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Singapore Lectures

1980–2018

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Singapore Lectures

1980–2018

A Selection

Edited by

Malcolm Cook • Daljit Singh

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Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	vii
1. The Invisible Hand in Economics and Politics <i>Milton Friedman, Professor of Economics, University of Chicago</i>	1
2. American Foreign Policy: A Global View <i>Henry Kissinger, Former US Secretary of State</i>	19
3. The Soviet Union: Challenges and Responses as Seen from the European Point of View <i>Helmut Schmidt, Former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany</i>	37
4. Trends in the International Financial System <i>Raymond Barre, Former Prime Minister of France</i>	57
5. Regionalism, Globalism and Spheres of Influence: ASEAN and the Challenge of Change into the 21st Century <i>Mahathir Bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia</i>	76
6. US Policy in the Asia-Pacific Region: Meeting the Challenges of the Post-Cold War Era <i>George H.W. Bush, President of the United States of America</i>	97
7. India and the Asia-Pacific: Forging a New Relationship <i>P.V. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister of India</i>	107
8. Australia, Asia and the New Regionalism <i>Paul Keating, Prime Minister of Australia</i>	124

9. South and Southern Africa into the Next Century <i>Nelson R. Mandela, President of the Republic of South Africa</i>	145
10. China and Asia in the New Century <i>Zhu Rongji, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China</i>	159
11. Global Values: The United Nations and the Rule of Law in the 21st Century <i>Kofi A. Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	186
12. Peace on the Korean Peninsula and East Asia <i>Kim Dae-jung, President of the Republic of Korea</i>	200
13. Japan and ASEAN in East Asia: A Sincere and Open Partnership <i>Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan</i>	210
14. EU and Asia: Sharing Diversity in an Inter-regional Partnership <i>Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission</i>	217
15. Global Challenges in the 21st Century: A View from Chile <i>Ricardo Lagos, President of Chile</i>	228
16. Indonesia: The Challenge of Change <i>Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia</i>	237
17. Japan and ASEAN, Always in Tandem: Towards a More Advantageous Win-Win Relationship through My "Three Arrows" <i>Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan</i>	244
18. Forging a Strong Partnership to Enhance Prosperity of Asia <i>Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China</i>	259
19. India's Singapore Story <i>Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India</i>	273
20. The Netherlands, Singapore, Our Regions, Our World: Connecting Our Common Future <i>Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands</i>	280
21. Democratic Transition in Myanmar: Challenges and the Way Forward <i>Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar</i>	292
<i>The Singapore Lecture Series</i>	309
<i>The Editors</i>	316

Introduction

Malcolm Cook

On 14 October 1980, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) hosted the inaugural Singapore Lecture given by Professor Milton Friedman to a packed audience at the Singapore Conference Hall. The First Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Monetary Authority of Singapore Dr Goh Keng Swee chaired the lecture. The Monetary Authority of Singapore provided an endowment to ISEAS for the Singapore Lecture Series that year that was augmented three years later by a donation from Mobil Oil Singapore. Since then, the lectures have been co-funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ISEAS. The lectures usually are chaired by the Prime Minister or a Senior Cabinet member to reflect their purpose and status.

At that time, it was unlikely that ISEAS or the Singapore government realized how important a platform this lecture series would become for senior foreign experts and leaders to share their views on regional and global developments with a particular focus on their country or institution and Singapore. The lectures, spanning over almost four decades, have addressed the most important economic and strategic changes Singapore and Southeast Asia have had to respond to. These include the East-West confrontation of the Cold War, the end of the Cold War, the re-emergence of China as Asia's leading power, India's resurgence, ASEAN centrality, global financial turmoil, globalization and its drawbacks and the threat of global terrorism.

By the end of August 2018, ISEAS, by then renamed ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, has had the honour of hosting forty-four Singapore Lectures. A complete list is available at the end of this volume. Prime Minister of Australia Bob Hawke was the first serving political leader to deliver a Singapore Lecture, the 8th lecture delivered in November 1987. A year later Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia became the first leader from Asia to give a Singapore Lecture.

The roster of eminent persons who have accepted the invitation to give a Singapore Lecture is truly global in scope. Speakers have come from all parts of Asia,

from Africa, South America, Oceania, Europe, North America and NATO and the United Nations. Befitting Singapore's location, seventeen Singapore Lectures have been delivered by serving political leaders from Asia, including the 44th Singapore Lecture by Li Keqiang, the premier of the People's Republic of China.

The Singapore Lectures are the Institute's most prestigious series of public events. The two editors have selected twenty-one of the forty-four lectures for this volume. The choice of which to include was far from easy and led to many discussions within ISEAS. The intrinsic intellectual quality of the speech, the importance of its main topic and its relevance for Singapore and Southeast Asia were the primary considerations for selection. The question and answer sessions of the selected Singapore Lectures also have been included as we believe that they add to the overall theme of their related lectures.