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THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

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THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE

EDITED BY

SAW SWEE-HOCK
DANNY QUAH



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INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
Singapore

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Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
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Jointly with London School of Economics and Political Science
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THE CONTRIBUTORS

Lee Hsien Loong is Singapore's third Prime Minister. He is also Chairman of the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council, an international panel to oversee Singapore's major effort in promoting R&D. He launched policies to build a competitive economy and an inclusive society. He has held Ministerial portfolios in Trade and Industry, Defence, Finance, and was Chairman of the Monetary Authority of Singapore. He also served as Deputy Prime Minister with responsibilities for economic and civil service matters. Before entering politics, he was Brigadier-General in the Singapore Armed Forces. He studied at the University of Cambridge, graduating with a Degree in Mathematics and a Diploma in Computer Science. He also obtained a Masters in Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Saw Swee-Hock is Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore and Honorary Professor in the University of Hong Kong and Xiamen University. He was the founding Professor of Statistics at the University of Hong Kong and the National University of Singapore. He is an Honorary Fellow of the London School of Economics and Political Science. His publications are mainly on statistics, demography and finance.

Mustafa Izzuddin is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He was a former Research Associate at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

Danny Quah is the Head of Department and Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is also a Research Fellow at the Centre for Economic Policy Research in London, a Governor of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, and on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Economic Growth*. He has also served on the Academic Panels of HM Treasury and the Office of National Statistics. He was a former Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Conor Gearty is Professor of Human Rights Law and the first Rausing Director of the Centre for the Study of Human Rights at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is also a legal correspondent for *The Tablet* and founding member of Matrix Chambers. He was a former Professor at King's College London.

Nikolas Rose is James Martin Professor of Sociology and Director of the BIOS Centre for the Study of Bioscience, Biotechnology and Society at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is also a member of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, and Chair of the Advisory Board of the ESRC Centre for Research on Economic and Socio-Cultural Change. He was a former Managing Editor of *Economy and Society* and is currently a co-editor of *BioSocieties*, an interdisciplinary journal for social studies of the life sciences.

Nicholas Stern is IG Patel Professor of Economics and Government and Director of the Asia Research Centre and of the India Observatory at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Before this, he was adviser to the U.K. Government on the Economics of Climate Change and Development, Head of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, Head of the U.K. Government Economic Service, Second Permanent Secretary of Her Majesty's Treasury, Director of Policy and Research for the Prime Minister's Commission for Africa, and Chief Economist and Senior Vice President at the World Bank. He was instrumental in the setting up of the LSE Asia Research Centre.

John T. Sidel is Sir Patrick Gillam Professor of International and Comparative Politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is a specialist on Southeast Asia, with a special focus on the Philippines and Indonesia. He was formerly a Reader in Southeast Asian Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

PREFACE

The London School of Economics and Political Science has been organising the LSE Asia Forum in different parts of Asia, with the first one held in Bangkok in March 2004, the second in Hong Kong in September 2005, and the third in New Delhi in December 2006. The LSE Asia Forum 2008 was jointly organized with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in April 2008 in Singapore, with *The Politics of Knowledge* as the theme of the forum.

It was decided in the early planning stage that, unlike the previous three forums, the proceedings of the 2008 Forum should be published in a book under the joint imprint of LSE and ISEAS. The actual publication would be handled by ISEAS Publishing. Except for Chapter 2 which was specifically written after the Forum for inclusion in the book, the other six chapters are the revised version of the papers presented in the Forum. The book serves as a permanent record of the important event held in Singapore as well as a valuable contribution to the discourse on the politics of knowledge that is playing a pivotal role in shaping the economic and social advancement of many regions in our globalising world.

We would like to put on record our grateful thanks to the distinguished speakers who have taken their valuable time to speak at the Forum as well as revising their papers for publication. Our thanks go to Howard Davies, Director of LSE, and Ambassador

K. Kesavapany, Director of ISEAS, for their encouragement and support in the organisation of the Forum and the publication of this book, and Mrs Triena Ong, Managing Editor, for overseeing the publication aspects. We must of course thank the many sponsors whose generous donations have contributed to the immediate success of the Forum and to the happy outcome as represented by this book. Finally, the views expressed in the book are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the institutions they represent.

Saw Swee-Hock and Danny Quah
September 2008

FOREWORD

This book is the outcome of the fourth LSE Asia Forum which the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) co-hosted in Singapore on 11 April 2008. Global trends as well as more recent developments in the domestic politics of regional countries have made a forum on the politics of knowledge most timely.

As much as we will need to deepen our knowledge of politics, the politics of knowledge aided and abetted by the ceaseless changes in information technology will increasingly be part of the wider political contestations of our times. Whether all this will have liberating, democratizing and enfranchising effects on peoples and societies remains to be fully explored. To some, knowledge may not necessarily bring with it power — instead a sense of powerlessness.

Sustained economic growth can be attributed to good governance and openness to trade but undoubtedly too, knowledge and technology meld into a powerful driver of growth as evidenced by the success of the East Asian economies particularly China's. At the same time the commercialization of scientific knowledge can also lead to multiple conflicts between commercial interests and perceptions of the common good. Such conflicts need to be addressed, managed and governed. In modern society, access to and delivery of knowledge — in pursuit of “the truth” — is often subordinated to political contest. Does the

Asian condition and “Asian values” provide any contextualization to the right of free speech in furtherance of the truth? New avenues to the dissemination of knowledge have in Asia and elsewhere created new opportunities for those who seek to pose challenges within established structures of religious knowledge and authority. Finally with respect to the pressing problems of our times posed by climate change and environmental degradation not just to Asia but to mankind as a whole, the need for sound analysis, understanding and knowledge culled from many disciplines is a crucial underpin to informed policy making.

The quest for knowledge will never cease as long as mankind thinks, continues to be curious and constantly seeks innovation, adaptation and progress. Just as the chapters of this book stem from a growing awareness of the sociological, economic, political and legal implications of an ever widening frontier of current knowledge, it will I am sure, also inspire other enquiries into and discourses on the subject of knowledge-making for some time to come. We in Singapore are also deeply engaged in building both a knowledge- and science-based economy as well as hopefully a more cultured society along the way. Such aspirations demand heavy investments in research and development and the establishment of institutes and think-tanks such as ISEAS. Other ASEAN countries in their surge up the developmental ladder will also be increasingly attracted to the potentials and promise of a knowledge economy. The issues raised in this book re-awaken us to the need to rise to the challenge as well as tap into the new opportunities opening up along the frontiers of new knowledge through appropriate and enlightened policies.

K. Kesavapany

Director

Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

MESSAGES

Unlike the previous three Forums organized by the LSE in Bangkok, Hong Kong and New Delhi, the LSE Asia Forum 2008 on “The Politics of Knowledge” held in Singapore was the first to be jointly organized with a local institution as represented by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS).

Another first was the publication of the papers presented in the Forum in a book to provide a permanent record to a wider audience. Those fortunate enough to attend the Forum were treated to stimulating presentations by the distinguished panel of speakers and discussants. I am delighted that ISEAS has been able to contribute to the success of the Forum and the publication of this book during the year of ISEAS’ 40th Anniversary.

Wang Gungwu
Chairman, ISEAS Board of Trustees

The LSE strives to achieve the highest academic standards in teaching and research in the social sciences. It also aims to contribute knowledge for the common good, to a global audience of governments, other policymakers, international business, multilateral institutions and the informed general public. This volume was created from the knowledge delivered to a large audience at the latest LSE Asia Forum held in Singapore on 11 April 2008. I hope that you find it a valuable contribution to some of the most pressing public policy issues of our day.

Peter Sutherland
Chairman, LSE Board of Governors