

# REGIONAL OUTLOOK FORUM 2024

TRUST AND POWER IN PIVOTAL TIMES

Wednesday, 10 January 2024

Sands Expo & Convention Centre, Cassia Ballroom Level 3

GUIDE TO ROF2024



# ABOUT THE ROF2024

Trust between countries is crucial for fostering stable and productive relations and finding common ground amid differing national interests. Trust among citizenry, government and business enables society to resolve pressing problems. The situation today and prospects in the year ahead are shaped by the state of trust and the exercise of power in political and economic spheres.

ROF2024 will consider the global political and economic challenges that arise from the heightened rivalry between the major powers. Geopolitical currents — chiefly, U.S.-China tensions and Russia’s war in Ukraine — continue to ripple across the region. Strategic distrust between the U.S. and China, and their efforts to exert influence and military presence, bear important consequences for Southeast Asia and the South China Sea. New frontiers of contestation, most consequentially U.S.-allied Indo-Pacific partnerships, raise questions about bipolar conflict and ASEAN’s role and posture.

On the regional front, ROF2024 will weigh Southeast Asia’s response to pivotal economic, technological and natural resource challenges. The bifurcation of global supply chains driven by geopolitical rivalry impinges on the region’s trade and investment, cross-border integration and access to technology for generating growth and upgrading economies.

ROF2024 will also survey the domestic situation in Southeast Asian countries. We reflect on the popular trends that are shaping politics in the Philippines and Thailand, the resilience of dynasties, and the outlook for reform. Ahead of Indonesia’s February presidential vote and legislative elections in 2024, we scrutinise the contest among political elites to win the people’s trust, and the possible directions in which the next president will lead the region’s largest country. Finally, in light of the stabilisation of Malaysia’s political landscape in 2023, with both the Unity government and Perikatan Nasional opposition consolidating their coalitions, we deliberate Malaysia’s social cohesion and political outlook.

# PROGRAMME

*Timings in Singapore time*

8.30 am – 9.00 am

Registration

9.00 am – 9.10 am

**Welcome Remarks**

**Mr Choi Shing Kwok**

Director & CEO, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

9.10 am – 10.00 am

**Keynote Address**

**Rivalry and Distrust in the Global Order: How Should Southeast Asia Respond?**

Political and economic rivalries continue to shape the global order heading into 2024. Deepening distrust between major powers affects political and economic ties, posing new challenges for Southeast Asia's strategic and peaceable engagement with all sides. In principle, the region does not choose sides, but the diplomatic balancing act faces new complexities. South China Sea disputes call for a defence of sovereign borders. Our Keynote addresses the major issues looming on the horizon and how Southeast Asia can navigate with clarity, purpose, and cohesion.

Moderator: **Professor Chan Heng Chee**

Chairman Board of Trustees, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Speaker: **Tan Sri Anifah Aman**

Senator, Dewan Negara Malaysia

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia (2009-2018)

10.00 am – 10.30 am

Coffee Break

10.30 am – 11.45 am

**PANEL 1 — Geopolitical Currents: U.S., China, and Japan**

The persistence of U.S.-China tensions raises questions about the causes and implications of this globally pivotal relationship. This Panel will reflect on the underlying factors and contemporary turning points that have given rise to the strategic distrust between the world's major powers. This Panel will also help us gain clarity on how domestic developments, particularly the U.S. elections in November and China's economic slowdown, may impact on the geopolitical rivalry in the coming year. Among the Asian countries, the strategic responses of Japan — as a middle power, QUAD member, and major presence in Southeast Asia, as well as China's neighbour and the U.S.' ally — have exceptionally grown in importance.

Moderator: **Ms Hoang Thi Ha**

Senior Fellow and Co-coordinator, Regional Strategic and Political Studies Programme, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

# PROGRAMME

Speakers: **Dr Evan A Feigenbaum**  
Vice President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

**Professor Xiang Lanxin**  
Professor Emeritus, Graduate Institute of International and  
Development Studies (IHEID), Geneva

**Professor Kawashima Shin**  
Professor of International Relations, Graduate School of Arts  
and Sciences, University of Tokyo

11.45 am – 12.45 pm

## **PANEL 2 — Regional Economic Challenges: Supply Chains, Technology, and Investment**

U.S.-China geopolitical tensions, domestic economic policies, and the pursuit of new technologies converge on the question of Southeast Asia's place in global supply chains. Reconfigurations in supply chains require strategic adaptations in three major aspects. First, raw material and component part industries are dynamically shifting in line with new market demand, notably for renewable energy and electric vehicle production. Second, the continual expansion of the digital economy and acceleration of artificial intelligence pose questions for countries that seek to access both U.S.-based and China-based value chains in key sectors such as semiconductors. Third, China's trade tensions with the U.S. and Europe, coupled with its growth slowdown, have prompted investment relocation to regions such as Southeast Asia. This panel will provide perspective on these unfolding developments and how governments, multinationals, small and medium enterprises, and financial institutions should respond.

Moderator: **Dr Jayant Menon**  
Senior Fellow, Regional Economic Studies Programme,  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Speakers: **Dr Lili Yan Ing**  
Lead Advisor (Southeast Asia), Economic Research Institute for  
ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA); Secretary General, International  
Economic Association (IEA)

**Dato' Seri Wong Siew Hai**  
President, Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association (MSIA)

12.45 pm – 1.45 pm

Lunch

# PROGRAMME

1.45 pm – 2.45 pm

## PANEL 3 — Malaysia: New Possibilities?

Malaysia's Unity government registered various achievements in 2023, its first year in power. The sprawling coalition maintained its cohesion, rolled out various signature policies, and defended Negeri Sembilan, Penang and Selangor in the August 2023 state elections. However, the Unity pact – comprising Pakatan-Harapan-Barisan Nasional on the Peninsula – saw its state assembly majorities shrink, and continually struggles to win ethnic Malay support. Perikatan Nasional, in federal opposition, sustained its popular momentum and dominates the Peninsular northeast and northwest. Economic challenges persist; the Anwar Ibrahim administration's delivery of tangible gains and long-term reforms will be tested. The contest for the Malay vote, and rivalry among Malay parties espousing different political visions, will keep shaping Malaysia. This panel will reflect on the country's prospects of continuity and possibilities of change.

Moderator: **Dr Francis Hutchinson**  
Senior Fellow and Coordinator, Malaysia Studies Programme,  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Speakers: **Datuk Seri Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa**  
Senator, Dewan Negara Malaysia; Deputy President of Parti Amanah  
Negara (AMANAH)

**Tuan Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal**  
Member of Parliament for Machang, Youth Chief of Parti Pribumi  
Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU)

2.45 pm – 3.45 pm

## PANEL 4 — The Philippines and Thailand: Enduring Elites, Deepening Dilemmas

The Philippines and Thailand, while located in geographic corners of Southeast Asia, have witnessed people power and elite endurance. Both highly unequal societies are grappling with the ramifications of elections that have seen the return of dynastic influence. Problems of disinformation weigh heavily on the Philippines, where social media usage is among the highest globally. In the international arena, the country is engrossed in South China Sea disputes and dilemmas of its proximity to Taiwan. Thailand's government, a coalition of Pheu Thai with military-aligned parties, was formed in August 2023 after three months of impasse following the general election that delivered an emphatic rejection of the military establishment. However, the mandate for change was overturned, eroding public trust in the democratic system. This Panel will discuss key domestic and regional issues facing both countries.

Moderator: **Dr Napon Jatusripitak**  
Visiting Fellow, Thailand Studies Programme, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Speakers: **Ms Marites Vitug**  
Editor-at-large, *Rappler*; Author of *Rock Solid: How the Philippines Won  
Its Maritime Case Against China*

**Dr Anusorn Unno**  
Associate Professor, Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology,  
Thammasat University

# PROGRAMME

3.45 pm – 4.00 pm

Coffee Break

4.00 pm – 5.00 pm

## **PANEL 5 — Indonesia's 2024 Elections: Contenders and Consequences**

Indonesia's 14 February 2024 presidential election will be pivotal. After Joko Widodo's decade-long presidency, Indonesians will elect his successor. The contest for president and vice-president nominations in September-October 2023 revealed the power dynamics and vested interests of the nation's political elites. Candidates have presented their economic visions and religious credentials in their appeals to Indonesia's diverse electorate. Rhetoric, tension and expectancy rise in the heat of campaigning, especially on social media. But Indonesia's democracy has proven robust if still a work in progress; the winner must forge political alliances and secure a broad-based mandate. This Panel will unpack the state of play in the quest for power.

Moderator: **Ms Julia Lau**

Senior Fellow and Co-coordinator, Indonesia Studies Programme,  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Speakers: **Dr Yanuar Nugroho**

Former Deputy Chief of Staff to the President of Indonesia (2015-  
2019); Visiting Senior Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

**Dr Burhanuddin Muhtadi**

Professor of Political Science, Islamic State University (UIN) Syarif  
Hidayatullah; Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

# SPEAKERS & MODERATORS

## WELCOME REMARKS



**Mr Choi Shing Kwok** is Director and Chief Executive Officer of ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute and Head of the ASEAN Studies Centre and Singapore APEC Studies Centre at the institute. Prior to this appointment, he was Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources from 2012 to 2017. Mr Choi started his career in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) in 1978. He held various appointments in the SAF before he was appointed as Director, Security and Intelligence Division, Ministry of Defence in 1995 and held the post till 2005. After leaving the Ministry of Defence, Mr Choi held the post of Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Transport from 2005 to 2012.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS — RIVALRY AND DISTRUST IN THE GLOBAL ORDER: HOW SHOULD SOUTHEAST ASIA RESPOND?

Political and economic rivalries continue to shape the global order heading into 2024. Deepening distrust between major powers affects political and economic ties, posing new challenges for Southeast Asia's strategic and peaceable engagement with all sides. In principle, the region does not choose sides, but the diplomatic balancing act faces new complexities. South China Sea disputes call for a defence of sovereign borders. Our Keynote addresses the major issues looming on the horizon and how Southeast Asia can navigate with clarity, purpose, and cohesion.



**Tan Sri Anifah Aman** is a Senator in Malaysia's Dewan Negara. He served in Malaysia's Cabinet for two decades, in the primary industries and plantations and commodities portfolios, and as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2009 to 2018. He is currently the Special Advisor on International Relations and Foreign Investment to the Chief Minister of Sabah, Chairman of Invest Sabah Berhad, and Chairman of Labuan Corporation. Tan Sri Anifah was elected to Parliament representing Sabah's constituencies of Beaufort (1999-2004) and Kimanis (2004-2018), as then member of United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition. He left UMNO in 2018 and is currently President of Parti Cinta Sabah (Love Sabah Party). He earned a degree in Philosophy, Economics and Law from University of Buckingham in 1979. A football enthusiast, he has served as Vice President of the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) and Team Manager for FAM's B-23 Years team since 2005.



**Professor Chan Heng Chee** is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. She is Ambassador-at-Large with the Singapore Foreign Ministry and holds the appointment of Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities at the Singapore University of Technology and Design. She was appointed a Member of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights in 2012 and continues to serve in that position. Ambassador Chan is the Deputy Chairman of the Social Science Research Council in Singapore. She is a Member of the Science of Cities Committee (National Research Foundation). She is a Trustee of the National University of Singapore, and of Yale-NUS College. In 2022, Ambassador Chan was appointed a Trustee of the University of the Arts Singapore. She is the Global Co-chair of Asia Society and a Board member of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

MODERATOR

# SPEAKERS & MODERATORS

## PANEL 1 — GEOPOLITICAL CURRENTS: U.S., CHINA, AND JAPAN

The persistence of U.S.-China tensions raises questions about the causes and implications of this globally pivotal relationship. This Panel will reflect on the underlying factors and contemporary turning points that have given rise to the strategic distrust between the world's major powers. This Panel will also help us gain clarity on how domestic developments, particularly the U.S. elections in November and China's economic slowdown, may impact on the geopolitical rivalry in the coming year. Among the Asian countries, the strategic responses of Japan — as a middle power, QUAD member, and major presence in Southeast Asia, as well as China's neighbour and the U.S.' ally — have exceptionally grown in importance.



**Dr Evan A. Feigenbaum** is Vice President for Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He was also the 2019-20 James R. Schlesinger Distinguished Professor at the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, where he is now a practitioner senior fellow. Initially an academic with a PhD in Chinese politics from Stanford University, his career has spanned government service, think tanks, the private sector, and three regions of Asia. From 2001 to 2009, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia (2007–2009) and Central Asia (2006–2007), Member of the Policy Planning Staff with principal responsibility for East Asia and the Pacific (2001–2006), and an adviser on China to Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick. He is the author of three books and monographs, including *The United States in the New Asia* (2009, co-author) and *China's Techno-Warriors: National Security and Strategic Competition from the Nuclear to the Information Age* (2003), as well as numerous articles and essays.

### PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

The collision in Asia between economic integration and security fragmentation has confronted the United States with a multi-decade challenge that the Biden Administration, like its predecessors, has largely failed to grapple with. For decades after the Second World War, the United States exercised leadership in Asia precisely because it was the principal provider of both security- and economic-related public goods and other benefits. Thus, for decades, Asia's security and economic orders were tightly interwoven, with the United States as the key player in both of them. But this is really no longer the case and Washington has failed to adapt. While America's economic role is growing in absolute terms, it is receding in relative

terms, which means that to lead, it should be leaning on its role as a rule writer and standard setter. Sadly, the opposite has happened, with the American withdrawal, or absence from, for example, the region's major trade agreements. Meanwhile, domestic populism risks making the United States itself less open economically, politically, and socially—entrenching concerns in Asia that America is no longer ideologically or practically committed to “leadership” but is instead mired in a self-centred bilateral strategic competition with China. The next presidency after 2024 will be determinative of America's trajectory.



**Professor Xiang Lanxin** is Professor Emeritus of International History and Politics at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID), Geneva. He was Founding Director of the Institute of Security Policy (ISP), China National Institute for SCO International Exchange and Judicial Cooperation (CNISCO), Shanghai, and Chair of Security Policy at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law (SHUPL) and is currently a Distinguished Fellow at the Stimson Center. Professor Xiang was a Henry A. Kissinger Chair of Foreign Policy and International Affairs at the U.S. Library of Congress, and has held distinguished chairs at Fudan University, East China Normal University and Foreign Affairs University, Beijing. He earned a PhD from the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. He has published widely, including four English books and six in Chinese. His most recent book is *Quest for Legitimacy in Chinese Politics—a New Interpretation* (2020).



## PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

A half-century old mutual trust has almost disappeared between two leading powers in the world. The core dispute between China and the US is over the definition of “One China”, but the US-vs-China haggling over “One China” or “Two China” policies are actually red herrings. This confusing word game sets up a dangerous situation that could end in war. The US insists that it is China that has shifted the foundation of the “One China Policy” by sabre-rattling military actions,

while China believes that the US is adopting a “salami-slice” approach to abandon the “One China Principle” and push for Taiwan independence. In reality, both sides are unwilling to recognize that the two concepts have little in common. We have entered a phase where two superpowers consistently talk past each other. This word game is too risky to play, because a single spark could start a prairie fire, and the result would be unimaginable.



**Professor Kawashima Shin** is professor of international relations at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the University of Tokyo. He was previously Associate Professor at Hokkaido University. Professor Kawashima is also an executive director of research at the Nakasone Peace Institute and an associate member of the Science Council of Japan. His main areas of interest are Chinese/Taiwanese diplomatic history and contemporary international relations in East Asia. He holds a PhD from the University of Tokyo and writes extensively in Think China ([thinkchina.sg](http://thinkchina.sg)) and The Diplomat ([thediplomat.com](http://thediplomat.com)). He has authored and edited several books and numerous articles, notably *Chūgoku kindai gaikō no keisei* (2004; awarded the Suntory Academic Prize), *Frontier of China* (2017), *Japan-China Relations in the Modern Era* (Routledge, 2017), *Emerging countries after Covid-19* (2021), *Xi Jinping’s China* (2022), and *Japan-China Relations, 2001–2022* (2023).

## PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

The US-China relationship is currently in a long-term, tough “competitive” phase, yet the two countries will not clash and will cooperate in areas where they should. To steer this difficult relationship, the US and China will maintain communication and manage the relationship, and the 2023 US-China summit was a timely intervention. However, depending on the US presidential election in 2024, this “competitive” relationship could also be changed.

In line with the prevailing Japan-US alliance, Japan has taken a joint step with the US on the security front and joined in sanctions against Russia, but on the other hand, with China, Russia, and North Korea as its neighbours, Japan faces the challenge of maintaining “peace and stability”. Therefore, Japan

is trying to avoid over-emphasising the division in this region. With 2023 marking the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan, the mainstream argument in Japan was to respect Southeast Asian countries’ autonomy rather than requesting that they choose either the US or China.

In Japan-China relations, the two countries have a stance of emphasising dialogue while enhancing deterrence on the security front. But the “(friendship) cooperation” with China is highly challenging. Domestic public opinion is 85% negative toward China. However, just under 70% of the public thinks that Japan-China relations are important for Japan. The Japanese business community is probably searching for a balancing point among economic interests, China risk, and economic security.



**Ms Hoang Thi Ha** is Senior Fellow and Co-coordinator of the Regional Strategic and Political Studies Programme at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. Prior to this, she held positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam and the ASEAN Secretariat, with her last post being Assistant Director, Head of the Political Cooperation Division. Her research interests include geopolitics in Southeast Asia and political-security issues in ASEAN, especially the South China Sea disputes, ASEAN human rights cooperation, ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific discourse and ASEAN’s institutional building. She holds an MA in International Relations from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam.

MODERATOR

# SPEAKERS & MODERATORS

## PANEL 2 — REGIONAL ECONOMIC CHALLENGES: SUPPLY CHAINS, TECHNOLOGY, AND INVESTMENT

U.S.-China geopolitical tensions, domestic economic policies, and the pursuit of new technologies converge on the question of Southeast Asia's place in global supply chains. Reconfigurations in supply chains require strategic adaptations in three major aspects. First, raw material and component part industries are dynamically shifting in line with new market demand, notably for renewable energy and electric vehicle production. Second, the continual expansion of the digital economy and acceleration of artificial intelligence pose questions for countries that seek to access both U.S.-based and China-based value chains in key sectors such as semiconductors. Third, China's trade tensions with the U.S. and Europe, coupled with its growth slowdown, have prompted investment relocation to regions such as Southeast Asia. This panel will provide perspective on these unfolding developments and how governments, multinationals, small and medium enterprises, and financial institutions should respond.



**Dr Lili Yan Ing** is Lead Advisor on the Southeast Asia Region at the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA). She also serves as Secretary General of the International Economic Association (IEA). Dr Ing was appointed as Lead Advisor to the Minister of Trade of Indonesia in 2017–19 and Advisor to the President on Trade and Investment in 2015–16. She holds a PhD in Economics from the Australian National University. She has edited and contributed chapters to books on technology, trade, and investment, including *Local Content Requirements: Promises and Pitfalls* (2023), *Robots and AI: A New Economic Era* (2022), *Indonesia's G20: New Normal, New Technologies, New Financing* (2022), *East Asian Integration: Goods, Services and Investment* (2019), and *World Trade Evolution: Growth, Productivity and Employment* (2018).

### PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

The dynamic interplay between nations, marked by the intensifying tensions between China and the United States, has fuelled the rising anti-globalisation in today's economy. A notable trend of rising protectionist measures, justified under the umbrella of national security, also increases the cost of production, and many countries will come up with not the first, second, or even tenth-best solution. Amidst the backdrop of global uncertainties, ASEAN needs to adopt a distinctive stance by recognising the importance of neutrality and enhancing an

inclusive-multilateral trading system. ASEAN has vast potential in the semiconductor sector, spearheaded by Singapore and Malaysia and their rising role in the global semiconductor market. Staying open to collaborative frameworks could help ASEAN capture prospective opportunities in trade and investment. Furthermore, it is important to enhance the role of digital technologies in the region by investing in both physical and digital infrastructure while also optimising their use to expand Southeast Asia's supply chains.



**Dato' Seri Wong Siew Hai** has 29 years of working experience in the electronics industry, 27 of which were with Intel. His last position with Intel was Vice President of Technology and Manufacturing Group (TMG) and General Manager of Assembly and Test Manufacturing (ATM), responsible for all assembly test factories worldwide. Currently, Dato' Seri Wong is involved in the electronics industry as Champion of the E&E Productivity Nexus (EPPN) and President of the newly formed Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association (MSIA). He was Chairman of the Malaysian American Electronics Industry committee (2005–21), and a Board member of the Penang Tech Centre Berhad and Penang Science Cluster. He served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) for 12 years and was Chair of its audit committee.

## PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

Semiconductor is the “New Oil”, and its importance is poised to rise further, with the industry projected to double over the next 7 years, heading toward 2030. However, the industry is in the midst of a tectonic shift in the world order, as the US-China “Chip War” threatens the decoupling of semiconductor supply chains which have been globalised for the past 50 years. The resiliency of the global supply chain is now a key focus for the

industry as the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the vulnerability of the “Just-in-Time” business model which experienced chip shortages as a result of intermittent closure and reopening of factories. ASEAN, a critical hub for semiconductors, is caught at the intersection of the US-China rivalry. What is at stake is much more than just semiconductors but the knock-on effects on other industries.

MODERATOR



**Dr Jayant Menon** is a Senior Fellow at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, following a long career at the Asian Development Bank. His last post at ADB was Lead Economist in the Office of the Chief Economist. After obtaining his PhD from the University of Melbourne, Dr Menon worked in academia, with positions at the Centre of Policy Studies at Monash University, as well as the University of Melbourne, Victoria University, the American University in Washington, DC and the ADB Institute in Tokyo. He has served as a Board Director of CDRI, Cambodia, and on the Advisory Board of the University of Nottingham, Malaysia. He holds adjunct appointments with the Australian National University, University of Nottingham, UK and IDEAS, Malaysia. He has authored/edited more than 15 books, 40 book chapters, and 80 articles in peer-reviewed journals.

## PANEL 3 — MALAYSIA: NEW POSSIBILITIES?

Malaysia’s Unity government registered various achievements in 2023, its first year in power. The sprawling coalition maintained its cohesion, rolled out various signature policies, and defended Negeri Sembilan, Penang and Selangor in the August 2023 state elections. However, the Unity pact – comprising Pakatan-Harapan-Barisan Nasional on the Peninsula – saw its state assembly majorities shrink, and continually struggles to win ethnic Malay support. Perikatan Nasional, in federal opposition, sustained its popular momentum and dominates the Peninsular northeast and northwest. Economic challenges persist; the Anwar Ibrahim administration’s delivery of tangible gains and long-term reforms will be tested. Selangor will be increasingly crucial to the Unity coalition’s future, and the contest for the Malay vote will keep shaping the country’s politics. This panel will reflect on Malaysia’s prospects of continuity and possibilities of change.



**Datuk Seri Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa** is a Senator in Malaysia’s Dewan Negara. He is Deputy President of Parti Amanah Negara, and Chair of Pakatan Harapan Perak. He was elected Member of Parliament for Parit Buntar, Perak, for three terms spanning 2008-22, and served as Minister of Religious Affairs in the Prime Minister’s Department during the Pakatan Harapan administration of 2018-20. Mujahid is also Chair of Nadwah Ulamak (NUNJI), a civil society organisation devoted to research and conducting seminars about Islamic Policies and Politics in contemporary local politics. He holds a doctorate in Syariah policy from the University of Malaya, and has authored various books on Islam, inter-faith dialogue, and Malaysian identity.

## SPEAKERS & MODERATORS



**Tuan Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal** is the Member of Parliament for Machang, Kelantan, and Head of ARMADA, the youth wing of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU). He was formerly Deputy Minister of National Unity, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, and Special Functions Officer to the Minister of Youth and Sports. Prior to joining frontline politics, Wan Fayhsal was a research fellow with Putra Business School, Senior Executive (Stakeholder Management) with the Affirmative Action Empowerment Unit (TERAJU) in the Prime Minister’s Department of Malaysia (Malaysia), and Executive (Business and Strategic Planning) with Petronas. He holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Chemical Engineering from Universiti Petronas Malaysia, and a Master of Arts in Geopolitics (Territorial Security) from King’s College London.



MODERATOR

**Dr Francis E Hutchinson** is a Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the Malaysia Studies Programme at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. His research interests include state-business relations, elections, federalism, decentralisation, local economic development, and cross-border regions. Francis is the Managing Editor of the *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*, and has authored or edited eight books, including *The Defeat of Barisan Nasional: Missed Signs or Late Surge?* (2020), *Asia and the Middle-Income Trap* (2016), and the *SIJORI Series*, a trilogy of edited volumes looking at the interactions between Singapore, Johor, and the Riau Islands (2016, 2020, 2021). He has published articles in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Asian Journal of Political Science*, *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature*, and other peer-reviewed journals. Francis holds a PhD in Public Policy and Administration from the Australian National University.

### PANEL 4 — THE PHILIPPINES AND THAILAND: ENDURING ELITES, DEEPENING DILEMMAS

The Philippines and Thailand, while located in geographic corners of Southeast Asia, have witnessed people power and elite endurance. Both highly unequal societies are grappling with the ramifications of elections that have seen the return of dynastic influence. Problems of disinformation weigh heavily on the Philippines, where social media usage is among the highest globally. In the international arena, the country is engrossed in South China Sea disputes and dilemmas of its proximity to Taiwan. Thailand’s government, a coalition of Pheu Thai with military-aligned parties, was formed in August 2023 after three months of impasse following the general election that delivered an emphatic rejection of the military establishment. However, the mandate for change was overturned, eroding public trust in the democratic system. This Panel will discuss key domestic and regional issues facing both countries.



**Ms Marites Dañguilan Vitug**, a leading Filipino investigative journalist and author, is editor-at-large for *Rappler*. She was editor of *Newsbreak* magazine, a trailblazer in Philippine investigative journalism. She has written eight books. Her latest, *Rock Solid: How the Philippines Won its Maritime Case against China* (2018), won the National Book Award and was translated into Vietnamese. Marites is also among the contributors to *Maritime Issues and Regional Order in the Indo-Pacific* (2021). She was a Nieman fellow at Harvard University and a recipient of fellowships from the University of San Diego in California—the Pacific Leadership Fellow; the Rockefeller Foundation Writing Fellowship in Bellagio Center, Lago di Como, Italy; the International House in Tokyo—the Asia Leadership Fellow Program; the Australian National University, University of Kyoto and the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo.

# SPEAKERS & MODERATORS

## PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

Despite emerging from a backdrop of dynastic and money-driven politics in the Philippines, as well as the politics of memory, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has managed to defy expectations. His presidency, which began in July 2022, has ushered in consequential changes on two fronts. One notable shift has been the strengthening of relations with the US and traditional allies, marking a departure from the previous administration's pro-China stance. Given the Philippines' geographical proximity to Taiwan and its strategic position in the South China Sea, Marcos' foreign policy orientation has garnered significant attention from countries with strong interests and stakes in the region. Second, in an attempt to redeem his family's legacy, particularly that of his father, former dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr., President Marcos has made efforts to restore a sense of normalcy to the country's flawed democracy. He has abolished state-sanctioned killings in combating the use of illegal drugs, vowed to uphold freedom of the press, and respected judicial independence. On his watch, former Senator Leila de Lima, who was imprisoned during the previous Duterte administration on trumped-up charges, was released after nearly seven years in detention.

While it is anticipated that the government will continue to uphold its commitment to democracy as well as the strategic alliances with the US, Japan, Australia, South Korea and Canada, President Marcos faces several challenges. China has escalated the activities of its Coast Guard and maritime militia against the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and Navy in the West Philippine Sea, an area falling within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), while also resorting to disinformation, spreading narratives that fuel doubts about the PCG and the country's alliance with the US. Under these circumstances, and in the face of a looming energy crisis, President Marcos must decide whether to greenlight a Philippine company's partnership with a non-Chinese firm for oil and gas exploration in the West Philippine Sea. Furthermore, on the political front, although President Marcos's approval rating dipped to 65% in September 2023 from a high of 80% in June 2023, primarily due to rising inflation, he still enjoys majority support. However, a critical test lies ahead: can he secure a majority in both Congress and the Senate in the upcoming midterm elections in 2025?



**Dr Anusorn Unno** is an Associate Professor at Thammasat University's Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology, where he served as a Dean from 2013–19. He received a PhD in anthropology from the University of Washington. He has researched and published works on Malay Muslims of southern Thailand, Thai politics, and social movements and youth movements in Thailand. Dr Unno's prominent publications include *"We Love Mr. King": Malay Muslims of Southern Thailand in the Wake of the Unrest* (2019) and a chapter in *After the Coup: The National Council for Peace and Order Era and the Future of Thailand* (2019). He has also published articles in the ISEAS Perspective series, Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia, SOJOURN, Thammasat Review, and other international peer-reviewed journals.

## PRESENTATION ABSTRACT — ALLIED ELITES, FRAGMENTED MASSES: THAILAND AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE

In 2023, Thailand arrived at a critical juncture. On the one hand, enmity between the establishment and elected leaders which has lasted for almost two decades seems to have come to an end, with the formation of the Pheu Thai-led coalition government which included establishment-supported parties at the expense of the anti-establishment Move Forward party – which actually won the election. The governing coalition is riveted by Thaksin's return to Thailand, and especially the royal pardon later granted to him. On the other hand, the new alliance, while welcomed by elite circles, further divided the masses not only between the two opposite blocs but also within each of them. Move Forward supporters were

infuriated whereas Pheu Thai supporters managed to support the coalition, leading to a rift in the pro-democracy bloc. Likewise, some conservatives tried to come to terms with the coalition while many others became disenchanted with the establishment, leaving them with no source of unity. Taking the elite alliance vis-à-vis mass fragmentation as a critical juncture in Thai politics, I demonstrate how these processes took place and how they in turn will shape Thailand's near future. To resolve discrepancies at the juncture, I submit that Thailand should not take that path that settles on an establishment-manipulated consensus, but the one that leads to a mass-negotiated contract.

# SPEAKERS & MODERATORS

MODERATOR



**Dr Napon Jatusripitak** is a Visiting Fellow at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute and a Postdoctoral Fellow at Chulalongkorn University. His research explores the dynamics of change, conflict, and development in Southeast Asia through the lens of social science. He holds a PhD in Political Science from Northwestern University. In his original research titled “The Politics of Giving: Patterns and Evolution of Patronage and Electoral Networks in Thailand,” Napon conducted in-depth interviews with hard-to-reach political actors, examining the distribution of rewards and favours by parties and politicians to secure electoral support. Napon continues to pursue his research interests in democratisation, elite politics, and patronage.

## PANEL 5 — INDONESIA’S 2024 ELECTIONS: CONTENDERS AND CONSEQUENCES

Indonesia’s 14 February 2024 presidential election will be pivotal. After Joko Widodo’s decade-long presidency, Indonesians will elect his successor. The contest for president and vice-president nominations in September–October 2023 revealed the power dynamics and vested interests of the nation’s political elites. Candidates have presented their economic visions and religious credentials in their appeals to Indonesia’s diverse electorate. Rhetoric, tension and expectancy rise in the heat of campaigning, especially on social media. But Indonesia’s democracy has proven robust if still a work in progress; the winner must forge political alliances and secure a broad-based mandate. This Panel will unpack the state of play in the quest for power.



**Dr Yanuar Nugroho** is a Visiting Senior Fellow at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, a Senior Lecturer at Driyarkara School of Philosophy, Jakarta and an Honorary Research Fellow with the University of Manchester’s Institute of Innovation Research, UK. He is also the Expert Coordinator at the National Secretariat for the SDGs Implementation at the Ministry of National Development Planning, Indonesia. Previously, Yanuar was Director and Special Adviser to the Head of the Indonesian President’s Delivery Unit for Development Monitoring and Oversight under President Yudhoyono (2012–14) and former Deputy Chief of Staff to the President at the Executive Office of the President, Indonesia, under President Joko Widodo (2015–19). His research and publications have focused on innovation, sustainability, knowledge dynamics, public policy, and decentralisation in Indonesia. He also co-edited the first academic book on Indonesia’s new capital Nusantara.

### PRESENTATION ABSTRACT — NAVIGATING INDONESIA’S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: A PRELUDE TO THE 2024 ELECTIONS

This presentation analyses Indonesia’s political landscape leading up to the crucial February 2024 presidential and legislative elections. It focuses on the intense competition among political elites to secure people’s trust and the potential direction of the country under new leadership. The analysis examines the implications of the presidential and vice-presidential nominees, and some attention is given to the influence of political strategies, including machinations and dynastic politics, on voter attitudes and behaviours – in addition to the role of incumbent President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and other key power brokers in shaping the election’s

outcome. Furthermore, the presentation explores the likelihood of the continuation of Jokowi’s hallmark policies, such as the ambitious Nusantara capital project and extensive infrastructure development, under the new regime. How would these factors collectively shape the political landscape of Indonesia and what direction would the nation take post-election? The analysis not only highlights the complexities of Indonesian politics but also underscores the broader implications for Indonesia in terms of governance and development policy continuity.

# SPEAKERS & MODERATORS



**Professor Burhanuddin Muhtadi** is Professor of Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, and an executive director of Indonesia's leading independent public opinion research institute, Indikator Politik Indonesia. He is also a Visiting Fellow in the Indonesia Studies Programme at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. Burhanuddin received his PhD from the Department of Political and Social Change, Australian National University (ANU), working on money politics in Indonesia. He has also published widely in leading peer-reviewed journals, including *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *Asian Studies Review*, *Pacific Affairs*, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Asian Journal of Social Science* and high-ranked disciplinary journals like *World Politics*, *Third World Quarterly*, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *Party Politics*, *Democratization*, *International Journal of Communication*, and *Electoral Studies*.

## PRESENTATION ABSTRACT — A SIGNIFICANT ELECTION: INDONESIA 2024

The 2024 Indonesian presidential election campaign season officially started on 28 November 2023. In one of the world's largest democracies, 205 million registered voters will cast their ballots on 14 February 2024. The highly popular President Joko Widodo has cast a long shadow and influence on this three-way race, especially after his son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, was picked as candidate Prabowo Subianto's running mate. The latest polls show that this move has borne significant electoral payoff. It has triggered Jokowi's support base to shift to the Prabowo-Gibran camp, leaving PDI-P's Ganjar Pranowo and the third-placed contender, former Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan, behind in electability ratings. Anies, positioning himself as the candidate of change and most able to attract anti-Jokowi voters, now looks competitive in advancing to the

run-off in June 2024 (which will occur should Prabowo fail to win outright in the first round with 50 per cent of the national vote plus one).

The palpable political split between Jokowi and Megawati, PDI-P chairwoman will also reverberate in the country's political landscape. While Anies has opposed Jokowi's plan to shift Indonesia's capital from Jakarta to Nusantara in East Kalimantan, most observers predict there will be no significant domestic or foreign policy shifts under a Prabowo or Ganjar presidency. At this point, the two latter contenders are competing for the same pool of voters who are content with Jokowi's programmes and policies.

MODERATOR



**Ms Julia Lau** is a Senior Fellow and Co-coordinator of the Indonesia Studies Programme at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, and an Editor of [fulcrum.sg](https://fulcrum.sg), ISEAS' commentary and analysis website. Julia's current research interests include Indonesia's foreign policy and domestic politics, Timor Leste studies, and Singapore's war memory of the Japanese Occupation. She holds postgraduate degrees in Security Studies and in Government (Georgetown University), and LLB and LLM degrees from the National University of Singapore. Julia was lead editor for *The Road to Nusantara: Process, Challenges and Opportunities* (2023), a multi-authored volume on Indonesia's new capital city. Prior to joining ISEAS, Julia taught international relations and law, comparative politics, and research methods at Georgetown, the Catholic University of America, and McDaniel College. In her early career, she was an analyst and manager at the Ministry of Defence, Singapore.

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## ROF2024 FEEDBACK FORM



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Please [share your thoughts](#) on the forum with us. To thank you for your feedback, please show your completed form at the registration counter outside the ballroom on 10 January 2024 to receive a complimentary title of ISEAS' publication "Trends in Southeast Asia".

# INFORMATION

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ROF2024 is a one day event which will take place in-person at Cassia Ballroom, Level 3, Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Singapore (10 Bayfront Ave, Singapore 018956) or virtually via zoom platform on 10 January 2024 from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Singapore Time.

For in-person attendance, note that check in to the event will start at 8.30 am. Do arrive early with your registration

confirmation and be seated at 9.00 am. Lunch and 2 coffee breaks with a halal menu will be provided.

For online attendance, note that each virtual registration is good for only one login at any one time during the event.

Contact [rof@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:rof@iseas.edu.sg) for more information. Or visit [www.iseas.edu.sg/rof2024](http://www.iseas.edu.sg/rof2024)





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ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute (formerly Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) was established as an autonomous organization in 1968. It is a regional centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security, and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environment. The Institute’s research programmes are the Regional Economic Studies, Regional Strategic and Political Studies, and Regional Social and Cultural Studies. The Institute is also home to the ASEAN Studies Centre, the Temasek History Research Centre and the Singapore APEC Study Centre.

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