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# Legacy of Engagement in Southeast Asia



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# Legacy of Engagement in Southeast Asia

EDITED BY

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Bridget Welsh



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*For Jack*  
*May his legacy live on*



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# FOREWORD

In this volume dedicated to John “Jack” Bresnan, some of his former colleagues, friends, and students continue his legacy of engagement with Southeast Asia. In a career that spanned over half a century, Jack engaged the region in a number of capacities: as an executive with the Ford Foundation, including two tours in Indonesia, the last as Representative; as a consultant to the Asia Society; and as Director of the Pacific Basin Programme at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University.

Throughout his career, Jack promoted the economic, social, and political development of the region as well as mutual understanding between Southeast Asian countries and the United States. The authors of this volume chronicle the transformations that have occurred both within Southeast Asia as well as between the region and the rest of the world over the last six decades. As with Jack, all of the contributors to this volume strived to balance “rational” analysis of each of the Southeast Asian country concerned with the more “emotive” understanding of the cultural context, thus meshing the “outsider’s” view with the “insider’s” innate impulses of meaning.

Jack believed in the power of ideas, and the power of people to bring about positive changes in the world around them. He spent much of his life bringing people and ideas together. At Ford, Jack worked to empower people by promoting new scientific discoveries, managerial techniques, and academic training in Southeast Asia. Later in his career, he facilitated dialogues and exchanges between the U.S. and Southeast Asia in order to promote understanding and reduce misperceptions. At Columbia, he introduced a new generation of American graduate students to Southeast Asia.

Jack’s greatest involvement was with Indonesia, where he had firm faith in the future of Indonesia’s most valuable resource — its diverse human talent from across the islands, from Aceh in the far west to Papua in the far east. The Social Sciences Development Programme of the Ford Foundation,

which he helped launched in 1973 brought together economists, political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, educationists, public administration specialists, historians, language experts, demographers, and gender specialists from all across Indonesia. It became a veritable forum of constant “nation-building” for the more than 1,700 Indonesian social scientists who shared knowledge, skills, and personal experiences in trying to gain understanding and meaning of Indonesia and of being Indonesian. To this day, all of those who took part in the programme owe Jack a debt of personal as well as professional gratitude.

For those Indonesians and Americans who appreciate the value and enduring relevance of understanding Southeast Asia and its relations with the outside world, Jack Bresnan was, and will always remain, an inspiration.

*JUWONO SUDARSONO*  
*Professor, University of Indonesia and*  
*Minister for Defence, Indonesia*  
2007

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the commitment of one man to Southeast Asia, John “Jack” Bresnan, and his efforts to build a community and foster mutual understanding between the United States and Southeast Asia. Each essay was written by a person connected to Jack, whether it was his contemporary or his student. The collection came together immediately after his tragic passing in May 2006, although the festschrift has its roots in a conference sponsored by the Weatherhead East Asian Institute (WEAI) of Columbia University in November 2005.

We would like to begin by thanking Columbia University for its support of this project. At Columbia, WEAI provided critical funding for the conference that brought over two hundred people to campus to discuss and reflect on the changes in the region. We are grateful for the support of Xiaobo Lu, then WEAI Director, and the professors at WEAI who chose to honour Jack’s contribution to the Institute by agreeing to sponsor the conference, including Andrew Nathan, Gerry Curtis, Madeleine Zelin, Greg Pflugfelder, and Carol Gluck. Professor Hugh Patrick of the APEC Centre based at Columbia Business School and one of the co-Directors of the Southeast Asia Seminar (a forum initially organized by Jack in 1982 to provide public dialogue on the region) was also instrumental in assuring adequate financing for the conference and was unfailing in his support for the festschrift. The conference itself came together due to the commitment of the WEAI staff at Columbia, notably Waichi Ho, Greg Alcock, Nissam Schaul, Madge Huntington, Heidi Johnson, Elizabeth Demissie, and the volunteer efforts of countless graduate students. The conference included presentations not in the festschrift by Donald Emmerson, Sidney Jones, and Vince Boudreau, as well as comments from the floor from his contemporaries and long-time colleagues Evelyn Colbert, Susan Siskel, David Denoon, John McAuliff, Bob Immerman, Jim Morley, Dick Betts, Sheridan Prasso, Allene Masters, Jayne

Werner, Robin Martin, Bob Hornick, and Wayne Forrest. A roasting dinner with friends and family followed the conference and was a lovely tribute to a man whose devotion to others continues to inspire. Many who could not make it to the dinner sent in their best wishes, including Juwono Sudarsono, Hal Hill, Surachart Bamrungsuk, Scott Harold, Jonathan Stromseth, and Dave Timberman.

The festschrift itself is a collective effort. Each contributor — Frederick Brown, Michael Chambers, Annette Clear, Theodore Friend, Peter Geithner, Edward Masters, Hugh Patrick, Hadi Soesastro, David Timberman, and Donald Weatherbee — prioritized writing and revising their essays, in some cases after or on long flights from the region, in recovery from bouts with dengue, avoiding the distractions of summer relaxation, and over the demands of family and other editors. To each we are extremely grateful. We recognize that Jack's community spirit brought us together and know that he would be delighted that our efforts have yielded a collection. We are all saddened that he is not here to argue the merits of our arguments with us personally. In getting the book to print, we are thankful for the support of ISEAS, in particular Triena Ong. We are also grateful to the assistance of Chong Wu-Ling and Desiree Hwang who assisted with the fact-checking and formatting of the essays.

On personal notes, putting this collection together was very important to us. We are each deeply appreciative of Jack for his support of our careers. As graduate students we arrived at Columbia where we found a true gentleman and mentor in our corner. He was always urging us to write more, and we are following his call. We thank each of our families for their patience and understanding as we took time away from them to get this book to press.

We share with Jack and our fellow contributors a deep affection for Southeast Asia, and would be remiss without acknowledging the continued inspiration the region provides and the critical need for mutual engagement and further understanding. Jack's career was in this spirit and this volume in his honour follows the same commitment.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Bridget Welsh** is an Assistant Professor in the Southeast Asia Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University-SAIS in Washington D.C. where she teaches courses on contemporary Southeast Asian politics. In 2004 she was a Henry R. Luce Southeast Asian Fellow at the Australian National University. She received her doctorate from the Department of Political Science at Columbia University, her MA from Columbia University, language training (FALCON) from Cornell University and BA from Colgate University. She edited a volume entitled *Reflections: The Mahathir Years* in 2004 and co-edited *Impressions: The Goh Chok Tong Years* (forthcoming). Additional manuscripts on Malaysian electoral behaviour and the Habibie period are in process/under review. In 2006 she received a grant from the USIP to study Islamic political parties in Southeast Asia. Bridget Welsh is the former Chair of the Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Studies Group, a member of the Southeast Asia policy survey team at Georgetown University, the Director of the Malaysia East Asia Barometer project and a consultant to Freedom House.