



Michael Leifer Award and Public Seminar

The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China

Date: Friday, 26 February 2010

Time: 10.00 am – 11.30 am

Venue: Seminar Room II, ISEAS

ISEAS is proud to announce Mr Kuik Cheng-Chwee as the winner of the 2009 Michael Leifer Memorial Prize. Mr Kuik's prize winning article, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China", appeared in the August 2008 issue of the ISEAS peer-reviewed academic journal *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. The award was established in memory of the late Michael Leifer, Professor Emeritus in International Relations at the London School of Economics, and is given biennially for the best article to appear in one of the three ISEAS journals, namely *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* and *Sojourn*. Its selection is based on originality, conceptual clarity and soundness, and contribution to Southeast Asian scholarship. The award, to be presented on Friday, 26 February, will be followed by a public seminar delivered by Mr Kuik on Malaysia and Singapore's response to the rise of China.

About the Speaker

Mr Kuik Cheng-Chwee
Senior Lecturer
Strategic Studies and International Relations Programme
National University of Malaysia (UKM)



Kuik Cheng-Chwee is a Senior Lecturer at the Strategic Studies and International Relations Programme at the National University of Malaysia (UKM), and concurrently a Ph.D. candidate at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of the Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C. He is formerly a visiting fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), the Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS), and the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library of Singapore. Cheng-Chwee was a recipient of the British High Commissioner's Chevening Scholarship, the ASF-Ford ASIA Fellows Award, the Fulbright Scholarship, and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Doctoral Fellowship. He received his BPA from Universiti Utara Malaysia, and M.Litt. from the University of St. Andrews, United Kingdom. Cheng-Chwee researches on smaller states' alignment behaviour,



multilateralism and Southeast Asia-China relations. His publications include "Singapore and Great Powers" (in Welsh et al, *Impressions of the Goh Chok Tong Years in Singapore*, 2009); "China's Evolving Multilateralism in Asia" (in Calder and Fukuyama, *East Asian Multilateralism*, 2008); "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China" (*Contemporary Southeast Asia*, August 2008); and "Multilateralism in China's ASEAN Policy" (*Contemporary Southeast Asia*, April 2005). He can be contacted at <cckuik@gmail.com>.

About the Seminar

What do smaller states do when faced with an increasingly strong and/or potentially threatening big power? Do they necessarily have to choose between balancing and bandwagoning, as mainstream International Relations (IR) theories would have it? Do different states respond to the problem of power asymmetry differently? How so, and why so? In an attempt to address these questions, Kuik Cheng-Chwee has explored the cases of Malaysia and Singapore by comparing their policies towards a rising China in the post-Cold War era. By conceptualizing "hedging" as a strategic act in which a country seeks to offset risks by pursuing multiple mutually-counteracting measures under the conditions of high-uncertainties and high-stakes, Cheng-Chwee argues that Malaysia and Singapore have both adopted four policy thrusts of hedging – i.e. economically, a pragmatic approach to maximise commercial benefits; diplomatically, an engagement policy to integrate China into the ASEAN-based multilateral institutions; politically, a dominance-denial position to prevent China from evolving into an unchecked hegemon; and militarily, an indirect-balancing posture to prepare for a possible scenario of failed engagement. In his talk, Cheng-Chwee will explain how and why, despite the above similarities, Malaysia's policy is critically different from that of Singapore in one important aspect – i.e. a greater readiness *to accommodate and selectively utilise growing Chinese power* as a useful force to pursue its own interests, as evidenced by its inclination to see Beijing as a foreign policy partner in pushing for East Asian regionalism and other common goals. Singapore, on the other hand, due to its own geopolitical constraints and its wariness about the long-term risks of a powerful neighbouring giant, has rejected such a "limited-bandwagoning" option.

ISEAS is pleased to invite you to this Public Seminar.