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Framing Asian Studies

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Framing Asian Studies

Geopolitics and Institutions

Edited by Albert Tzeng, William L. Richter
and Ekaterina Koldunova

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Foreword

The present edited volume, *Framing Asian Studies: Geopolitics and Institutions*, co-edited by Albert Tzeng, William L. Richter and Ekaterina Koldunova, derives from a conference entitled “Framing Asian Studies, Geopolitics, Institutions and Networks” that was organized by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in collaboration with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), in Leiden, in November 2013.

Dr Albert Tzeng, the 2013/14 recipient of a joint fellowship between IIAS and ISEAS, was the main architect of the event in both its intellectual and organizational “framing”. Albert’s research on the history of Sociology as an academic institutional discipline in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore served as inspiration for a discussion that he, with our encouragement, wanted to broaden in its geographical reach, its intellectual and disciplinary ranges, and in its institutional and political configurations.

The IIAS–ISEAS Fellowship Programme was an innovative undertaking developed by the two institutes. The selected beneficiaries of the programme were asked to spend six months in the Dutch/European academic setting of IIAS, and six months in the Singaporean/Asian environment of ISEAS. The programme was unfortunately short-lived. It produced only three fellowships, with Albert as the second incumbent. He was preceded by Dr Elizabeth Chandra (2012/13), and followed by Dr Lee Yong Woo (2014/15).¹

Given the topic of the book, I should say something about this short-lived experiment of a joint fellowship programme and the spirit behind its creation in 2012. As we planned it with our colleagues from ISEAS, the joint fellowship aimed at reconfiguring the “area studies” paradigm — and the inherent danger of an imbalanced approach or “gaze” that characterizes it — to create a new mechanism in which

“Eastern” and “Western” academic milieus, as agents and “ecologies” of knowledge production, are placed on equal footing so as to enable truly culturally cross-connected research projects.

When IIAS and ISEAS launched the initiative, the idea was to use Leiden and Singapore as convenient hubs in their respective regions. By interacting with peer colleagues in two different cultural and intellectual environments, the fellows tested the limits of their own research methodologies in a self-reflexive fashion generally not experienced in classical programmes.

The IIAS–ISEAS joint fellowship experiment was terminated too early to yield its potential for the development of a new model of interconnected and decentred scholarship beyond or above borders.² Today, IIAS facilitates inter-regional intellectual exchanges such as the Africa–Asia and Latin America–Asia “axes of knowledge”. It is helping to create a pan-Indian Ocean network of institutions and it is at the origin of a number of thematic platforms involving scholars and educators from Asia and other regions.³ In an academic and intellectual landscape that is ever more connected and yet increasingly fragmented and hierarchized, mechanisms such as the IIAS–ISEAS Asia–Europe fellowship can support genuinely balanced spaces of interactions and cross fertilization.

The present book focuses on academic institutions and programmes and their epistemological, social and political dynamics. Such kind of reflection on how forms of knowledge are shaped is proving increasingly critical to our understanding of what is really at stake in their deployment.

Philippe Peycam

Director, IIAS

Singapore, 1 September 2017

Notes

1. The first fellowship led to an edited volume recently published by IIAS–Amsterdam University Press, entitled *Eurasian Encounters, Museums, Missions, Modernities* (co-edited by Yoshiyuki Kikuchi and Carlien Stolte). It was during Dr Lee’s fellowship that the decision to discontinue the programme in its wide scope of intervention was made.

2. IIAS and ISEAS continue to collaborate on other initiatives: a special ISEAS page on Southeast Asia features in *the Newsletter* (the IIAS periodical), a series of joint conferences on the politics of Heritage in Asia, and some co-publications.
3. For instance, the pedagogical initiative "Humanities across Borders, Asia and Africa in the World", which involves individuals and institutions from Asia, Africa, Europe and America.

The Contributors

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Huei-Ying Kuo is Senior Lecturer and Associate Research Scientist in the Department of Sociology, Johns Hopkins University. She received a junior fellowship from the Social Science Research Council’s Transregional Program in 2012–13 and was in 2016–17 a recipient of the William-Dearborn Fellowship in American History, Houghton Library, Harvard University. She is the author of *Networks beyond Empires: Chinese Business and Nationalism in the Hong Kong–Singapore Corridor, 1914–1941* (2014) and many refereed articles on ethnic Chinese business networks and Japan’s southward advance in Southeast Asia in the early twentieth century.

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William L. Richter is Professor Emeritus of Political Science and former Associate Provost for International Programs, Kansas State University. His authored and co-edited books include *Approaches to Political Thought* (2009) and *Combating Corruption, Encouraging Ethics* (2007). He is also author of numerous articles and book chapters on South Asian politics and security issues.

Brij Tankha retired as Professor of Modern Japanese History, University of Delhi. At present he is Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi. His research interests centre on nationalism, religion and Japan's interactions with Asia, and he is currently working on the intentional communities in Asia. His publications include *A Vision of Empire: Kita Ikki and the Making of Modern Japan* (2003) and (translated from the Japanese) Sato Tadao, *Mizoguchi Kenji no Sekai (The World of Mizoguchi Kenji) Kenji Mizoguchi and the Art of Japanese Cinema* (2008).

Riwanto Tirtosudarmo recently retired as Senior Research Fellow at the Research Center for Society and Culture, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI). His research covers issues of migration, urbanization, political demography, ethnicity and territorial politics. He has held visiting appointments at Brown University, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS), Oxford University, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. His two latest books are *From Colonization to Nation-State: The Political-Demography of Indonesia* (2013) and *On the Politics of Migration: Indonesia and Beyond* (2015).

Albert Tzeng is a sociologist, a public intellectual, a media innovator and a policy advisor. He studied chemistry and psychology in National Taiwan University before obtaining sociology degrees in the London School of Economics and the University of Warwick. He was an ISEAS–IIAS Fellow while organizing the conference “Framing Asian

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