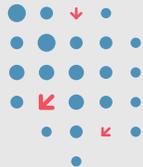
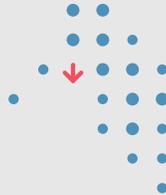




ISEAS @ 50



RESEARCHING
SOUTHEAST
ASIA



Contents

1. **Our Heritage**
2. **Our Research**
3. **Our Resources & Outreach**
4. **Our Archaeological Activities**
5. **Our Future Research Direction**

1. Our Heritage

The year was 1965. The first batch of US ground troops had landed in Vietnam to fight communist insurgents in what was to be a protracted war. In Indonesia, long-time President Sukarno was deposed following a military coup and replaced by General Suharto and the New Order regime. Meanwhile, Indonesia's Konfrontasi against Malaysia waged on. Amidst these uncertainties, Singapore was evicted from Malaysia and a young nation was born.

Then Deputy Prime Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee realised that a small and vulnerable state had to better understand its neighbours for survival. He observed that we "knew more about Melbourne than Medan". The idea for ISEAS was thus conceived.

After personally visiting research centres around the world, Dr Goh proposed to Cabinet in October 1966 to establish a research institute on Indonesian affairs. He had intended for ISEAS to conduct multi-disciplinary research on our biggest neighbour – including its history, geography, ethnography, politics, economics and culture.

Dr Goh's original proposal was expanded the following year when the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed in 1967. ISEAS's shift from an Indonesian to a Southeast Asian focus acknowledged the importance of studying the region holistically and how different national societies interacted with each other.

On 7 June 1968, Parliament passed the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Act. It was a significant milestone because the establishment of ISEAS as an autonomous institute bucked the trend of western centres of learning studying the region from afar. For the first time, Southeast Asia had a research centre dedicated to the study of the region.

Humble Beginnings

ISEAS started small, housed at No. 8 Bukit Timah Campus in 1968 with a \$260,000 seed grant from the Singapore government. Yale University provided tuition fellowships for two ISEAS trainees with support from the Asia Foundation while the Ford Foundation covered part of the Director's remuneration.



First premise at No. 8 Bukit Timah Campus, 1968.



ISEAS's second home at the former Civil Service Institute, Kent Ridge Campus, 1980.



ISEAS moved to 30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace in 1998.

Pioneer Directors

The search for ISEAS's founding Director was led by Dr Goh.

He turned to Prof Harry Benda who was seconded from Yale University. An Indonesian expert, Prof Benda reaffirmed ISEAS's strong Indonesian focus and was ISEAS's first Director from 1968-1969. He spent 15 months at the Institute shaping its mission and objectives, as well as recruiting researchers.



ISEAS's founding Director Prof Harry Benda.

Prof John Legge from Monash University succeeded Prof Benda from 1969-1970. Like his predecessor, Prof Legge was also an Indonesian specialist. Prof Legge instinctively understood the Institute's raison d'etre, observing that ISEAS was:



ISEAS's second Director, Prof John Legge (middle).

"attempting to stimulate Southeast Asian scholarship and not American or Australian scholarship... If you're having an institute in Singapore and if its concern was to draw upon scholars from the region, this would indeed have a different perspective".

Prof Josef Silverstein took over as ISEAS's third Director from 1970-1972. Prof Silverstein was a Burma expert from Rutgers University, New Jersey and enjoyed a warm relationship with Dr Goh.



Prof Josef Silverstein (in white suit), ISEAS's third Director in 1971.

The first three Directors were crucial in synchronising ISEAS's unflinching regional focus with international academic practices and norms. In 1972, Prof Kernial Sandhu became ISEAS's fourth and longest serving Director from 1972-1992. Prof Sandhu brought academic rigour to bear on real-life issues. He made the point that ISEAS must have **"a judicious mix of academically inclined and problem-oriented or applied research"**.



Dr Goh Keng Swee (left) and ISEAS's fourth Director Prof Kernial Sandhu (right) in 1980.

Working with Other Stakeholders

ISEAS values its relationship with other stakeholders. This relationship has enabled ISEAS to go beyond the ivory tower and stay in touch with real world challenges. For example, Dr Goh Keng Swee personally approached the business and banking communities for support in the early years. By sharing their interests and concerns, non-academic partners have helped the Institute anticipate regional and global trends and consequentially broadening its research horizon.



Dr Goh discussing the importance of ISEAS with local corporate leaders in order to raise funds in 1970.

ISEAS's supporters and sponsors included the Ford Foundation, The Asia Foundation, Shaw Foundation, the Lee Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and Sasakawa Peace Foundation, among others. The Tun Dato Sir Cheng Lock Tan Trust Fund has supported ISEAS with MA scholarships since 1997.

Honouring Yusof Ishak

On 12 August 2015, ISEAS was officially renamed ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, in honour of Singapore's first President. PM Lee Hsien Loong announced the name change in his National Day Rally speech on 17 August 2014. Yusof Ishak had served as President from 1965 to 1970. In his Rally speech, PM Lee observed,

"Encik Yusof showed that in Singapore, you can rise to the top if you work hard. He stood for enduring values that underpin Singapore's success – meritocracy, multiracialism, modernisation. He was a President for all Singaporeans."

2. Our Research

ISEAS's research is grounded in real world relevance. This means keeping abreast of the latest academic developments while conducting fieldwork to understand how events unfold on the ground. In doing so, the Institute carries out applied research that is useful to both academics and policy makers.

1970s: Political Transitions and Conflict

The 1970s were characterised by the Cold War, disruptive political transitions and conflict. China seized the Vietnamese-occupied Paracel Islands from Vietnam, the US troops withdrew from mainland Southeast Asia, the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia while Saigon fell to the communists.



It was against this backdrop that ISEAS launched the *Southeast Asian Affairs*, an annual review of the region, in 1974 to keep track and make sense of these changes. Together with Occasional Papers, Trends in Southeast Asia Seminar monographs, Research Notes and Discussion Papers, ISEAS began to develop its own body of research.

1980s: Growth and Political Change

With the Cold War as a backdrop, the 1980s was a decade of growth and change. On a broad level, the region benefitted from the signing of the Plaza Accord in 1985 which ushered large-scale FDI into ASEAN. Meanwhile, national economies underwent change: Singapore suffered a major economic recession in 1985, the People's Power revolution overthrew the Marcos regime in the Philippines in 1986, Vietnam embarked on *Đổi Mới* market reforms the same year and the military cracked down on the 8888 Revolution in Burma in 1988.



In response, ISEAS established three research programmes in 1988, namely, the ASEAN Economic Research Unit, Social Issues in Southeast Asia, and Regional Strategic Studies to better untangle political trends from economic and social ones. The Southeast Asian Cultural Programme was expanded to study the traditions of the different peoples in the region.

1990s: Globalisation and the 'Asian Miracle'

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 set the tone for the decade. The region gradually embraced neoliberal policies which led to accelerated growth. The so-called 'Asian miracle' saw the economies of Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and to some extent, the Philippines, develop at unprecedented rates. The Southeast Asian middle class was emerging, resulting in profound socio-political change. The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis rocked the region, beginning with the collapse of the Thai baht.



To study these issues more effectively, ISEAS streamlined existing programmes in 1995 into the Regional Economic Studies (RES) Programme, Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS) Programme, and the Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS) Programme. These three research pillars remain to this day.



Singapore APEC
Study Centre

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Study Centre was established in ISEAS in 1994.

The Centre is part of the ISEAS's Regional Economic Studies Programme. It is headed by the Director of ISEAS and assisted by a Centre Coordinator. The Centre seeks to network with its overseas counterparts to undertake collaborative research, disseminate research results and raise public awareness of APEC.

2000s: Regionalisation and Shifting Global Power

China's integration into the world economy was formalised in 2001 when it became a member of the WTO. The following year saw China become the first ASEAN Dialogue Partner to sign an FTA with the regional body. China's economic ascent prompted ASEAN member states to enhance regional identity and solidarity. These geopolitical trends led to the establishment of two centres at ISEAS.



The ASEAN Studies Centre (ASC) was set up in 2008 as a legacy of Singapore's ASEAN chairmanship that year with the explicit mandate of giving voice to the regional interest. Singapore served as ASEAN Chair in 1992, 2000, 2007 and 2018. Today, ASC conducts research on issues pertaining to ASEAN as an organisation and on raising awareness on ASEAN matters. ASC organises annual events such as the ASEAN Roundtable and the ASEAN Lecture Series which engage policy-makers, scholars and business leaders alike. *ASEAN Focus*, its bimonthly publication, connects the wider audience to important developments in Southeast Asia with in-depth analytical pieces.



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong unveils the ASC logo at the Opening Ceremony of the 40th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in 2008.



The Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre (NSC) was established in 2009 as part of an East Asia Summit (EAS) leaders' initiative. Made up of ASEAN countries together with the US, China, India, Russia, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, EAS is a leaders' forum to discuss strategic and economic issues, initially aimed at developing an East Asian community. NSC serves EAS's goal by studying the historical interactions between Asian civilisations and premodern Southeast Asia societies. It is also home to the Archaeology Unit, the only dedicated archaeological centre in the country. NSC's signature event is its annual archaeological Field School which conducts academic lectures and archaeological excavations in a Southeast Asian country for students from EAS member countries. NSC publishes *NSC Highlights* quarterly, in addition to academic and working papers on various subjects.

2010s: Complexity and Diversity

The forces of globalisation and regionalisation have made Southeast Asia more complex and diverse. Different types of politics and modes of governance in the region are now meshed with market economic practices, producing unique socio-political conditions from country to country. In addition, the digital revolution in the form of social media and the Internet has changed state-society relations in different and profound ways.

The complexity of national issues demanded a more focused and multidisciplinary approach. In 2012, ISEAS formed its country studies programmes. These programmes brought together scholars from different disciplines to examine specific countries. The Indonesia Studies Programme, Malaysia Studies Programme, Myanmar Studies Programme and the Vietnam Studies Programme were introduced. The Thailand Studies Programme was included in 2013. The country studies programmes bring in visiting scholars for short stints to work on the latest developments.



The inauguration of the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre by Prof Amartya Sen and then Foreign Minister George Yeo on 11 August 2009, ISEAS.



Picture of the Red River between Vietnam and China taken by ISEAS researchers studying the impact of China on mainland Southeast Asia in 2015.

3. Our Resources And Outreach

ISEAS Library

Since its establishment in 1968, ISEAS Library has served as a hub for Southeast Asian research. The valuable library collection built up over the past five decades attracts researchers, scholars, students and government agencies from all over the world.

Our print collection consists of approximately 300,000 books and journals, some 1,000 maps and 1,200 microfilm titles of regional newspapers, journals, theses, rare and antiquarian books and press clippings. In particular, the Library's collection on Indonesia is considered one of the best in the world, according to a 2011 report "*Crossing Borders: Self-assessment*", by The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV).

ISEAS Library also holds private papers of prominent individuals from the region, mainly from Indonesia and Malaysia.

Our Oral History Project seeks to conduct oral interviews with participants in significant local and regional events. The Oral History Project was initiated in 1973 but ceased after 1997 and was resumed in 2015. The Project is now thematically driven to be aligned with ISEAS's research direction.

ISEAS Publishing Unit

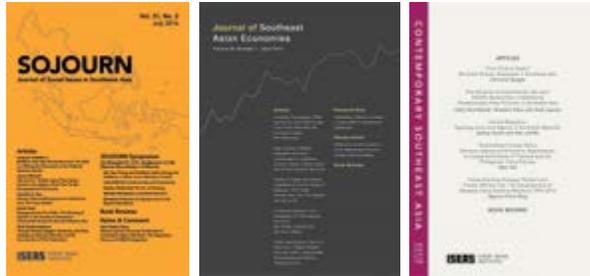
Set up in 1968, ISEAS Publishing Unit produces scholarly books and journals on Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific.

Since its inception, ISEAS Publishing Unit has issued more than 2,000 books and journals; an average of 50 publications a year.

The Unit also collaborates with university presses such as Cornell University Press, Oxford University Press, Palgrave Macmillan, Australian National University, Stanford University Press and East-West Centre Washington.

All books published by the Unit are reviewed and authorised by the Institute's Manuscript Review Committee to ensure high standards for our publications. A stringent review process involves blind peer review by international subject specialists to ensure that manuscripts accepted and published meet the Institute's academic standards.

In addition to books, the Unit produces three internationally peer-reviewed journals – *SOJOURN*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*, and *Contemporary Southeast Asia* – all of which are published three times a year.



The Publications Unit has been important to ISEAS's strong academic international reputation. It publishes three renowned journals, namely, *SOJOURN*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*, and *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. All three are internationally peer-reviewed and issued three times a year.

Southeast Asian Affairs
- A companion to the region from 1974 to Present.

The *Southeast Asian Affairs* series began in March 1974. The series invites experts to review significant national events in ASEAN countries and in the broader region. Over the decades, *Southeast Asian Affairs* has become strongly associated with ISEAS and has served as a valuable source of analysis for generations of students, journalists, government officials and the general public.



Regional Outlook Forum

The Regional Outlook Forum (ROF) is ISEAS's flagship event held at the beginning of each year. This one-day forum discusses short- and medium-term trends in the region and beyond to highlight geopolitical challenges that stakeholders in government, businesses and private sector need to be aware of.

ROF invites expert speakers from across the globe and attracts between 500-650 people. The inaugural Regional Outlook Forum (ROF) was held at the Shangri-La Hotel on 16 January 1998.

The Singapore Lecture

The Singapore Lecture is one of ISEAS's signature events. The Institute jointly organises the Singapore Lecture series with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is an honour bestowed on visiting heads of government to address a distinguished audience of diplomats, business leaders, community leaders and political office holders.

The inaugural Singapore Lecture in 1980 was delivered by Prof Milton Friedman, entitled "The Invisible Hand in Economics and Politics", with a founding endowment from the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and augmented by a donation in 1983 from ExxonMobil Asia Pacific. There have been 41 Singapore Lectures since.



ISEAS hosting Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the 1988 Singapore Lecture.



Indonesian President Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono giving the 25th Singapore Lecture in 2005.



Dr Goh Keng Swee presiding over the inaugural Singapore Lecture by Nobel laureate Milton Friedman in 1980 entitled "The Invisible Hand in Economics and Politics".



People's Republic of China President Xi Jinping delivering the 36th Singapore Lecture in 2015.

5. Our Future Research Directions

The challenge for ISEAS in the next 50 years is to maintain its position as a leading research institute and think tank, as the region becomes more complex and its development more multi-faceted. Just as Singapore faces a myriad of external challenges in a dynamic geopolitical landscape, so too ISEAS must remain responsive to unfolding geopolitical and social trends. This will allow the Institute to provide timely analysis and sound forecasts. Looking forward, there are several research areas that ISEAS will focus on.

01 Firstly, it will continue to monitor US-China relations and its impact on Southeast Asia. As the most important bilateral relationship in the world, the character of US-China relations will impact different Southeast Asian societies in different ways.



02 Secondly, ISEAS will continue its interest in the rise of China and its impact on Southeast Asian communities. Chinese capital, labour and influence on these communities will have profound consequence on issues like national sovereignty, local communities and cultural identities.

03 Thirdly, the digital revolution and e-commerce will be of growing importance. The digital revolution has democratized access to information and the ability to mobilise. Social media and unfettered information sharing have disrupted the traditional state-society relationship. Their impact on political institutions, the economy and culture will continue to draw the attention of researchers.



04 Finally, ISEAS will continue to study ASEAN resilience and its future direction. ASEAN faces a myriad of external pressures, sometimes resulting in a divergence of agenda amongst its member states. How such pressures are exerted, the divergences they cause and the resilience of the grouping will be of research interest to ISEAS.



