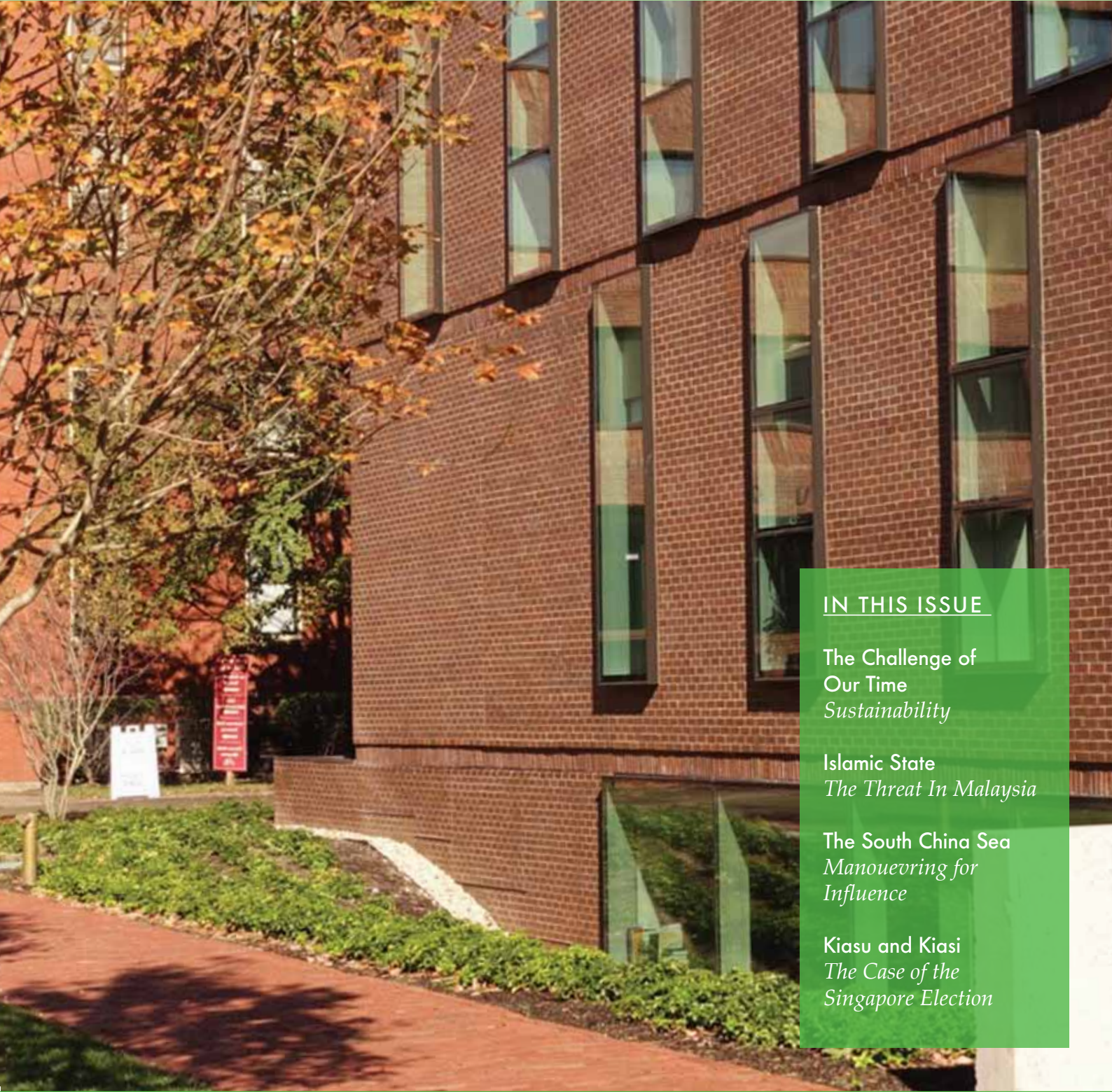




Jeffrey Cheah Institute
on Southeast Asia

THE COMPASS

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Professor, Seoul National University, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, South Korea



Woo Wing Thye

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Converting the threat of a new Cold War to an opportunity for greater economic prosperity

Of the think tank work undertaken by the three public policy research programmes at the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia (JCI) in 2015, I would like to use the opportunity of this President's Message to highlight the one that draws attention to a serious emerging threat to Malaysia and the rest of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This threat comes from the continued intensification of the competition between the United States and China. In the many workshops on US-China relations that I have attended in the last decade, one very popular view about the future of US-China relations is based on the global consequences of the rise of Germany in the 1890s and the rise of Japan in the 1930s. In both cases, there was a disastrous war between the emerging super-power and the existing super-power.

According to this popular view, ASEAN should expect a war between China and the United States. In my view, this prediction of a war between China and the US will almost surely be wrong. This is because the nature of conflict between major powers has taken on a new form since 29 August 1949. On that day, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb, and this development rendered war between the USSR and the US possible only if at least one of the two leaders was mad and well beyond the restraint of his colleagues.

However, the absence of a US-China war in the future does not imply a "no worries" outcome for ASEAN. From 1949 onwards, conflict between the USSR and the US took the form of indirect wars, such as the wars in Cambodia, Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola, Cuba, Bolivia and Afghanistan. In the age of nuclear weapons, the conflict between major powers assumes the form of proxy war that is fought between third and fourth parties with conventional weapons supplied by the major powers. The question for ASEAN is whether Southeast Asia might again become a battleground – this time in a Cold War between the US and China.

The potential of a US-China Cold War first appeared on 21 August 1991 when the Soviet Union imploded after the KGB coup against Mikhail Gorbachev failed. The country's disintegration brought to an end the de-facto US-China alliance against the USSR.

There are worrying signs that a new Cold War is being hatched in sovereignty disputes over the South China Sea. In the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting in Phnom Penh in July 2012, the meeting failed to agree on a concluding joint statement for the first time in its 45-year history because of disagreement between Vietnam and the Philippines on the one hand and Cambodia on the other about whether mention should be made of the dispute over the South China Sea. The same division within ASEAN resulted again in the non-issuance of a communique by the ASEAN Defence Ministers meeting in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015. Clearly, we cannot rule out a second Cold War, but I do think that a second Cold War is entirely preventable.

The optimists among us would say that both Xi Jinping and Barack Obama are fully cognisant of the tremendous waste of such a confrontation and are each not sure that his own side would win. More importantly, neither the Chinese people nor the American people fear or dislike each other enough to support a Cold War. One must acknowledge, however, the occasional capacity of our species to be short-sighted or short-tempered. The inescapable fact is that there will always be conflicts between nations, but then there are low-level conflicts, medium-level conflicts and high-level conflicts.

A low-level conflict is like a type of competition between brothers a sibling rivalry. In this situation, China and the US would be able to resolve differences through bilateral diplomatic means. Southeast Asia would then be left to its own devices as long as its behavior is consistent with the Sino-US consensus on the international order.

A medium-level conflict is like the conflict between the Democrats and Republicans in the US, a longstanding two-party state. With US-China tension at medium-level, ASEAN countries will profit from the separate efforts of the US and China to "win friends and influence people". This is why in 2015 China bought a possibly overpriced power station from 1MDB; US President Obama played golf with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib as a show of political support; China made a more generous offer than Japan to build the high-speed railroad connecting Bandung and Jakarta; and the US

granted extraordinary exemptions to Vietnam and Malaysia in the TPP negotiations. More recently, in February 2016, President Obama hosted a get-together for ASEAN leaders in Sunnylands, California.

A high-level conflict is like the conflict between a wife and a mistress. ASEAN will certainly lose in this second Cold War, because both the US and China would adopt the stance of 'if you are not with me, then you are against me', forcing ASEAN to take sides in the conflict.

The area where escalation to high level conflict seems likeliest is the buildup of Chinese military capacity in the South China Sea. In 2015 China built at least four artificial military installations over what the rest of the world perceived as 'rocks in the sea' and stationed troops on the disputed islands. In February 2016, the Chinese military established an anti-aircraft missile system on Woody Island in the Paracel islands, which are claimed by both the Chinese and the Vietnamese. The installation of anti-aircraft missiles is a clear signal that China is prepared to enforce the Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the South China Sea that it declared unilaterally last year.

The US has signalled its rights to free passage in the disputed zone by having a military jet fly through the ADIZ and a warship sail within twelve miles of Triton Island in the Paracels. The US, in all likelihood, will arrange more such flights and naval passages this year. All it would take is a mistake on either the Chinese side, or the US side, for the conflict to become 'hot'.

ASEAN MUST WORK TOGETHER

ASEAN, therefore, cannot be a bystander in the present intensification of Sino-US conflict. JCI proposes that ASEAN must now work together on three fronts. The first front is to work with other countries and international bodies (like the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union) to strengthen existing global mechanisms of conflict mediation, for example, World Court and World Trade Organization.

The second front is to establish a strong regional mediation institution. The question is whether this regional mediation institution could be built without China's active support. It is generally to China's advantage to delay the establishment of a regional institution because China can count quite confidently on being an even bigger economic and political power in the future, a position that would give it greater influence. It is therefore incumbent on ASEAN to make China realise that this advantage has to be weighed against the greater risk of driving ASEAN irreversibly closer to the US now.

The third front is for ASEAN to undertake actions that will accelerate its rise as a unitary economic powerhouse. ASEAN has to be important enough for the economic health of the US and Chinese economies to motivate the two countries to be at least begrudgingly agreeable to ASEAN's requests to strengthen global institutions and to participate in the ASEAN regional mediation mechanism. ASEAN's transformation into a unitary economic powerhouse will require every ASEAN member to undertake two sets of root-and-branch reforms.

The first set of reforms is to boost economic development in each country. For example, Malaysia and Thailand, the two most advanced ASEAN countries after Singapore, have been

caught in the middle-income trap since 1995. The ratios of the standard of living in Malaysia and in Thailand to that of the United States have been stagnant since 1994, meaning that there has been no closing of the development gaps between these two countries and the US.

The second set of reforms is to accelerate the process of economic integration in ASEAN to achieve the declared objectives of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). AEC must become as integrated economically by 2020 as NAFTA is today. I want to add that while ASEAN members are embracing tight economic integration with each other through the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), they should also embrace economic integration with the United States through the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and embrace economic integration with China through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

It is important to note that each economic integration programme will result in losers as well as winners. Because the gains of the winners will exceed the losses of the losers, ASEAN is morally obliged to mobilise some of the gains to fund programmes to compensate the losers, for example, a trade adjustment programme to facilitate the transition of the displaced workers to new jobs, and, in the case of Malaysia's joining TPP, to subsidise the poor on the drugs that would experience price increases due to the shutting out of some types of generic medicine. The reason for the TPP debate to have been so rancorous in Malaysia, despite the unusually large concessions by the US (e.g. Malaysia's preferential system of government procurement was left intact), was the failure of the Malaysian government to give any meaningful trade adjustment assistance to those hurt by TPP.

These two sets of reforms must be implemented simultaneously because they are synergistic in nature and their interaction will speed up the emergence of ASEAN as a world economic power. For example, the treaty commitment of an ASEAN member to bring AEC to fruition within a specified time period can be one of the arguments used by the government to defeat the interest groups that are blocking the badly-needed national economic reforms.

SUGGESTION: AN OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN, ETC.

To sum up, the strategic response that JCI is suggesting to US-China rivalry is, one, to strengthen global peacekeeping institutions and to establish a regional mediation mechanism to prevent the escalation of US-China tensions; and, two, to enact the reforms that are necessary to create an economically powerful ASEAN Economic Community. The JCI prescription is that the best defence is a strong economy, which is that ASEAN should convert the US-China threat into an opportunity for region-wide economic construction. A regional security architecture can only be built on the foundation of strong economies.

JCI is optimistic about the future of ASEAN because a number of the specific measures in each of the two sets of reform are already known, and the others can be designed with some additional research. JCI is ready, willing, and able to do its part to help ASEAN members achieve the goals of national development and deep regional integration. Hence, a key item in the Institute's work agenda in 2016 is an outreach programme to think tanks in Southeast Asia to collaborate in the design of country-specific reform packages. An exciting year lies ahead for the institute.



THE WORLD ECONOMY IN 2016

Professor Kuan Chung-Ming & Professor Woo Wing Thy

SLOWDOWN OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR REFORM

The difficult economic conditions of 2016 provide an opportunity for countries, including China, to embrace reform to achieve more sustainable growth, Professor Woo Wing Thy, President of the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia, told The World Economy in 2016 Forum at Sunway University in January 2016.

"Growth in 2016 will be lower for most countries, including Malaysia and China, but that could be good for a few of these countries if they do not waste this crisis," Woo said. "Instead of being passive victims of the disaster that is unfolding, Malaysia and China should reform and shape the future that they will face."

"We are now in the middle of a semi-panic," Professor Woo added, referring to a 12 January note from the Royal Bank of Scotland that investors should sell everything except for high-quality bonds. He explained that the 'unconventional monetary policy' known as Quantitative Easing (QE), pursued by the U.S. in the wake of the 2008 crisis was partly to blame for the world's current economic problems because while it had helped underpin a U.S. recovery, it had created speculative bubbles elsewhere.

The U.S. financial crisis of 2008 had its origin in Alan Greenspan's chairmanship of the U.S. Federal Reserve (1992-2006), when he failed to understand that economic globalisation would draw an industrialising China into the international economy and expand global productive capacity, Professor Woo argued. As a result, 'excessive' U.S. money growth would not lead to higher U.S. inflation, but to increased imports, a larger U.S. trade deficit, and bubbles in stocks and property.

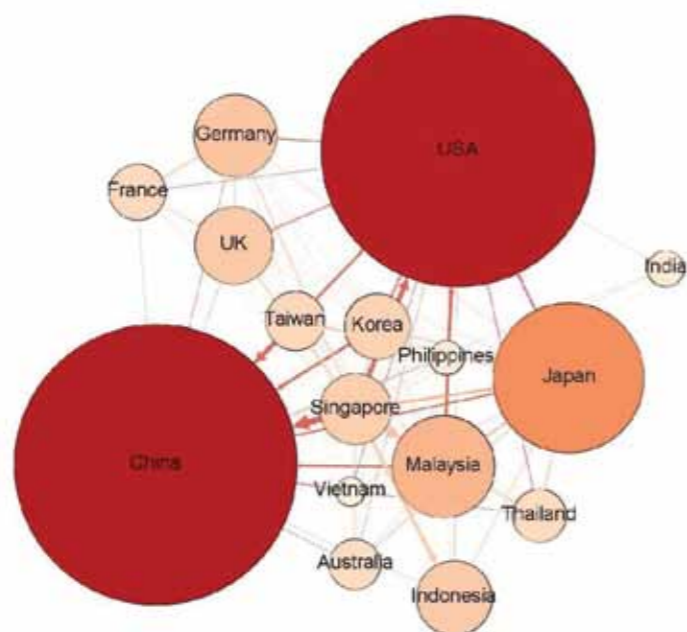
The Chinese economy is in trouble now because the government continued with its stimulus policies for too long, creating a 'bubble' of over-capacity in heavy industry, Professor Woo told the audience. The macro-stimulus that started in late 2008 was effective in boosting output, in contrast to the U.S. and Japan, because of the dominance of state-controlled firms in China's economy. The obedience-maximising managers of state firms and local governments ramped up investments without regard for excess capacity, while the obedience-maximising managers of state banks gave out loans without risk assessment, he said.

The credit-fuelled investments by state enterprises and local governments continued into 2013, creating lots of excess capacity in the industrial sector and bad loans in the banking sector. China produced more cement between 2011 and 2013 than the U.S. did in the whole of the 20th century, Professor Woo said.

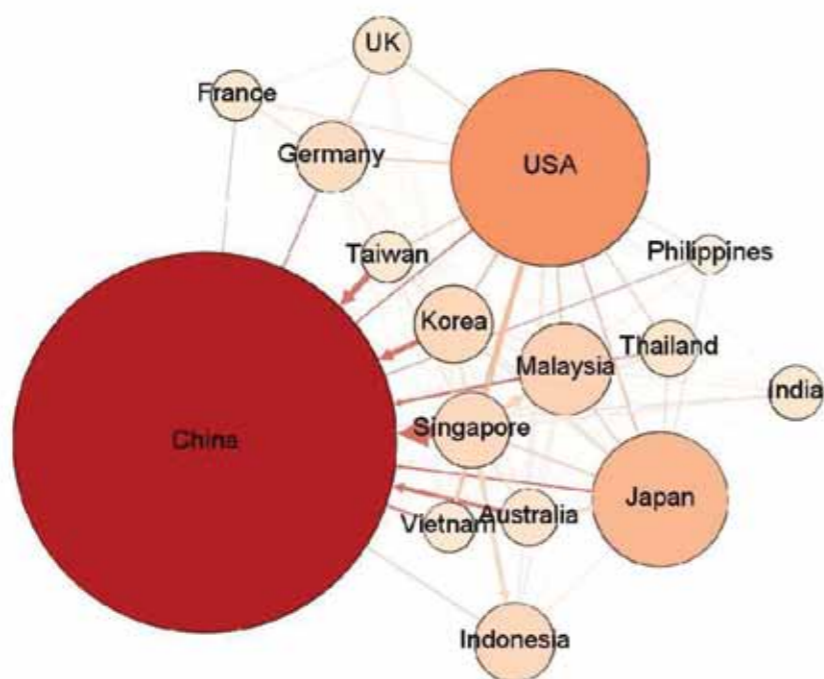
Turning to Malaysia, the JCI President pointed out the country's 'normal' rate of growth has fallen to around 5%, compared with 7.5% before the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, because foreign investment has been diverted to China after it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001. In addition, the acceleration of brain drain and capital flight in the last 15 years, has left Malaysia without a critical mass of skilled labour and capital, making it difficult for Malaysia to move up the value-added ladder on its own.

Also speaking at the forum, Professor Kuan Chung-Min of the National Taiwan University and a former economic planning minister in the island's government, mapped trade links between the world's major economies in the years since 2004, highlighting China's increasing importance not only globally, but regionally.

WORLD TRADE LINKS 2004



WORLD TRADE LINKS 2014



"In trade terms, China matters the most in Asia," he concluded. Going beyond trade to address the impact of monetary policy and political relations, Professor Kuan warned that Taiwan and Malaysia were most at risk from economic shocks emanating from China and the U.S., the world's two biggest economies. The countries most affected by the slowdown needed to do more to address the economic challenges.

Professor Woo noted that, after the 1929 crash, the U.S. implemented transformational changes in financial regulation to promote transparency and accountability, and reduce speculation, but that no similar reform was initiated after the 2008 crisis because the government bailed out the bankers. The result was that U.S. financiers remained powerful enough to resist reform.

Woo went on to argue that policymaking in the U.S. is paralysed by public mistrust of the government's ability to fix problems, and a widespread sense of insecurity and vulnerability. In his view, U.S. policymakers are mistakenly focussed on cutting the size of government and maintaining the debt ceiling rather than leading efforts to restructure the economic system to deal with globalization and technological changes.

For China, Professor Woo said that the country needed to reform its financial markets, privatise rural land, reduce the size of the state sector, and terminate its 'hukou' system of residential registration to allow people to move to large coastal cities such as Tianjin and Shanghai. These measures, he said, would promote the growth of small-and medium-size private businesses, and accelerate the type of urbanisation that increases innovation.

For Malaysia, Professor Woo saw the urgent need for reforms on four fronts. First, Malaysia should unleash the entrepreneurship of the private sector by reining in the state sector, for example, ending the monopoly status of government-linked companies (GLCs) and ending the GLCs' practice of buying up successful private companies. Second, Malaysia should focus on improving the human capital of the bottom 40%. The objective of education should be to empower creative thinking and skill acquisition, and not to engage in social engineering and brainwashing, he said.

Third, Malaysia should stop the needless conflict over the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) by instituting trade adjustment assistance to the people hurt by TPP, including sponsoring worker training to facilitate movement to other jobs.

In general, Malaysia should be more inclusive in its socio-economic policies to improve the investment climate. And finally, the country must develop a new federal-state compact on administrative and fiscal decentralisation to create multiple centres of policy initiatives. Increased local accountability would promote growth competition between the states, boosting economic development country-wide, he argued. For example, the stunning success of the pioneering efforts of Penang (beginning in 1970) in attracting FDI led to a nation-wide campaign to welcome foreign investment.

Professor Kuan, meanwhile, recommended that ASEAN members counter the China slowdown by promoting more trade among themselves – currently about a quarter of all trade – and improving their infrastructure.



Professor Arthur Kleinman,
Victor and William Fung Director
Harvard University's Asia Center

JCI HARVARD CONFERENCE

SOUTHEAST ASIA EXPLORES SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: COPING WITH SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, BIG POWER RIVALRY, AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Harvard University Asia Center and the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia jointly organised the one-day conference "Southeast Asia explores sustainable development: coping with socio-economic difficulties, big power rivalry, and climate change" on 27 October 2015 at Harvard University.

BIG POWER RIVALRY

The panel on "Big Power Rivalry" examined the ways in which Southeast Asian nations are adapting to the military and economic competition between the United States and China, with particular attention to the region's evolving economic architecture, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

James Chin, JCI Senior Fellow in Governance Studies, Mari Pangestu, Professor of International Economics at the University of Indonesia, Woo Wing Thye, and Anthony Saich, Director of the Ash Center for Democratic Governance at the Harvard Kennedy School discussed the issues.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The second panel highlighted both the necessity and difficulty of structuring economies in a way that is ecologically and socially sustainable. The three speakers - Daniel Schrag, Sturgis Hooper Professor of Geology at Harvard and Director of the Harvard University Center for the Environment, Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, and Somkiat Tangkivanich, President of the Thailand Development Research Institute - discussed how sustainable development was perceived differently around the world and the need for new technologies to address the problems created by climate change.



Professor Woo Wing Thye, Professor Mari Pangestu,
Professor Anthony Saich and Professor James Chin

WORKING LUNCH

Over lunch, Rema Hanna, Associate Professor of Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, elaborated on her experimental, evidence-based approach to evaluating policy interventions, and stressed the importance of this approach to improving decision-making. Drawing on her fieldwork in Indonesia, Hanna presented case studies of health insurance enrollment and food transfer programme to show how a systematic assessment of administrative data can point to underlying problems in policy design and implementation. Hanna expressed her hope that, in the coming years, academics and policymakers would collaborate to expand knowledge of key policy debates in Southeast Asia.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

The third panel examined both the historical and contemporary economic trajectories of Southeast Asian nations. A consensus on the critical importance of education to economic competitiveness was evident across the panel in both their historical analysis and their policy recommendations for the future.

The speakers were Dwight Perkins, Harold Hitchings Burbank Professor of Political Economy Emeritus, at Harvard University, Tan Sri Lin See Yan, Research Professor at Sunway University, and author of *The Global Economy in Turbulent Times*, and Muhamad Chatib Basri, Ash Center Senior Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School and former Finance Minister of Indonesia.

INCLUSIVE SOCIAL PROGRAMMES

The final panel focussed on the human dimension of sustainable economic development in Southeast Asia and how to make development more socially inclusive.

Arthur Kleinman, Victor and William Fung Director of the Harvard Asia Center, Professor of Anthropology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University, and Professor of Medical Anthropology and Professor of Psychiatry in the Harvard Medical School, opened the panel. Hongtu Chen, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, and Michael Herzfeld, Ernest E. Monrad Professor of Social Sciences at Harvard University, also spoke.

CONCLUSION

After a day of presentations and discussions, the conference concluded with an evening reception in honour of Tan Sri Jeffrey Cheah.

4TH ANNUAL SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES SYMPOSIUM & 32ND MEETING OF THE ASIAN ECONOMIC PANEL (AEP)

Some 450 hundred scholars and students from 25 countries gathered at Sunway University from 20 – 24 March 2015 for two academic conferences; the Southeast Asia Studies Symposium, co-organized by Project Southeast Asia at University of Oxford and the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia, from March 20-22; and the meeting of the Asian Economic Panel (AEP), organised by the Earth Institute of Columbia University, the Korea Institute of International Economic Policy, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, and the Jeffrey Cheah Institute from March 23-24.

Participants discussed issues from art to freedom of expression, and race relations to environmental degradation. It was the first time the Symposium had been held outside Oxford.

Sultan Dr. Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, who graduated from Oxford and Harvard universities, opened the event.

In his address, the Sultan of Perak argued that ASEAN was essential for the peace and prosperity of the more than 620 million people who live in the organisation's ten member states. Where ethnic and religious divisions give rise to social and security challenges, "neighbours can assist to mediate in the process as in the case with the Philippines and Thailand," he noted, alluding to the role of Malaysia in attempts to broker peace in the two countries.

He also called for a greater willingness on the part of the member states to forego their traditional commitment to decision making by consensus, which he said would enable the group to respond more effectively to the political and economic challenges they faced.

Professor Wang Gungwu from the National University of Singapore, delivered the keynote lecture. He argued that world history could be understood as the gradual shift of power from the Eurasian core to its western and eastern edges.

The contest between the nomadic societies of Central Asia and the agrarian states of Europe and China led to the emergence of Western and Chinese civilisations, and maritime power eventually enabled Western powers to achieve global dominance.

This framework, he argued, gives coherence to seemingly disconnected historical phenomena, and positions Southeast Asia to play a vital role in world history. Southeast Asia is the only region which is both continental and maritime, both Western and Eastern due to its history of colonialism, and highly interconnected. However, the global influence of Southeast Asia would depend ultimately on its own ability to unify and integrate.



Sultan Dr. Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah hitting a traditional Malay gong at the opening ceremony

The AEP meets three times a year to discuss economic issues of importance to Asia. Each meeting involves 40 Asia experts from around the world, and selected papers from the meeting are published in the journal, *Asian Economic Papers* (MIT Press).

Among the AEP sessions was a panel discussion on "Slower growth in Southeast Asia; What is to be done" with Chatib Basri (former Minister of Finance, Indonesia), Chalongsob Sussangkarn (former Minister of Finance, Thailand), Mari Elka Pangestu (former Minister of Trade, Indonesia), Lin See Yan (former Deputy Governor of Bank Negara Malaysia) and Barry Eichengreen (University of California, Berkeley). Other sessions considered the economics of post-conflict Sri Lanka, Russia's economic difficulties and Malaysia's middle-income trap.



Prof. Wang Gungwu (left), one of the keynote speakers

The AEP meeting featured two Jeffrey Cheah Distinguished Public Lectures. The first was delivered by Barry Eichengreen (Global Economic Prospects: What Should Keep Us Up at Night?) and the second by Jeffrey Sachs (The Age of Sustainable Development), which concluded the event.



Participants and speakers at the 4th Southeast Asian Studies Symposium



Professor Jorn Dosch

ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

CLOSER INTEGRATION NEEDS LEGALLY-BINDING AGREEMENTS

The commitment of ASEAN countries to voluntary rather than legally binding agreements has hindered their progress towards closer integration, despite an end-2015 deadline to implement the ASEAN Economic Community, according to a leading European academic.

Professor Jorn Dosch from Universitat Rostock in Germany, in a lecture comparing the integration experiences of the European Union, and ASEAN, noted that the ever closer relationship of the European Union was part of a legally binding process.

"I don't believe it's possible to establish a fully-integrated community based on voluntary agreements or giving everyone veto powers," Dosch said in his talk.

"You have in ASEAN, the 10 minus x formula; that everyone can join at their own time and leisure, but nothing is legally binding. There are about 350 agreements signed by Asean member states on all sorts of issues; that's an impressive number, but none of these agreements are binding. There is no stakeholder or authority in a position to enforce this agreement so it's all based on goodwill."

Dosch noted Europe's integration was rules-based, and monitored and enforced by the European Commission, a powerful regional body.

On the other hand, ASEAN had opted for voluntary agreements with no supranational authority, and had not progressed as far as it had proposed under the AEC, which called for the creation of a single market and production base. While intra-regional trade in the European Union was about 68% of total trade, in ASEAN the share was only 26%, only slightly more than the 21% recorded in 1998, Dosch pointed out.

"I would expect that if the group of states was working towards deeper regional integration, the share of internal trade would be going up, but this is not the case," he said. Dosch explained that there were a number of reasons behind the sluggish growth in regional trade including a lack of complementarity among ASEAN economies, and rapid growth in other markets – particularly China, the expansion of non-tariff barriers and the fact that most ASEAN companies are small-and medium-size businesses with little interest in expanding beyond borders.

"There are few champions of integration."

Dosch noted that there had been some successes, particularly in terms of harmonizing customs procedures and streamlining the bureaucracy associated with trade. Nevertheless, he argued that those improvements had been driven largely by ASEAN's trading partners, countries such as the EU, Japan, Australia and the United States. As many as 2,000 projects in the customs sector had been funded by external forces, he said.

A lack of broad interest among the broader population of ASEAN, as well as the institutional weakness of the ASEAN Secretariat – the organisation has just 300 staff compared with 33,000 at the European Commission – also made it more difficult for Asean to achieve its integration ambitions, Dosch said.

Acknowledging that a strong supranational authority was "unthinkable" for ASEAN, Dosch concluded that the member states had been too ambitious in their public commitment to a single market.

"There is a gap between the vision of what ASEAN wants to achieve and the political reality of what the member states are willing to implement," he said.



Ahmad El- Muhammady

THE ISLAMIC STATE THREAT IN MALAYSIA

ISLAMIC STATE REQUIRES A NEW APPROACH TO TACKLING TERRORISM

Islamic State is a "unique" kind of terrorist organisation that demands a new approach from governments aiming to curb its spread and deter new recruits, according to Ahmad El- Muhammady, a lecturer from the International Islamic University Malaysia.

El-Muhammady, who has also advised the Malaysian police on terrorist rehabilitation, said that Islamic State operated more like a business corporation than a traditional terrorist group.

"It's hard to imagine IS as an ordinary terrorist group because it's unique," El-Muhammady said in his talk. "I would propose (to look at) IS as a kind of business corporation. Understanding them is a step towards defeating them."

El-Muhammady noted a number of key features of the Islamic State:

- 1 Its organisational structure, akin to that of a business corporation headed by a CEO, Managing Director and Senior Leadership Team setting a direction for a company.
- 2 Monthly income of some US\$3 million from black market oil sales and significant areas under its control.
- 3 Its use of the Internet and slickly produced multimedia to spread its message and win over new recruits.
- 4 Its ability to attract a significant number of Westerners and non-Arab fighters, estimated to be more than 10,000, to join them.



“They make IS like a brand name,” El-Muhammady told the audience. “It’s something some people are proud of.”

Between 100 and 150 Malaysians are thought to be fighting with IS, which controls large swathes of Syria and Iraq, and more than 120 Malaysians have been arrested on suspicion of connections to the group. According to El-Muhammady, around three quarters of Malaysians recruited to the cause were through social media, especially Facebook.

Reflecting on his conversations with those in detention, El-Muhammady suggested people were drawn to the group for three main reasons:

- 1 Religion - wanting to help fellow Muslims whom they felt were under attack
- 2 Politics - feeling that Malaysia is “un-Islamic” and there is a need to fight global injustices against Muslims.
- 3 Personal - looking for a new life, whether through redemption or for love.

He said recruits also tended to share a number of characteristics: sincerity, fanaticism, a lack of religious knowledge and determination.

“I would propose (to look at) IS as a kind of business corporation.”

El-Muhammady argued IS poses an ideological threat to Malaysia because its followers reject notions of democracy and peaceful coexistence, and a security threat because of its extreme violence and use of religious texts to justify its acts. He said Malaysia should adopt a comprehensive strategy to deal with the group - strengthening the legal framework to deal with terrorism, tightening security to detect, disrupt and detain those suspected of terrorist involvement, deepening efforts to counter violent extremism and enhancing rehabilitation programmes.

The Malaysian police’s deradicalization programmes had proved effective with other groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah, achieving a success rate of about 96%, probably the highest in the world, El-Muhammady said.



Dato' Noor Farida Ariffin speaks at JCI

THE G25 AND ITS AGENDA FOR A ‘BETTER’ MALAYSIA

The G25 drew national attention at the end of 2014 after it urged the Malaysian government to review Shariah criminal offences and assert the supremacy of the Federal Constitution.

The informal group of Malay intellectuals counts former senior civil servants, ambassadors, bankers and judges among its membership and sees itself as a voice of moderation on religion. It also champions clean and transparent government.

G25’s spokeswoman, Noor Farida Ariffin, a former ambassador and Sessions Court judge, spoke to the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia in August on the group’s agenda for a better Malaysia.

How do you think Malaysia got to where it is today?

Because the Barisan Nasional government has lost its two-thirds majority, their party leaders are focussing their efforts on the rural Malays. They think the way to win rural Malay hearts is to champion Islam. But frankly, to me they are being delusional because it’s not going to go well with Sabah and Sarawak. With the 1MDB scandal, rising prices, GST and the fall in the ringgit, the Malays are not going to support BN. They are being personally affected. The thinking within UMNO is that in order to win votes they must be seen as the champions of Islam. But people are thinking if you are the champion of Islam, how come you are so corrupt. Corruption is completely against Islamic teachings. Even now, rural Malays are asking these questions.

What changes do you want to see?

In the first place, I would like the government to introduce a series of measures to change the perception people have of Islam as a conservative religion. Promote Islam as a religion of peace, justice, kindness and compassion. This is what Islam is all about. Portray the real Islam, the proper Islamic teachings. Right now people think that all we’re interested in is moral policing. We want the government to form a consultative committee, comprising Shariah experts and Constitutional Law experts to review the Islamic criminal law enactments, and all those laws, which are inconsistent with the Federal Constitution should be repealed – the provisions or the laws themselves – and we would also recommend that the moral policing laws like ‘khalwat’ be repealed altogether. You are turning personal sins into crimes against the state, and that is wrong.

“Promote Islam as a religion of peace, justice, kindness and compassion. This is what Islam is all about.”

Given the current situation, how confident are you that there will be action?

I wouldn’t say I’m overly optimistic, but the point is we cannot give up. We’ve got to keep at it and we have to raise awareness. We need to influence Malaysians, especially the Muslims. All NGOs must be involved and we must convince the religious departments that we are not their enemies. We are doing this for Islam.

What about the direction in which Malaysia is headed, generally? Are you optimistic?

I’m an eternal optimist. It cannot go on. More and more people are speaking up. We still have general elections where people who do not believe in the policies of the government can cast their vote. My feeling is if they do not do anything to make things right; to have policies to ensure a better Malaysia, they will lose the next general election.



IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FEASIBLE?

Professor Jeffrey Sachs

In our confusing, confused and distracted world, we are running powerfully off course in many ways – climate change, the sixth great extinction, cities in danger, food supplies under threat, massive dislocations, widening inequalities of income,

“Is it even conceivable that we can get back on course? This is a deep and real concern.”

Simply speaking, sustainable development is the greatest, most complicated challenge humanity has ever faced. Climate change alone is extraordinarily difficult, but then add in these other challenges of a rapidly urbanising world, a great extinction process underway due to human domination of ecosystems, increasing population, and over-extraction from oceans and land resources.

These are complex problems, and are science-based issues without the necessary worldwide public literacy in the scientific underpinnings. These are issues of tremendous uncertainty in chaotic, nonlinear, complex systems. This is a multigenerational problem that we are unequipped by tradition to think about. It goes to core areas of our economic life like energy, transport, infrastructure and food supply, all of which need major technological overhauls.

There are powerful vested interests like Big Oil that have hindered clarity and progress on implementation. There are long lead times in rebuilding our infrastructure because infrastructure has such a long life expectancy, 50 – 100 years or more. And we have very limited time left, partly because we have in a way frittered away the last 22 years since the Rio Earth Summit, even though we had been on notice decades earlier.

We must not give up hope. We have identified very specific ways through our backcasting of how we can get from here to where we need to be. We have identified technologies that can decarbonise the energy system and lead to tremendous energy efficiency. We have identified technologies that can economise tremendously on land, raise agricultural productivity, and reduce the fluxes of nitrogen and phosphorous and their poisoning of the estuaries.

We have shown how cities can plan ahead and design smart infrastructure. These are opportunities within our grasp, not fanciful science fiction, but things that we know how to do and where the costs are absolutely within reach.

In many cases, as with wind power and solar power, the costs are already close to the traditional technologies, at least in some favoured regions of the world.

We can see how we could succeed with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), just as the world has made tremendous progress with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I believe that despite the cynicism, the darkness, the confusion and the miserable politics on many of these issues, we can make a breakthrough. Even though it looks as if the political systems are unresponsive, things can change. The most important message I would send is that ideas count. They can have an effect on public policy far beyond anything that can be imagined by the hard-bitten cynics.

Ideas have been transformative throughout history and have sparked some of the greatest transformational movements of the last two centuries (the time of our modern economic growth). First, consider the end of slavery.

The outlawing of slavery in the British Empire was the result of a massive social movement, the first of its kind in modern history. In the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, English leaders such as William Wilberforce and William Pitt the Younger took on the deeply embedded institution of slavery.

It took a few decades in the face of much cynicism and dirty dealings, but in 1807 the British Empire abolished the slave trade, and in 1833 abolished slavery entirely. This flew against powerful and entrenched British economic interests. In the end, the ideas and morality were the underlying forces of change.

The struggle against European colonial rule, led by Mahatma Gandhi and by many of his contemporaries in Africa and in

Asia, also at first seemed impossible. One would have bet in 1910 or 1930 that Gandhi would have been long forgotten by now and the British Empire would have continued to rule over India and Africa.

But, of course, it is Gandhi’s leadership in helping to end colonialism that we regard as the correct moral answer for our age, and it is one that inspired many in the civil rights movement, the human rights movement, and beyond. Ideas played a role so powerful that the interests and entrenched power structures were, in the end, completely overwhelmed.

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. Ideas and morality have repeatedly paved the way for great breakthroughs.”

The human rights movement followed, led partly by Eleanor Roosevelt, who championed the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This moral charter is sadly violated massively every day, but it has changed the world. It has expanded the recognition and reach of human rights, empowering major initiatives like the MDGs that have turned into real results on the ground.

The ideas, of course, inspired the civil rights movement. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. Ideas and morality have repeatedly paved the way for great breakthroughs.”

This brings us to the key ideas of our own time. The idea that we can end extreme poverty is now an official doctrine of major institutions like the World Bank, and is at the core of the SDGs. The idea of sustainable development is now a worldwide commitment to a safer, more prosperous, and more just planet.

There is an underpinning of ethics in all these ideas. When we talk about moving to global SDGs, we are also talking about the need for, and possibility of, a shared global ethics. It is heartening that many of the world’s religious leaders have come together and declared that the world’s religions share a common ethical underpinning that could reinforce a shared commitment like SDGs, including the Golden Rule; the commitment to “first, do no harm;” and the standards of good governance, including human rights, accountability, transparency and participation.

It has been half a century since two great episodes in U.S. history where values changed history: the U.S. civil rights movement and President John F. Kennedy’s quest to make peace with the Soviet Union.

They both give us inspiration for our challenges today. It is astounding and inspiring that Kennedy used ideas and words, not force, to bring about this advance of peace. President Kennedy gave us what is called his ‘Peace Speech’ on June 10, 1963. It is a speech about values, human rights, and ideas; and the most important idea is that humanity can solve its problems peacefully and can live together, because

what we have in common is so much more important than what divides us. Kennedy said:

“No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man’s reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable, and we believe they can do it again. I am not referring to the absolute, infinite concept of universal peace and goodwill of which some fantasies and fanatics dream. I do not deny the value of hopes and dreams, but we merely invite discouragement and incredulity by making that our only and immediate goal. Let us focus instead on a more practical, more attainable peace, based not on a sudden revolution in human nature, but on a gradual evolution in human institutions, on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements, which are in the interests of all concerned.

There is no single, simple key to this peace; no grand or magic formula to be adopted by one or two powers. Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts. It must be dynamic, not static, changing to meet the challenge of each new generation. For peace is a process – a way of solving problems.”

Sustainable development also is a process, a way of solving problems peacefully and globally, using our science and technology, our know-how, and our shared global ethics to address our deep common needs. Kennedy was grappling with the divide between the United States and the Soviet Union, the divide of deep values, political systems, and nuclear arms pointed at each other. But his message was that we have common interests, and can resolve our problems peacefully. He had an absolutely magnificent way of describing those common interests that resonates today:

“Let us not be blind to our differences, but let us also direct attention to our common interests and the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s futures. And we are all mortal.”

Yes, we are all today breathing the same air now with 400 parts per million of CO₂; it is a threat to our well-being and future survival. We all cherish our children’s futures. And we know what needs to be done.

Professor Jeffrey Sachs is a senior adviser to the United Nations and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. This article is an extract from his book, ‘The Age of Sustainable Development’ Columbia University Press, 2015.



CULTURAL NORMS MATTER: THE CASE OF SINGAPORE'S 2015 ELECTION

Professor James Chin

The results of Singapore's 2015 general elections surprised many, after the People's Action Party (PAP) increased its share of the popular vote by about 10%, reversing the declines of previous elections and prompting many to describe the 2015 poll as a 'watershed'. While many plausible reasons have been given for the PAP's performance, I would like to offer an additional explanation for the party's continued dominance of Singapore's electoral politics, the Kiasi/Kiasu voter. After half a century of government policy to depoliticise the polity and the rise of two key Singapore cultural traits—commonly referred to locally in the Hokkien dialect as kiasi and kiasu—the voters favour PAP when they feel under threat, and that is exactly how they felt during this election.

Kiasi and kiasu are Hokkien phrases, widely understood in Singapore even by its non-Chinese population, and often

referred to by Singaporeans themselves as key cultural traits in the nation's psyche. There was even a famous comic strip character, 'Mr Kiasu', in the 1990s to reflect how Singaporeans behave. Kiasi, 'afraid of death', describes Singaporeans as cowards, overly afraid, timid and cautious. Kiasu is closely related, 'fear of losing', in any aspect of one's life, never stepping out of one's comfort zone, fear of taking risks or opportunities. Collectively, Singaporeans are seen as willing to take extreme measures to avoid risk and reduce the chance of failure in their lives. The reverse is true as well—Singaporeans will do all they can to achieve success, especially in business or in school, and remain number one. These two traits are the direct by-product of the super-competitive environment established by the PAP. Ordinary Singaporeans, I would argue, kiasi (fear) the government politically. Since they cannot distinguish between the

government and PAP, they also fear the PAP. This political fear is not unfounded.

Let's take three examples. First, the Internal Security Act (ISA). While many think Nelson Mandela was the world's longest-serving political prisoner, that title should in fact go to Chia Thye Poh, a Singaporean who was detained for 23 years without charge or trial. He was later placed under house arrest for an additional 9 years— all because the government claimed he was a Communist. The point here is that the ISA can be used to detain anyone the government deems a security threat without having to secure the approval of the courts.

Second, the use of defamation suits against opposition members and foreign media.

The two most famous opposition figures in Singapore, Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam and Chee Soon Juan, were both sued successfully for defamation by PAP leaders. Lee Kuan Yew and his son, Lee Hsien Loong, have both been successful in actions against foreign publications including the now defunct Far Eastern Economic Review, the International Herald Tribune, the Asian Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times, often winning huge damages. Third, the PAP regularly uses infrastructure development as an incentive to attract votes during elections. In the 1990s, the PAP promised to renovate old high-rise flats (more than 80% of Singaporeans live in public housing), install new lifts and offer subsidies for internal renovations if the party was voted to power in the constituency concerned. In contrast, in constituencies where the PAP lost an election, there was no upgrading. Estates that were renovated were seen as more desirable and hence fetched better prices on the market. Voters were told directly by a PAP minister to vote for 'enlightened self-interest'.

In the non-political space, the government adopted harsh attitudes towards, and strict punishment of, antisocial behaviour such as graffiti, jaywalking, littering and chewing gum (Singapore was widely known as the 'Fine City' for most of the 1960s to the 1990s). Taken collectively, these actions have caused many Singaporeans to be fearful of the PAP government. The PAP is seen as a no-nonsense party that will use state machinery to put down any opposition to its dominance. There is little doubt Singaporeans are kiasi when it comes to their government.

One of Singapore's public intellectuals, Tommy Koh, gave an insightful analysis of PAP's performance in the 2015 GE. Two of the factors he identified as key to PAP's strong showing were people's fear of what he termed freak election results and uncertainty over security. The voters, according to Koh, were worried that with the opposition contesting all 89 seats, there was a possibility that they might actually win (a 'freak election result' in a country that has been governed by a single party since 1965). Voters were also worried about the security of Singapore due to the threat posed by Islamic State. The uncertain global economy also, apparently, pushed the voters towards the PAP.

One of the most widely reported and read news items during the campaign was a speech given by the PAP's Lim Swee Say, Minister for Manpower. He played the kiasi/kiasu card directly by relating how his father had come from China and how it was fortunate that Singapore had left Malaysia in 1965.

If my father had not taken that boat to Singapore, today I might be a Chinese citizen. Heng (Lucky) ah!...

Then in 1965, Singapore and Malaysia separated, because Mr Lee Kuan Yew wanted a nation regardless of language, regardless of race—one that is equal...

So we can't stay in Malaysia, as the tenet of Malaysia is: Malaysia belongs to the Malays.

So we had no choice, we could only separate

... So I am thinking, if we didn't separate in 1965, today you and I would be Malaysians, Heng (Lucky) ...

Lim Swee Say, Minister of Manpower, Singapore

His words easily resonate with a vast number of Singaporeans. Many Singaporean Chinese believe themselves to be socially and economically superior to the Chinese in China. Chinese from China are regularly criticised by Singaporeans for their lack of social grace, and for engaging in rude and 'uncivilised behaviour'.

Lim's words rang especially true when it came to the Malaysian Chinese. The Chinese in Malaysia suffer from institutional racism and about one-third of Singaporean Chinese today are, in fact, former Malaysians who have migrated to the island state. Lim's message was crystal clear—the PAP was responsible for Singapore not 'losing' when the country and its people could easily have ended up worse off.

The PAP campaign was full of clear messages to reinforce the fear that Singaporeans would kiasu ('lose out') if they did not return the PAP to power.

The four themes were:

- 1 Singapore, as a small nation, is vulnerable to security threats posed by IS terrorists;
- 2 Singapore's economic prosperity is under threat given the bleak regional and global economic outlook
- 3 The opposition's economic plans will ruin the economy and lead to tax increases; and
- 4 The region and the world face an uncertain outlook.

Since independence, the government has made security one of the nation's core concerns. All Singaporean men are required to undertake two years of compulsory military service in the Singapore Armed Forces, Singapore Police Force, or the Singapore Civil Defence Force. After that they remain reservists until the age of 40–50 years. Singaporeans are constantly reminded that they are surrounded by a hostile region.

Although it is not said, it is widely understood that the threat comes from the fact that the majority ethnic Chinese island is located in a non-Chinese region. Worse, in both Indonesia and Malaysia there is a history of ethnic discrimination against the Chinese community, which have sometimes flared into violence.

I have no doubt that many of the factors identified by others (such as the SG50 celebrations, payments to senior citizens, the death of Lee Kuan Yew, gerrymandering, the personal appeal of Lee Hsien Loong, policy changes since the last election) had a positive impact on the PAP's votes. However, I would argue that the underlying factors, the depoliticisation of Singaporeans combined with the kiasi and kiasu cultural norms, gave the PAP the additional boost it needed to increase its share of the popular vote.

These cultural norms combined with a scare campaign about the security and economic future of Singapore in a region faced with the threat of terrorism and economic uncertainty, helped the PAP tip the balance in its favour. The PAP was always going to win, but these factors gave it the additional votes it needed to increase its share of the vote.

If kiasi/kiasu norms were present in previous elections, why had the PAP's popular vote decreased in every election prior to 2015? The simple answer was the level of fear and uncertainty over the fate of the PAP. As mentioned earlier, the ultimate rule of kiasi and kiasu-ness is about not losing out, not who is right or wrong. Under such a mentality, self-preservation or preserving what you have now is paramount.

In all previous elections, the risk of the PAP losing power was not really there - the PAP 'won' the election on nomination day when half of the seats in parliament went uncontested by the opposition. That strategy removed a large amount of the kiasi and kiasu-ness. The voters knew they 'could not lose' since the PAP had already been returned to government on nomination day. The actual election was thus about sending a certain number of opposition MPs to parliament to keep a check on the PAP.

In the 2015 election, the scenario was completely different—the opposition fielded candidates in all the constituencies and there was a possibility, albeit a remote one, that the

opposition might win and become a government (the so-called 'freak election' result). Combined with the terrorism threat and an uncertain economic outlook, the kiasi/kiasu mentality kicked in strongly at the ballot box.

Does this mean that as long as kiasi/kiasu cultural norms exist, the PAP will be unassailable? Obviously, the answer is no. When Singaporeans are convinced that the PAP is no longer able to fulfil the social contract—constant rising standard of living and economic prosperity – the very same norms of kiasi/kiasu will ensure the population votes for an alternative to restore Singapore's economic pre-eminence in the region.

One could argue that, at the end of the day, the old saying always holds true, viz. bread and butter issues are key to elections; Singaporeans like many others vote according to which party they think can give them a better life, or at the very least can maintain their current economic prosperity. This is where the opposition has never performed well. The PAP is still seen by the majority of Singaporeans as the party with better talent than the opposition.

Kiasi/kiasu will also not work when new cultural norms are adopted. For example, younger Singaporeans may decide that the competitive kiasi/kiasu culture does not suit their lives as they pursue a less stressful form of existence. However, like all cultural change, this will not happen overnight. For the foreseeable future, the element of fear combined with kiasi/kiasu-ness will remain an important tool to win votes.

This is an abridged version of the paper "The 2015 Singapore Swing: Depoliticised Polity and the Kiasi/Kiasu Voter", The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs (Special Issue: The 2015 Singapore General Elections; Guest Editor: James Chin) Volume 105, Issue 2 (March), 2016

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ORANG ASLI DESERVE BETTER; THE EDUCATION OF MALAYSIA'S ORIGINAL PEOPLE

Kate Mayberry

In August, seven young children ran away from their school in the remote jungle of Kelantan and disappeared. Only two survived; discovered weak and emaciated after 47 days without food or water.

The children, aged between seven and 11 years old, were all Temiar (Orang Asli) pupils at Sekolah Kebangsaan Pos Tohoi in the interior of Gua Musang, about two hours away from their home villages.

The incident was shocking – for the heart-breaking outcome, but also for the way in which the school, and government officials, reacted. Considering seven young children were missing in a remote area, the search at the beginning did not even seem particularly urgent.

When parents send their children to school, especially as boarders - as these young children were - they place their trust in the teachers and the school leadership. They expect their children to be cared for, and for the school to inform them if there are any concerns. They also count on the school to be responsible and accountable.

Those principles are sometimes in short supply in an education system where reports of violence and abuse are resolved with transfers rather than action, but at Pos Tohoi, the parents' anxiety about their children was compounded by the accusatory and threatening letters they received from the school. Adding to the parents' misery, there were attempts to lay the blame on the children and the community.

The Ministry of Education has said a special committee will look into the issues facing Orang Asli boarders, but the problems with the provision of education to the Orang Asli go far deeper. The crux of the matter is that Malaysian education is failing the children of the Orang Asli and has been doing so for many years. NGOs – notably the Center for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC) - and Suhakam, Malaysia's human rights commission, have for years documented the many shortcomings.



The Ministry must make the following changes to improve the situation:

- 1 Young Orang Asli children must be educated closer to their home villages. Community projects for vulnerable groups, including Orang Asli and refugees have shown such initiatives can work. Primary school children, in particular, should not be separated from their parents and isolated from their culture.
- 2 All teachers assigned to remote schools must understand the culture and way of life of the Orang Asli, and work with this culture. The Orang Asli's traditional system of learning is "multi-faceted and holistic" according to COAC's Colin Nicholas.
- 3 The government must encourage more Orang Asli to become teachers, and develop a fast-track for Orang Asli to get into the profession. At Pos Tohoi, not one of the eight teachers is Orang Asli.
- 4 Develop a special curriculum designed around the Orang Asli's needs, in collaboration with community leaders and parents.
- 5 Ensure Orang Asli and indigenous children are exposed to more of their own culture in schools. Ensure the lives of the country's indigenous people are included in the curriculum and activities of schools in the rest of Malaysia.
- 6 Address the delays in financial aid. The 11th Malaysia Plan commits the government to giving 'special attention' to Orang Asli schooling and providing the financial aid required. This assistance must be provided in a timely manner so that parents can prepare for each new school year.
- 7 Consult parents and community leaders. Too often the problems of Orang Asli schooling are dismissed with the assumption that Orang Asli are uninterested in education. That is not true. At Pos Tohoi, the parents simply want the schools to be closer to their villages.

These suggestions should also be applied to remote schools in Sarawak and Sabah where children from indigenous longhouses often live in school hostels hours away from their homes. Some have been forced to drop out because their families cannot afford the fees.

Over the coming year, JCI will begin a study on improving education programmes for the Orang Asli and Malaysia's other indigenous people. These families want, and deserve, a useful education for their children; and the government can do more to meet their aspirations.



THE JEFFREY CHEAH TRAVEL GRANTS

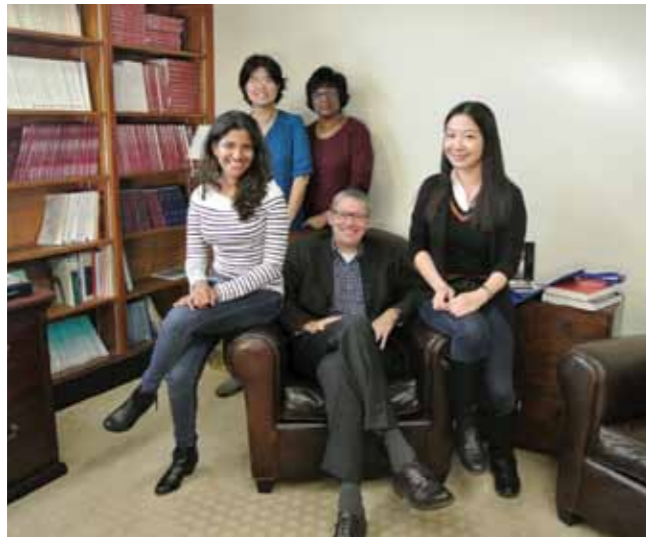
The Jeffrey Cheah Travel Grants provide an opportunity for academic exchange between academics, scholars and staff of the Sunway Education Group, including Sunway University and Monash University Malaysia, and Harvard University in the United States.

The first exchanges took place in 2014.

In 2015, Harvard doctoral students Damina Khaira and Seth Soderborg used the grant to undertake vital fieldwork in Southeast Asia. Karin B. Michels, Associate Professor of Epidemiology, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School will use the grant in 2016 for further research on Folic Acid fortification of rice in Vietnam.

From Malaysia, Professor Glenda Crosling, Dean of Quality at Sunway University, travelled to Harvard in 2015 to investigate best practices at the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. Gamini Herath, Professor of Economics at Monash University, was also awarded a grant to further his research into globalisation and sustainable economic growth.

The Travel Grants programme is coordinated by JCI and applications are invited twice a year. Further information is available on the JCI website, www.jci.edu.my.



SOME RECENT RECIPIENTS OF THE JC TRAVEL GRANTS:

NAME/ AFFILIATION	RESEARCH TOPIC
Ms. Lavanya Vijayasingham, PhD Candidate, Monash University Malaysia	Living with Chronic Illness in Malaysia
Prof Poh Chit Laa, Distinguished Professor, Sunway University	To explore research collaborations in Virology programme
Prof Glenda Crosling, Dean of Quality, Sunway University	Learning from the Most Accomplished: Investigating Best Practice at the Derek Bok Centre for Teaching and Learning at Harvard University
Prof Gamini Herath, Professor, Monash University Malaysia	Research Networking on Globalization, Sustainable Economic Development (SD) and Growth of Asia
Ms Liew Jie Ying, PhD Student, Monash University Malaysia	Social Network Technology, Dynamic Capabilities, and Creative Performance Among University Students: A Case Study of Malaysia
Dr. V. Santha A. Vaithilingam, Associate Professor, Monash University Malaysia	Smart Learning Ecosystem to Leap-Frog to An Innovation-Driven and High-Income Economy
Dr. Lee Hooi Yean, Associate Professor, Monash University Malaysia	Economic Integration in East Asia
Liyana Devangi Hanamika Perera, PhD student, Monash University Malaysia	Mind the Gap: What Explains Malaysia's Underperformance in PISA?
Koh Geok May, PhD Student, Monash University Malaysia	Can Trade Liberalization and Better Governance Mitigate Asia's Rising Inequality?
Rachel Leng, MA candidate, Harvard University	Unravelling the Sinophone Malaysian Experience: The Circulation of Mahua Cultural Products across Malaysia and Taiwan
Lina Verchery, PhD Candidate, Harvard University	To conduct ethnographic fieldwork for dissertation on Venerable Hsuan Hua
Graham Moyer, BA Candidate, Harvard University	Residency in Shalini Ganendra Fine Art Gallery in Petaling Jaya – an investigation into the influence of art on public policy in Malaysia compared to the US
Damina Khaira, PhD candidate in Anthropology, Harvard University	Storytelling and Nostalgia: The Experience of Aging in a Longhouse Community
Seth Soderborg, PhD candidate in Government, Harvard University	Neighborhood Associations and Electoral Politics in Indonesia



A 2015 recipient of the Jeffrey Cheah Travel Grants, Ms Damina Khaira, spoke to us about her research. Born in Malaysia to a Punjabi father and Iban mother, Damina Khaira, has often felt like an outsider, even in multicultural Malaysia.

She has spent much of her life questioning her place in a country preoccupied with ethnicity and religion. Inspired by the work of American anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff on storytelling among the older Jewish community in California, Khaira recently moved to a longhouse in Sarawak where she will spend the year living among the largely elderly residents, learning more about their everyday lives and listening to their stories.

“Coming from a mixed background, I was always trying to understand who I was and where I belonged,” Khaira said during a visit to Sunway University. “In a society like Malaysia where you tend to be classified or identified based on racial lines that was always very confusing growing up. Issues of identity have always interested me, particularly among marginalized people. For a long time I felt I was marginalized, too, and so I’ve always been drawn to learning more about indigenous communities, gender and race.”

Khaira was extremely close to her mother’s mother – the longhouse where she is doing her fieldwork was where her grandmother once lived - and, like many people who have lost a grandparent, regrets she did not learn more about her life when she was alive. Her doctoral work is, in some ways, a response to that.

“I always wished I had known more of her,” she said. “I wish I had asked her these questions. In some ways, it’s personal – in that it’s part of me trying to reclaim something from the past, make sense of that past and subsequent changes. But it’s also important to do work on marginalized communities like the elderly - because it’s a phenomenon taking place across Asia now. You have the older population staying in rural areas while the young migrate to the cities; that’s a huge issue for healthcare agencies and for the government.”

There are about 40 families living in the longhouse, about five hours by road and an hour by boat from Kuching. Khaira gets up as the sun rises - collecting water for the longhouse - and is in bed by 9pm. As the longhouse is so remote, Khaira is also relieved of the other temptations of 21st century life such as mobile phones and the Internet.

“Being there encourages me to slow down,” she said. “I have all the time in the world to read, meditate and, of course, do my research and document places of interest. No one uses a phone; people spend time talking to each other. It’s quite refreshing. Time seems to go by so slowly. There’s so much space to observe, so much texture and movement. I feel like my senses are sharper when I’m there.”

Khaira says the Jeffrey Cheah Travel Grant has been crucial to her realising her research ambitions, helping fund her fieldwork in Sarawak. Khaira, who has a degree in law from the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur and a Masters from Oxford University, returns to Harvard in 2016 to start writing her dissertation.



Woo Wing Thye (JCI), Vincent Wong Wai Sang (Prime Minister's Office), Dwight Perkins (Harvard University), Feng Da Hsuan (University of Macau), and Hai Wen (Peking University) at Education Workshop, 17 March 2015

JANUARY 2015

15 January 2015

Asian Shadow Financial Regulatory Committee (ASFRC) Meeting: Market Conduct, Internet Finance, Financial Inclusion & Consumer Empowerment

23 January 2015

Webcast: Asian Economic Community (AEC) and Malaysia's Role
Prof Rajah Rasiah and Prof Woo Wing Thye

MARCH 2015

17 March 2015

Workshop: Achieving Excellence in Malaysian Universities
Prof Dwight Perkins, Prof Ghauth Jasmon, Prof Da Hsuan Feng, Prof Wen Hai, Vincent Wong Wai Sang and Prof Woo Wing Thye

20 -22 March 2015

Oxford 4th. Southeast Asian Symposium The Year of ASEAN Integrating Southeast Asia

21 March 2015

Jeffrey Cheah Distinguished Speakers Series: Global Economic Prospects: What Should Keep Us Up at Night?
Prof Barry Eichengreen

23 - 24 March 2015

Asian Economic Panel Conference: Slower Growth in Southeast Asia: What Is To Be Done
Prof. Mari Pangestu, Dr. Chalongsob Sussangkarn and Dr. Muhamad Chatib Basri

23 March 2015

Dinner Talk: Hall of Mirrors: The Great Depression, The Great Recession, And The Uses - And Misuses - Of History
Prof Barry Eichengreen

24 March 2015

Jeffrey Cheah Distinguished Speakers Series: The Age of Sustainable Development
Prof Jeffrey Sachs

APRIL 2015

28 April 2015

Public Forum: The Malaysian Parliament: Reforms and Barriers
Datuk Zaid Ibrahim, YB Liew Chin Tong, Ivanpal S Grewa and Prof James Chin

JUNE 2015

15 June 2015

Book Launch: The Global Economy: In Turbulent Times
Tan Sri Lin See-Yan

17 June 2015

Public Forum: The Dilemmas of Malay Political Leadership
Dato' Dr. Vaseehar Hassan, Dr. Ahmad Farouk Musa and Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah

29 June 2015

Public Lectures by Harvard University recipients of Jeffrey Cheah Travel Grant

AUGUST 2015

3 August 2015

Public Forum: The Islamic State (IS) in Malaysia: Implications for National Security
Ahmad El Muhammady and Prof James Chin

14 August 2015

Public Forum: Standing Tall Against Extremism: The G25 Agenda for a Better Malaysia, (co-organised with Group of 25), *Dato' Noor Farida Ariffin*

SEPTEMBER 2015

14 September 2015

Webcast: A Conversation on Malaysia, the Club of Doom and the Collapse of the Islamic Countries
Syed Akbar Ali

OCTOBER 2015

27 October 2015

Conference: Southeast Asia Explores Sustainable Development: Coping with Socio-Economic Difficulties, Big Power Rivalry, and Climate Change (co-organised by the Harvard University Asia Center), held at Harvard University

NOVEMBER 2015

4 November 2015

Seminar: Strengthening the Higher Education Sector in Malaysia (co-organised with the Centre for Research on International and Comparative Education, University Malaya)

9 November 2015

Book Launch: Post-Mahathir: A Decade of Change?
Prof James Chin and Prof Joern Dosch

9 November 2015

Public Forum: A European Perspective on the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)
Prof James Chin and Prof Joern Dosch

DECEMBER 2015

1 December 2015

Public Forum: Testing Times: Reforming Malaysia's Schools
Tengku Nurul Azian Tengku Shahrman, Elmarie Potgieter and Kate Mayberry

JANUARY 2016

14 January 2016

Public Forum: The World Economy in 2016
Kuan Chung Ming and Woo Wing Thye



Tan Sri Jeffrey Cheah at the 4th Southeast Asia Symposium

25 January 2016

Public Forum: Is Political Islam a Threat to Democracy?
Mustafa Akyol, (in Collaboration with G25 and Islamic Renaissance Front)

25 January 2016

Webcast: ISIS in Malaysia
Dr. Maszlee Malik and Prof James Chin

28 January 2016

Public Forum: Universities to Survive the Current Uncertainties Through Innovation

FEBRUARY 2016

4 February 2016

Webcast: TPPA and Malaysia
YB Charles Santiago, Prof Sufian Jusoha and Prof James Chin

MARCH 2016

7 March 2016

Seminar: Mobilising Diversity to Achieve Academic Excellence' (co-organised with the Centre for Higher Education Research, Sunway University)
Prof Ghauth Jasmon, Karen Welsh, Prof Graeme Wilkinson and Prof Marnie Hughes-Warrington

24 March 2016

Conference: East Asia in 2016: Searching for Solutions to Domestic Socio-Economic Problems, Big-Power Rivalry, and Climate Change

24 March 2016

Dinner and talk: Reimagining Southeast Asia
Prof Mari Elka Pangestu

JCDSS: Jeffrey Cheah Distinguished Speakers Series

All our public events can be found on JCI Youtube channel: www.youtube.com/user/JeffreyCheahInst



JEFFREY CHEAH INSTITUTE ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

In August 2013, The Jeffrey Cheah Foundation and Harvard University signed agreements to establish at Harvard, two Jeffrey Cheah Professorships of Southeast Asia Studies (SEA) and the Jeffrey Cheah Travel Grants following a gift of USD6.2 million by the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation (JCF), the largest social enterprise in Malaysia.

In conjunction with the gift, the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia (JCI) was established in early 2014. The JCI will act as a catalyst in promoting Southeast Asian studies and as an attractive hub to develop and upgrade academic standards of teaching and research in the Sunway Education institutions and in the region.

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