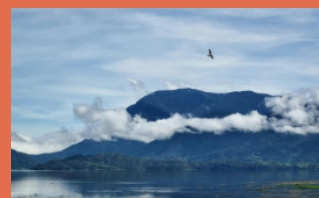
• Professor Kim A. Wagner (Queen Mary, University of London)



19 February 2025

Battles for Pluralism: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Great Democratic Unknown

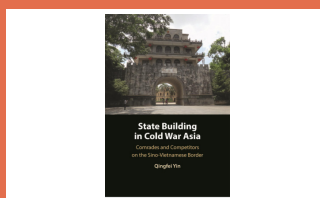
• Professor Dan Slater (University of Michigan, SEAC Visiting Professor)



12 February 2025

The Will to Govern: Territorial Redivision and the Politics of Sovereignty in West Papua

• Dr. Veronika Kusumaryati (University of Wisconsin-Madison)



5 February 2025

State Building in Cold War Asia: Comrades and Competitors on the Sino-Vietnamese Border (Book launch)

• Dr. Qingfei Yin (LSE)



29 January 2025

Decentralisation, Healthcare Privatisation, and Women's Health: The Indonesia-Philippines Comparison

• Professor Sarah Shair-Rosenfield (University of York)



21 January 2025

Revisiting the Vietnam War Fifty Years after the Fall of Saigon

• Professor Peter Zinoman (University of California, Berkeley)



4 December 2024

Understanding and Challenging the Exploitation of Filipina Domestic Workers in the UK: A Roundtable Discussion

• Susan Cueva (Southeast and East Asian Women's Association)
• Nina Rivera (Filipino Domestic Workers Association)
• Marissa Begonia (Voice of Domestic Workers)
• Alex Millbrook (Kalayaan)



27 November 2024

The Politics of Coercion: State and Regime Making in Cambodia (Book talk)

• Dr. Neil Loughlin (City St. George's, University of London)



21 November 2024

Inter Asia Seminar Series: Interrogating Asia's Urban Futures

• Dr. Yimin Zhao (University of Durham)
• Dr. Diganta Das (Nanyang Technological University)
• Dr. Rita Padawangi (Singapore University of Social Sciences)



20 November 2024

Kretek Capitalism: Making, Marketing, and Consuming Clove Cigarettes in Indonesia

• Dr. Marina Welker (Cornell University)



13 November 2024

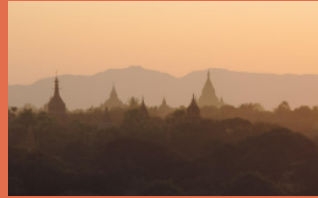
Understanding Vietnamese History with a View from the Sea

• Professor Li Tana (Australian National University)



11 November 2024
Reclaiming Gendered Spaces Before the Mountain God: Resistance and Resilience of Remote Women Amid Urban Transformation in the District of Kundasang, Sabah

• Dr. Vilashini Somiah (Universiti Malaya, SEAC Visiting Fellow)



31 October 2024
London Burma Reading Group



30 October 2024
Coups and Crises in Myanmar and Thailand: Implications for Southeast Asia/ASEAN and Beyond

• Professor Thitinan Pongsudhirak (Chulalongkorn University, SEAC Visiting Professor)



23 October 2024
Contesting Indonesia: Islamist, Separatist and Communal Violence since 1945 (Book launch)

• Professor Kirsten E. Schulze (LSE)



16 October 2024
The Ripple Effect: China's Complex Presence in Southeast Asia (V)

• Dr. Enze Han (University of Hong Kong)



11 October 2024
Colonial Debris: The Struggle for Land and Citizenship in Indonesia

• Professor Ward Berenschot (University of Amsterdam)



9 October 2024
The Crypto-Colonial Heritage of Modern Thailand

• Professor Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University)



2 October 2024
A Sunny Place for Shady People? Singapore As a Conduit for Illicit Financial Flows and Cross-Border Crime

• Dr. Joe Studwell (Overseas Development Institute)

Southeast Asia Forum

The LSE Southeast Asia Forum is SEAC's annual flagship event, designed to bring together leading Southeast Asia experts to engage with some of the region's most critical and pressing issues, as well as to showcase the high-quality research on Southeast Asia conducted at the LSE.

Over the past decade, observers and scholars of international relations have begun to focus on intensifying 'geoeconomic' competition and 'weaponized interdependence', with close attention to the deepening rivalry between China and the United States. Within this broader, global trend, Southeast Asia has loomed large as a crucial arena of geoeconomic contestation,

especially between China, the United States, and Japan. Such contestation has ranged from major transportation infrastructure megaprojects to transoceanic submarine fibre-optic cable links to semiconductor supply chains. The second Trump Administration has further escalated the ongoing 'chip war' into an even broader and deeper trade dispute by imposing new tariffs and restrictions on Chinese goods.

Against this backdrop, SEAC's [Southeast Asia Forum](#) in May 2025 brought together leading specialists from across the world to discuss the implications of global trends and ongoing geoeconomic contestation over Southeast Asia's economies, politics, and societies.



Professor Evelyn Goh
(Australian National University),

"Southeast Asia and China:
Investing in Regime Security"
Pragmatism

Since the 1990s, Southeast Asia's growing economic linkages and dependence on China for investment in infrastructure and industry have generated political opportunities and strategic concerns in equal measure. Lively debates about the extent of China's increasing impacts on Southeast Asian politics and societies are often premised on the assumption that such investment creates influence for China. However, there remains less comparative and empirical knowledge about how Southeast Asian elites interpret rising dependency on Chinese investment, and how growing Chinese investments change the calculus for key domestic political stakeholders.

Prof. Goh's keynote lecture examined the interactions between very large Chinese investments and regime security dynamics in the ten ASEAN countries during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, providing a region-wide analysis. It outlined a 'regime security' framework for studying the connections between the level and character of such investment, and China's growing significance and influence in these countries. It then analysed how regime security operates as a vital element of domestic politics in Southeast Asian countries that helps determine the type and effectiveness of Chinese influence through investment. Taking into account the large variation in domestic political contexts across these ten diverse countries, it employed an original typology of five key types of

domestic mediations of Chinese investment on regime security in the region, offering key illustrations from Southeast Asian states for each type.



Professor Henry Wai-chung Yeung
(Chinese University of Hong Kong),

"Chips war? Geopolitics and the
restructuring of semiconductor
global production networks in
Southeast Asia"

Prof. Yeung's presentation focused on the intensified geopolitical contest between the United States and China and its ramifications for a critically important high-tech industry – semiconductors. He argued that semiconductor global production networks have now been highly politicized through state-led industrial policy and technology restrictions, resembling a kind of "chips war" between national governments. In this highly capital-intensive industry, governance and power dynamics are manifested differently from many other industries due to the very complex technology regimes, production network ecosystems, and, more recently, geopolitical imperatives and changing state-business relationships governing semiconductors. While some of these critical dynamics had been in play ahead of the 2020s in mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Southeast Asia, their intensity and significance have become far more apparent by the mid-2020s. Prof. Yeung examined their most significant implications for regional development in Southeast Asian economies up to the late 2020s and the need for strategic partnership with technology leaders towards building national and regional resilience in the United States, Western

Europe, and East Asia. He ended the discussion with some relevant future research agendas on technology, resilience, and politics for the interdisciplinary studies of global production networks and global value chains.



Dr. Selina Ho (National University of Singapore),

“The Geoeconomics of Infrastructure Projects in Southeast Asia”

According to the Asian Development Bank, Southeast Asia needs to invest US\$2.8 trillion from 2023 to 2030 to construct new infrastructure in order to maintain economic growth, reduce poverty, and mitigate climate change impact. Rapid population growth, urbanization and economic growth in the region have resulted in a widening investment gap. China plays a key role in plugging this gap. It has significantly invested in infrastructure projects, particularly roads, highways, railways, ports and telecommunications across Southeast Asia, through its Belt and Road Initiative. However, it is not the only investor in infrastructure initiatives in the region. Japan, for instance, has long been a major investor in transport infrastructure in Southeast Asia. Other notable investors hail from South Korea, India, and Europe as well as multilateral organizations like the Asian Development Bank. These other powers have historical and contemporary interactions with Southeast Asia that bear on today's connectivity projects in the region. Are they credible alternatives or supplements to China's initiatives? What determines the choices that Southeast Asian countries make?



Dr. Alvin Camba (Association of Universities, Inc.),

“The Paradox of Megaprojects: How Incumbents and their Chinese Partners Shape the Politics of Southeast Asia's Illiberal Democracies”

In this presentation, Dr. Camba examined how Chinese megaprojects have impacted the political dynamics of illiberal democracies—nations with democratic features but weak institutions – particularly when these projects are implemented during heightened political competition. He argued that incumbents can strategically use these projects to bolster their political or economic standing, leveraging them as external resources at critical moments. These projects shape not only the fates of incumbents and their opponents, but also the broader political trajectories of their countries. Incumbents may consolidate power by distributing

projects among loyalists or, alternatively, allocate them to potential defectors to prevent political fragmentation, leading to two distinct modes of political dynamics.

The first is the mode of contestation. When incumbents allocate Chinese projects to a select group of loyalists, they consolidate power but risk alienating elites and mobilizing opposition. This centralization can trigger elite defections and mass protests, ultimately leading to regime collapse, a temporary weakening of China's influence, and a strengthening of democratic institutions. The second is the mode of enmeshment. When incumbents distribute Chinese projects more broadly, including to potential defectors, they create a network of entanglement within the regime. This fosters coalition stability and strengthens centralized power, sustaining the political order until domestic transitions intensify political competition. Both modes also interact with the country's party system, altering the development impact and diffusion of influence by Chinese actors. Dr. Camba's presentation drew from approximately 300 interviews with elites and non-elites alongside extensive political party, state, and private sector documents, focusing on Arroyo and Duterte in the Philippines, Najib in Malaysia, and Jokowi in Indonesia.

[Visit Southeast Asia Forum Page >](#)

Southeast Asia Forum: Photos



IMAGES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA FORUM 2025

Southeast Asia Working Paper Series

The **Southeast Asia Working Paper Series** was launched in April 2022, showcasing work-in-progress research by the SEAC community. Working papers published under this Series are treated as 'work-in-progress', pre-publication versions of academic papers, and therefore as

'drafts' that receive feedback and are subject to future revision. The Series is an open platform for critical and constructive dialogues on region-related affairs and is open to contributions from all disciplines that SEAC engages with. The following Working Papers have been published this year:

Paper No.12, February 2025

Reclaiming Gendered Spaces Before the Mountain God: Exploring Women's Resilience in Urbanising Kundasang, Sabah in Malaysia

Vilashini Somiah

This working paper examines the intersection of gender, space, and agency among indigenous women in rural Sabah, Malaysia, with a focus on the communities of Kundasang District. Geographical spaces, shaped historically by patriarchal systems, often impose barriers for women, particularly in rural contexts. Drawing on anthropological fieldwork conducted between early 2023 and mid-2024 in Kampung Cinta Mata and Kampung Bundu Tuhan, this study explores how indigenous women reclaim agency and challenge patriarchal norms by navigating, creating, and transforming female-gendered spaces before Aki Nbalu, the revered mountain God of the state of Sabah. Engaging with spirituality and development, these women assert their roles in shaping gender and identity amidst socio-economic and political conflicts in Sabah.

The findings highlight their resilience, adaptive strategies, and deep connection to their environment, which they regard as a living, sacred entity. The women's connection fosters a collective sense of identity and responsibility, extending beyond land and heritage to include the preservation of collective memory and spiritual knowledge of the mountain, deemed vital for future generations. Through collective action, they redefine peripheral spaces as vibrant sources of resilience, demonstrating that empowerment transcends traditional leadership roles.

In the face of mass gentrification, these communities illustrate how gender, spirituality, and ecological preservation intersect to create a sustainable and culturally rich future. This paper contributes to broader discussions on gender, space, and resistance, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of rural development and cultural preservation in Southeast Asia and beyond.

[Visit SEA Working Paper Series Page >](#)

Books

Qingfei Yin. *State Building in Cold War Asia: Comrades and Competitors on the Sino-Vietnamese Border.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024.

Research articles

Petra Alderman. "Subverting elections in Thailand: inclusion and independence in election commission design and practice." *International Political Science Review*, published online January 2025. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/01925121241312884>.

Petra Alderman, Duncan McCargo, Alfred Gerstl and James Iocovozzi. "All About China?: (Mis)Reading Domestic Politics through a Great Power Lens." *Asian Survey* 64, no.5 (2024), pp.877-911. <https://online.ucpress.edu/as/article-abstract/64/5/877/203036/All-About-China-Mis-Reading-Domestic-Politics>.

Chris Chaplin. "Radicalized Nationalists? Ideological Contestation, the State, and the Grammar of Populist Muslim Belonging in Indonesia." *PoLaR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 48, no.1 (2025), pp.1-9. <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/plar.70010>.

Chris Chaplin. 2025. 'Religious Authority within the Urban Mosque: Islamic Activism and the Ethics of 'Being Present' in Eastern Indonesia.' *American Ethnologist* 52, vol.2 (2025), pp.159-170. <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/amet.13388>.

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Nicholas J. Long. "Therapeutic AQompaniments: Walking Together in Hypnotherapy – and Ethnography." *Ethos*, published online in March 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1111/etho.70004>.

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Exhibitions

Nicholas J. Long. "Faces of Hypnosis - Exhibition", Atrium Gallery, 11 November to 13 December 2024, London School of Economics and Political Science. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/Events/2024/11/20241111/Faces-of-hypnosis>.

[Visit Publications Page >](#)

The Southeast Asia blog is a multi-disciplinary blog that analyses and debates the Southeast Asia region's most critical and pressing issues. Here is a list of posts from Sep 2024 to August 2025:

- [**Remembering Anticolonialism in Malaysia: Collective Memory under Neo-Coloniality**](#)
Author: Armand Azra bin Azlira
- [**How ancient temples and dynastic feuds sparked the Thailand-Cambodia conflict**](#)
Author: Sagartirtha Chakraborty
- [**From Colonial Rails to Modern Malaysia: The Enduring Legacy of Connectivity**](#)
Author: Liew Yit Wey
- [**Metro Manila's Linguistic Paradox: A Melting Pot on the Brink**](#)
Author: Anna Mae Yu Lamentillo
- [**Trump's US-Vietnam trade agreement risks supply chain disruption**](#)
Author: Sagartirtha Chakraborty
- [**Malaysia's 'postcolonial fear': How the neoliberal state's latest language of innovation fosters cultural displacements and homogenisations \(again\)**](#)
Author: Sing Fei Teoh
- [**Trump's US-Vietnam trade agreement Governing Faith in a Secular State: What Singapore's MUIS Can Teach Us About Religious Public Administration**](#)
Author: Ambar Khawaja
- [**Book review: Communism, Cold War and Revolution: The Indonesian Communist Party in West Java, 1949-1966 \(Oxford University Press, 2025\) by Matthew Woolgar**](#)
Author: Aidan Hall
- [**Unprecedented Number of Siblings in Philippine Senate Raises Red Flags in Representation and Country's Regional Posture**](#)
Authors: Athena Charanne Presto & Joseph Edward Alegado
- [**Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: What was said and done \(and not\) at the 46th ASEAN Summit**](#)
Author: Aarie Glas
- [**How filmmakers visualise the city in Southeast Asian cinema**](#)
Author: Suyin Haynes
- [**ASEAN Navigating Through Trump's Tariffs**](#)
Author: Sek Wannamethee
- [**Duterte's ICC Indictment Proves Why Power Remains the Ultimate Determinant and Arbiter of Justice – at least thus far**](#)
Author: Michael Magcamit
- [**Singapore's Death Penalty: State Violence and the Illusion of Popular Consent**](#)
Author: Anusha Arumugam
- [**Beyond the Battlefield: The Economic and Socio-Political Impact of the Vietnam War on Singapore-US Relations, 1965-1968**](#)
Author: Collin TEO Jun Kai
- [**What do Singaporeans and Malaysians think of China and its effects on the region?**](#)
Author: Tiffany Lau
- [**Nuclear prospects in malaysia: an analysis of news framing, public perception, and media trust**](#)
Author: Luca Fraticelli
- [**Turning off the plastic tap and advancing a circular economy through extended producer responsibility: Policy narratives in Vietnam and the Philippines**](#)
Author: Ferth Vandenstein Manaysay
- [**Addressing online toxicity in Indonesia: How a behavioural science approach can help**](#)
Author: Nurfitriyana Riyadi

■ **How Anti-Corruption Reforms are Reshaping Vietnam's Banking Sector**

Author: Ryan Taehyoung Kim

■ **Regime's Afterlife: Malay Special Positions and Continued Political Gridlock**

Author: Morris Chan

■ **Myanmar's Predicament: Civil War and Foreign Encroachment**

Author: Khin Zaw Win

■ **Struggle and Adaptation: Identity Shifts of Chinese 'Returnees' from Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s**

Author: Yuyang Chen

■ **Constitutionalism from the People: Understanding Metro Manila Middle-Class Perspectives on the 1987 Philippine Constitution and its Proposed Amendments in the Post-People Power Era**

Author: Amanda Fidelino

■ **The Plantation as Subject? Centring the Plantation within Malayan Anti-Colonial Histories**

Author: Sahil Bhagat

■ **Political Parties, Family Dynasties, and the Budget Surplus Trap: Addressing the Public Goods Deficit in the Philippines**

Author: Hannah Gwynneth Pimentel

■ **Hadhrami Arabs in Britain's policy towards Muslims in Malaya before the Japanese occupation, 1939-1941**

Author: Omar Nasr

■ **Observations from the Field: Exploring the Role of Endogenous Environmental Subjectivities in the Efficacy of Blue Carbon Interventions in Marginalized Communities in Southeast Asia**

Author: Jake D. Chavara

■ **Silent Struggles: Mental Health Stigma in Malaysia's Social and Cultural Tapestry**

Author: Khairin Amin

■ **Is it still possible for Indonesian Civil Society Organisations to maintain their influence for policy changes under a Prabowo Administration?**

Author: Papang Hidayat

■ **Prabowo and Indonesia's Vulnerable Democracy**

Author: Greg Fealy

■ **Prabowo's Islamist Connection: A Future Political Weapon?**

Author: Nava Nuraniyah

■ **Prabowo and the UK**

Author: Chris Chaplin

■ **Prabowo Subianto's 'hands-on' Foreign Policy Beckons**

Author: Daniel Peterson

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Podcast



Dialogues on Southeast Asia is a podcast series hosted by the Centre. It features discussions with specialists in diverse disciplines and with different expertise on the countries of the region and Southeast Asia as a whole.

Dialogues on Southeast Asia episodes are available on all major podcast streaming platforms, including Spotify and Apple Podcasts. The series is part of the **New Books Network**, an academic podcast platform with a global reach.

Stuck at Home: Pandemic Immobilities in the Nation of Emigration

8 August 2025

In this episode, host Dr. Sharmila Parmanand (LSE-SEAC) is joined by Dr Yasmin Ortiga, Associate Professor of Sociology at Singapore Management University, to speak to us about her latest book, *Stuck at Home: Pandemic Immobilities in the Nation of Emigration*, published by Stanford University Press. Yasmin is mainly interested in how changing ideas about desirable “skill” shape where and why people migrate. This question has led her to study different groups of migrants - from international students to farm workers. She is best known for her research on migrant nurses, one of the most highly regulated professions in the world. She is the author of *Emigration, Employability, and Higher Education in the Philippines* (2018). Her latest book, *Stuck at Home*, is a little different in that Yasmin is now focused on the question of how do people not move.

The May 2025 Mid-Term Elections in the Philippines

25 June 2025

In this episode, Prof. John Sidel (LSE-SEAC) focuses on the mid-term elections in the Philippines which were held in May of this year, including all local elected positions, all seats in the House of Representatives, and twelve of the twenty-four seats in the Senate. The elections have been viewed as a reflection on the administration of President Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos, Jr. and as especially consequential for the future of Vice-President Sara Duterte. She was impeached by the House of Representatives in February 2025, setting the stage for a trial by the Senate, but with her continuing popularity making her a serious contender for the presidency in 2028. To interpret the mid-term elections, Prof. Sidel has turned to Dr. Sharmila Parmanand, an Assistant Professor in Gender, Development and Globalisation in the Department of Gender Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and an Associate and member of the Management Committee of the LSE’s Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre.

Public Healthcare Under Decentralized Governance in Indonesia and the Philippines

24 November 2024

This episode focuses on the policy challenges and politics of public healthcare in Southeast Asia, a topic which has become increasingly visible and important in Southeast Asia and in the study of the region over the past decades in the context of expanding public healthcare programs in many countries across the region and the recent experience of the global pandemic. To discuss these issues, host Prof. John Sidel (LSE-SEAC) is joined by Prof. Sarah Shair-Rosenfield, Professor of Comparative Politics in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of York, who has been conducting research on public healthcare in Indonesia and the Philippines over the past several years.

Unpacking Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia

5 November 2024

In this episode, Prof. John Sidel (LSE-SEAC) focuses on a major issue of enduring importance in Southeast Asia and in Southeast Asian Studies: authoritarianism. Even today, various forms of dictatorship remain alive and well across Southeast Asia, raising questions about their origins, their endurance, and the prospects for their evolution. To discuss these issues, he interviews Prof. Dan Slater, James Orin Murfin Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center of Emerging Democracies at the University of Michigan. Prof. Slater is one of the world's leading specialists on authoritarianism in Southeast Asia and the author of important and influential works on this topic and more broadly on the politics of the region.

Bananapocalypse: Plantation Southeast Asia and Its Many Afterlives

6 October 2024

This episode focuses on a cluster of issues of longstanding significance in Southeast Asia and in Southeast Asian Studies – plantation agriculture, global commodity chains or supply chains, exploitation of labour and environmental degradation, and resistance. To discuss these issues, host Prof. John Sidel (LSE-SEAC) is joined by Dr. Alyssa Paredes, an environmental and economic anthropologist who is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan.

Prabowo Subianto and the Decline of Indonesian Democracy

2 October 2024

This episode focuses on Indonesia, the presidential election held in February 2024, and the impending inauguration of the winner of that election, former Army general and current defence minister Prabowo Subianto, in a few weeks' time. Prabowo's victory in February, events over the past several months, and the imminent transition to a Prabowo presidency have heightened concerns about the state of democracy in Indonesia. To discuss these issues, host Prof. John Sidel (LSE-SEAC) is joined by Prof. Edward Aspinall Professor in the Department of Political and Social Change at the Corall Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs at the Australian National University. Prof. Aspinall is one of the world's leading specialists on Indonesian politics and someone who has been writing about worrying trends in Indonesian politics for many years.

[Visit Podcast Page >](#)

EDI at the Centre

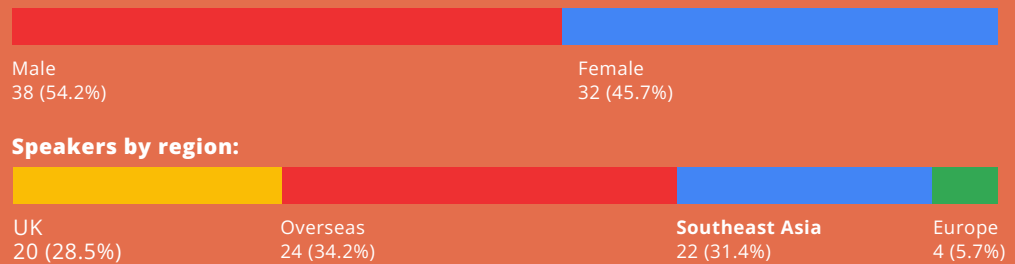
SEAC approached all its work with LSE's principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in mind. This approach can particularly be seen in our events programme, where we have welcomed a diverse range of speakers to the Centre to discuss regional topics from a variety of backgrounds, approaches, and academic disciplines. Decentring knowledge production and access to knowledge is core to the Centre's approach. We are pleased to report on our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at the Centre, and in particular, to share statistics on our speakers:

35

Number of events

70

Number of speakers

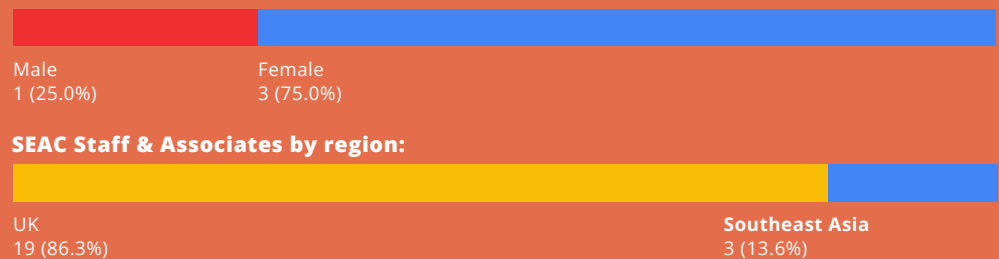


4

Number of SEAC Staff

18

SEAC Associates



Outreach and Engagement

Student Engagement

LSE's student body comprises around 7% of students from Southeast Asia, with 10% of undergraduate students from Southeast Asia, reflecting the region's diversity, culture, and peoples. As Southeast Asia's hub at LSE, SEAC continues to actively engage with Southeast Asian students, particularly with LSE Students' Union societies related to Southeast Asia:

- **Filipino Society**
- **Malaysia Club**
- **Singapore Society**
- **Indonesian Society**
- **Thai Society**
- **Vietnamese Society**

Student numbers from Southeast Asia

	2024-2025	
	UG	PG
Myanmar	2	6
Thailand	52	34
Laos	0	1
Vietnam	19	15
Cambodia	1	4
Malaysia	236	30
Singapore	275	87
Brunei	6	1
Indonesia	21	66
Philippines	4	15
Timor Leste	0	0
TOTAL	616	259

Autumn Term Events 2025

OCTOBER

1 OCT

12pm-1.15pm

Chanapang Pongpiboonkiat, University of Leeds

Caught in the Crossfire: Thai Military Women's Mediated Experience and Self-Representation

8 OCT

12pm-1.15pm

Stéphen Huard, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement

Calibrated Engagement: Chronicles of Local Politics in the Heartland of Myanmar (book talk)

15 OCT

12pm-1.15pm

Mark Bo, Independent researcher

Inside Southeast Asia's Cybercrime Compounds (book talk)

22 OCT

12pm-1.15pm

Bernard Keo, Geneva Graduate Institute

Imagining Malaya, Rethinking Merdeka: Decolonisation and Nation-Making through the Perspective of the Peranakan Chinese, 1945-1957 (book talk)

24 OCT

12pm-1.15pm

Trissia Wijaya, University of Melbourne

The Political Economy of Japanese and Chinese Infrastructure Financing Governance (book talk)

27 OCT

5pm-6.15pm

Wichuta Teeratanabodee, University of Cambridge

Jeffrey Wasserstrom, University of California, Irvine

Tales of Two Cities: Prodemocracy Protests and Beijing's Lengthening Shadow in Bangkok and Hong Kong, 2015-2025

Autumn Term Events 2025

NOVEMBER

12 NOV
12pm-1.15pm

Daniel Whitehouse, SOAS

Affective Cohorts: Why Elite Schools Matter for Southeast Asian Politics

19 NOV
12pm-1.15pm

**Marie Gibert-Flutre, Université Paris 1
Panthéon-Sorbonne**

Platformization, Citizenship, and Statecraft in Vietnam: A Three-Body Problem

26 NOV
12pm-1.15pm

Martin Slama, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Revisiting "the Exemplary Centre" in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas, Ideologies, Cosmologies

DECEMBER

2 DEC
5:30pm-7pm

Meredith Weiss, University at Albany, SUNY

Scapegoating queers: Pinkblocking as state strategy

3 DEC
12pm-1.15pm

Pavan Mano, King's College London

Straight nation: Heteronormativity and other exigencies of postcolonial nationalism (book talk)

8 DEC
12pm-1.15pm

Sana Jaffrey, Australian National University

Impunity from below: Vigilantism and the state in democratic Indonesia

10 DEC
12pm-1.15pm

**Peter Zinoman, University of California at
Berkley**

Huy Đức and the Rise and Fall of Renovation in Vietnam



THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

LSE is a global community of people and ideas in the heart of central London. We're a specialist social sciences university, ranking sixth in the world in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024 and as the top university in London in the Complete University Guide 2025. LSE's motto "rerum cognoscere causas" means "to know the causes of things". It was chosen to support the School's founding purpose, "for the betterment of society". Our ambition today is to be the leading social science university with the greatest global impact. Led by our new President and Vice Chancellor, Professor Larry Kramer who joined LSE in April 2024.

International Outlook

We are committed to building a vibrant, equitable and truly inclusive environment for staff and students from all over the world. We have partnerships with globally renowned universities spanning Europe, Africa, America and Asia including CIVICA - The European University of Social Sciences. In the UK, we are part of the Russell Group, the Aspect social science research commercialisation network, and the launch of SHAPE - Social sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy.

An LSE Education

We help students prepare for bright futures in world-changing roles. A rigorous social science education is designed to stretch students

intellectually through specialist undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, executive education, distance learning and summer schools. LSE students are members of one of the largest economic and social science libraries in the world. Initiatives such as LSE LIFE, the PhD Academy, Student Futures, Careers, Volunteering and Generate provide academic, personal and professional support for students too. The student-led Houghton Street Press is one of many ways LSE students engage with the world.

Research and Society

LSE academics conduct social science research that makes a lasting impact on society. This means students are taught by academics that regularly advise international bodies and governments, and who are also vocal in the media on current news. The 2021 Research Excellence Framework, a national evaluation exercise, ranked LSE as a top university for research quality and impact. We're continuously expanding our research horizon to reflect and aid the changing society around us. Our current Understanding Global Politics initiative brings together LSE research to shed light on the topic.

The Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre

Support Us

As the primary hub for Southeast Asia research in the UK, SEAC seeks funding to help support its mission. The Centre is looking to engage in individual and long-term partnerships to drive the work of the Centre and to work together to promote research on Southeast Asia. Without generous support, this vital hub for academic research on Southeast Asia would be lost, marginalising scholarship on the region and limiting possibilities for learning and exchange. The generous support of funders will allow SEAC to continue its work and impact, through our funding priorities. Below is an illustration of how your support can help us:

- £1000 will enable an undergraduate or Master's student to undertake dissertation research in Southeast Asia
- £5000 will enable the Centre to host a small workshop with participants from Southeast Asia.
- £5000-10,000 grant will fund a PhD student's fieldwork in Southeast Asia.
- £10-20,000 will provide seed funding for LSE academic staff research projects in Southeast Asia.
- £20,000 will enable the Centre to host a conference with public lectures focused on major contemporary issues in Southeast Asia.
- £110,000 will pay for a fully-funded PhD for a UK student focused on Southeast Asia
- £175,000 will pay for a fully-funded PhD for a student from Southeast Asia
- £10 million will serve as a long-term endowment to allow the Centre to survive for years to come.



SOUTHEAST ASIA

**LSE Saw Swee Hock
Southeast Asia Centre (SEAC)**

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